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‘Because I am a stranger’ Urban refugees in Yaoundé, Cameroon

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Introduction

As of January 2011, UNHCR reported that there were more than 106,000 refugees and asylum seekers living in Cameroon, over 14,000 of them living in urban and peri-urban areas. The majority come from neighbouring and nearby states such as Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Nigeria, Rwanda and Sudan.

Cameroon is signatory to most conventions and treaties that articulate human rights, including the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugee and 1967 Protocol (hereafter referred to as the “1951 Convention”) and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (hereafter referred to as the “OAU Convention”). Cameroon adopted national legislation regarding the status of refugees in 2005. Of particular importance are the provisions found in Chapter III of the law, which outline the rights and obligations of refugees hosted in Cameroon.

Article 9 grants refugees several important rights, including the right to practice religion freely, the right to property, freedom of association, the right to sue, the right to work, the right to education, the right to housing, the right to social assistance, freedom of movement, the right to obtain identity and travel documents, the right to transfer of assets, and the right to naturalisation. Additionally, Article 10 states that refugees are required to comply with the same laws and regulations on the same basis as nationals. Essentially, it is expected that refugees comply with the same standards and laws that apply to nationals and in turn be treated as nationals.

Article 16 of the law indicates that the government will create a national committee for determining refugee status and appeals, however this has not been done and the UNHCR still shoulders the responsibility in determining refugee status. In reference to this law, UNHCR Cameroon country representative Aida Haile Mariam, stated that “it’s a very good law, with very good principles, but to apply this law there should be a Presidential Decree and we are waiting for this Presidential decree for the application of the law.”

In addition to providing a commission for RSD and appeals, Article 9 of the 2005 refugee law indicates that refugees have the right to government issued identity documents. This documentation has not yet been issued, and has been quite problematic for many refugees living in Cameroon. Several of those interviewed for this research claimed that authorities often harassed them because they did not recognise UNHCR refugee documentation.

To try to alleviate this issue, UNHCR has sent a specimen of documents to the authorities and institutions (i.e. banks, money transfer companies, etc.) so that they are able to become familiar with the various documents that refugees will use for identification, however this problem still persists. In regard to this issue of identification documents, a UNHCR official stated that “it brings about a certain vulnerability for the refugees with police men who will harass them, saying ‘I don’t know this, I don’t recognise this’, so if the government had issued the ID card we believe that it will enhance the protection for refugees, or at least make life easier [for the refugees]”. However, as UNHCR, other organisations, and the refugee community await the decree on this law, the refugees still must live and work and carry on their everyday lives.

Urban refugees

The regional dynamics of many of the conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa generate a perspective of refugees as a potential security threat, as governments fear that some refugees will involve the country in the conflict, for example by using the host country as a base for rebel groups to attack their home country.¹ The host country's desire to protect and separate itself from the effects of conflict, and the conflict itself, influence the way in which treatment, assistance, and policies are formed towards refugees. This is often achieved by confining refugees into camps and settlements where they are prevented from moving freely, which is essential to their ability to access many of their economic and social rights, such as employment.²

Refugees in Cameroon are mostly self-settled, as there is only one refugee camp in the country, the Langui camp, located in the extreme north of the country near the border of Chad, and thus is home to a large number of Chadian refugees; however the UNHCR is working to repatriate some 1,000 Chadian refugees upon the signing and finalising of an agreement with the government of Cameroon.³ In Cameroon the large majority of refugees in country are coming from the neighbouring country CAR, with 80,900 living in the East and Adamaoua regions of Cameroon.⁴

The refugees from CAR are mostly from the Mboro ethnic group, which are nomadic cattle herders found in CAR, Cameroon, parts of DRC and Chad; refugees from CAR are not accepted on an individual basis, but rather *prima facie*. Many of the Mboro refugees stay in the rural parts of the East and Adamaoua regions, among the Cameroonian population, because many Cameroonian Mboro live there, and according to representatives of UNHCR, the Mboro peoples from CAR know the land, so when they came as refugees they knew where they were able to stay.

Although most refugees stay in more rural areas, many refugees, including those from CAR, choose to move into the larger cities of Cameroon, mainly Yaoundé and Douala. The refugees move towards the cities for many reasons, but those interviewed indicated two primary reasons for coming to Yaoundé: the first was to find work, and the second was because they already knew some people in the city, who presumably came to find work. Refugees living in urban areas have different needs and obstacles than those who live in camps or rural settlements, and in order to understand the needs and protection issues for urban refugees it is important to discuss some of the literature on the subject of integration and urban refugees.

Many refugees enter urban settings hoping to have the opportunity to retain self-sufficiency and earn an income in order to support their family, but the reality of living as a refugee in a city can be difficult without proper support mechanisms. The reality is that many refugees in the Global South face grave rights violations and extreme levels of poverty.⁵

The spatial dispersion of urban refugees makes it difficult for aid organisations to easily identify refugees and access them, and for organisations such as UNHCR, identifying and registering refugees is an important component to assessing how much aid is needed. On the other side of

¹Akokpari, *supra* note 13

²Harrell-Bond, *supra* note 5

³Based on information gathered during interview with UNHCR representatives.

⁴UNHCR, *supra* note 1

⁵Harrell-Bond, *supra* note 5

this issue, often times it is difficult for urban refugees to reach out to UNHCR, as locating the office may be difficult for a newcomer to that particular city, which is made increasingly difficult if there is a language barrier between the refugee and the host population.⁶ Unfortunately, host governments within the Global South often restrict services available to urban refugees, as they fear it will create “pull factors” that make their city more appealing for more refugees.⁷

Livelihood strategies

In Cameroon however, the vast majority of the refugees come from similar cultural backgrounds and countries where French is the primary language, so for most, communication and language is not much of a barrier. However, despite these similarities, finding employment and getting by in an urban area is not easy for refugees. Although according to domestic law refugees are able to access employment in Cameroon, the reality is that it is not easy for them to find opportunities to earn an income.

For refugees living in urban areas, usually among the local poor, they will have to compete for jobs and resources among the local population, further exacerbating the vulnerability of the resident poor and increasing social tensions.⁸ Refugees are able to compete with, and potentially displace local workers; this could happen when the skills of the refugee(s) are greater or when they are willing to accept lower wages and work conditions.⁹ The other view is that allowing refugees to integrate into the local community can produce multiplier effects, “by expanding the capacity and productivity of the local economy”, contributing their skills, labour and resources.¹⁰

With a high unemployment rate among the local population of Cameroon, the ability for refugees to compete for limited job opportunities is more difficult. According to UNHCR representatives, “Cameroon has a lot of educated people, so competing in the job market is not easy for refugees, as highly qualified Cameroonians are already employed”. All refugees interviewed in this research were very clear to make the point that it is not easy for them to find work in Cameroon, and that every day is a struggle living in Yaoundé.

Prior to arriving in Cameroon, many of the refugees had a stable income, or at least were able to meet their needs; many of those interviewed had fields and livestock in their home countries, and some worked office jobs. Several refugees in Cameroon are unable to find a job that matches their skill set, and because of non-recognition of education or previous experience/gained skills, many refugees often suffer from underemployment, which is defined as “holding a job which does not require the level of skills or qualifications possessed by the jobholder”.¹¹

This is not an issue unique to Cameroon, but also in other refugee-hosting countries in both the Global South and North. One woman from Rwanda who has been living in Cameroon for over 15 years, since July 1995, said that “here [in Cameroon] they do not recognise our diplomas, the

⁶ D. Buscher, ‘Case Identification: Challenges Posted by Urban Refugees’, NGO Note for the Agenda Item, *Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlements*, Geneva 18–19 June 2003.

⁷*Id.*

⁸ A. Tibaijuka, A., ‘Adapting to urban displacement’, *Forced Migration Review*, February 2010, p. 4.

⁹Jacobsen, *supra* note 13

¹⁰*Id.*

¹¹Ager & Strang, *supra* note 47

refugees come after the Cameroonians...in Rwanda I was a computer secretary, but here I cannot find any work.” For this woman she is not able to use the skill set she possess, to make ends meet she used to sell mobile phone cards and credit, or other random items on the street, but in her words “it is difficult to find money, to work, to get food . . . there are a lot of problems.”

In order to get by, many refugees work odd jobs in the informal sector, or sell things on the street, and some refugees interviewed even admitted to resorting to begging on the streets to meet their financial needs. A 16 year old boy interviewed said that “my father is working in a construction site but is a victim of discrimination and the money is not being paid to him...I am always searching for jobs to help my father and junior brother.” Unfortunately, according to Damien Eloundou of the organisation RESPECT, employers under payment and lack of pay, is something that many refugees experience. On the flipside of this issue, a representative at CRAT indicated that being withheld pay is something that happens to many Cameroonians as well.

Some refugees have been able to find temporary work with friends or odd jobs, but none interviewed have found a permanent or stable solution. Although there is a lack of jobs in Cameroon, there are several other reasons that are preventing refugees from finding gainful employment. Mr. Moundzogo of *Réfugiés sans Frontières* stated that “Within the society the perception of refugees is changed with time, however there is still the idea that a refugee is someone who is a criminal and who came to the steal the work of the Cameroonians...they are someone who has no money.”

The majority of refugees that were interviewed during this project support this view. An article was also found in the *Cameroon Tribune* newspaper, which had an interview with a refugee living in Yaoundé, Cameroon, he explained that he moved to Yaoundé in order to find a job, but had not been successful, which he also indicates is a problem for many refugees living in that city: "Whenever refugees go to look for jobs anywhere people fear to recruit them because they believe that refugees are thieves. They don't have confidence in refugees..."¹²

Several of the refugees interviewed for this research indicated that no one wanted to give them work because of their status as a refugee in Cameroon. When discussing the treatment they received from the host population and the ability to find a job, all refugees interviewed explained that it was difficult for them “because I am a stranger”, “from the outside” or because “I am different”.

Although there are many similarities between the refugee population and the host community, there is also a clear distinction that exists; all refugee interviewed indicated that they experienced some sort of harassment and/or discrimination because they were refugees, and most connected this directly to their ability to find wage-earning work in Yaoundé. However, several refugees stated that the discrimination they face is not experienced with all Cameroonians, in some cases they indicated that the locals supported them and treated them well; simply put by one refugee from CAR, “some Cameroonians are nice, some are not.”

As discussed previously, identity documentation is a big problem for refugees living in Cameroon, as many authorities and institutions do not recognise UNHCR identity cards and

¹² E. Mosima, ‘Refugees at ease in Yaounde’, *Cameroon Tribune*, 24 June 2009, retrieved 24 April 2011 from <<http://www.africafirst.com>>.

papers. This issue extends to finding employment in the formal sector of Cameroon. For refugees who wish to participate in the trade and commercial activities, not having national identity documents hinders this desire, so some, in addition to their refugee documentation card, possess the *carte de séjour* (a two year residence permit) or *carte de resident* (a ten year residence permit).

According to UNHCR's Deputy Representative, for those who are involved in trade or commercial activities, they purchase this permit "in order to pay for their taxes and to be registered and really to be seen as a credible commercial actor they will need to present this document- even though by law they should not need it, in practices it's what the people will ask for." However, only those who have the means for the permit are able to obtain one; it is primarily Rwandans who have this permit, as most of them have been in Cameroon for over ten years and are more involved in commercial activity compared to refugees from other nationalities.

Directly connected to the ability to earn money is the ability to find adequate housing. Urban refugees within the cities of Sub-Saharan Africa usually become part of the urban poor, as such their marginalised position in the city means they often live in the slums of the city. Although rent may be cheaper in the poor, slum areas of the cities, if one is not earning an income rent becomes near impossible to pay. According to the UNHCR Deputy Representative, "the issue of rent is a huge problem in an urban setting, and we do not have the resources to pay for rents". In some cases, UNHCR is able to assist with paying rent, however, "it's a temporary measure for an on-going problem".

In addition to the difficulties in paying rent, many refugees in Yaoundé live in small, unfinished slum housing. Most of the refugees interviewed lived with many people in a small one-room house, often sharing one bed with several people. Two refugees interviewed were squatting in unfinished construction sites, which were dangerous, with partial floors leading to large drop offs among other things¹³; one young woman from CAR with three small children said, "we will stay here until someone removes us".

According to Damien Eloundou of RESPECT, it is very common for refugees and some very poor Cameroonians to live in this type of housing because they only have to pay a very small amount, however when the owner decides to resume construction they must leave. Many of the refugees have changed houses several times during their stay in Yaoundé.

A refugee man from CAR, who had seven children with him, has moved seven times since he first arrived in Cameroon in 2006. This man was recently removed from his house, and without money to find a new residence, the landlord allowed him to build a small "house" on the adjacent empty lot. Using spare wood he could find, this man built a makeshift, one room house for him and his family, however he was not able to construct a roof for the house, and as it was the rainy season, this posed many difficulties.¹⁴

A female refugee from DRC said that in Cameroon there is "no consideration, no rights, no knowledge of these rights...it is very difficult to live in Cameroon, especially with children.

¹³ Based on observations from field visits in July 2011

¹⁴ *Id.*

Difficult and frustrating.” This frustration, expressed by many refugees, is rooted in the difficult lives they face living in Cameroon. Refugees move to the cities often times with the intention of being able to work and provide for their families’ basic needs, as stated previously. The organisation CRAT, which primarily focuses on mental health issues, recognises that employment/livelihood strategies have a direct connection to the mental health of refugees. According to a psychologist working at CRAT, “the first is the issue [for refugees] in Cameroon is of employment, it is very difficult for refugees here ... there are many, and they are jobless.” The inability to find work and meet basic needs may trigger mental health issues, or exacerbates existing conditions.

As has been demonstrated, jobs are not easy to come by for most refugees, and in order to earn money some choose to invest in small businesses. Some organisations assist refugees in their livelihoods through allowing them to be able to gain independence and earn their own money. In 2009-2010 CRAT, in conjunction with the US Embassy in Cameroon, began a project entitled “Improving the Coping Status of Urban Refugees”. This project was initiated after a survey and research project was done with many of the torture victims that CRAT assists, the results of which showed a strong link between Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety and depression, with a lack of livelihood support. According to a psychologist at CRAT, when people are unable to meet their basic needs, it is very difficult to treat their mental health issues.

This project took 50 refugees living in Yaoundé, mostly women, and assisted them with skills training for managing a small business as well as a start-up kit, and the refugees were also given assistance in saving money through CRAT. As of summer 2011, approximately 75% of the beneficiaries were still doing well and earning an income from the business they started. Although this project was only able to target a small number of refugees, the success that many of the recipients experienced is encouraging, and supports projects directed more towards empowerment and assisting refugees in earning their own money over direct financial aid.

Another, similar type of livelihood assistance is also provided by UNHCR in Cameroon. For those refugees that show initiative and have the desire to start their own small businesses, UNHCR offers skills training to develop their business skills, as well as further training for some in business management. This is done in conjunction with an NGO who has a focused capacity on business training, and upon completion they are given a start-up kit for their business.

According to UNHCR officials, many of the small business include activities like selling peanuts and other small food items, as well as small shops that sell various goods. The organisation RESPECT offers training in sewing skills for many refugee women, so they can work as dressmakers and tailors. There are many women who want to participate in this program, but according to the organisation, the problem is having money to purchase materials for the women to work with and sell.

All organisations interviewed stressed the importance of skills training and assisting the refugees to have the ability to earn their own money, however, for many refugees they are heavily dependent on aid. According to UNHCR country representative, “what [the refugees] would prefer is to receive regular assistance...a sort of salary, but we do not have the means to do that and I do not think it is a desirable assistance program in this way- they should bring a contribution also to help themselves and we try encourage them”, she went on to indicate that

those who really want to succeed in becoming independent are the ones who are pursuing the various training programs offered by UNHCR.

This opinion of assistance programming is consistent with the information in the UNHCR policy on urban refugees, which states that “UNHCR will support the efforts of urban refugees to become self-reliant, both by means of employment or self-employment.”¹⁵ Regarding the psychosocial opinion on the issue of self-reliance and independence, one researcher notes, “ultimately a population recovers from war not as recipients of aid or as patients but as active citizens. Structural poverty, landlessness, and lack of violable jobs too often retard this rebuilding of lives”.¹⁶

Many of the refugees interviewed have spent time in and IDP or refugee camp, sometimes both, which has made them more dependent on financial assistance, as psychologist working at CRAT stated that “many refugees are actually less eager to do something [work] because they expect everything from the UNHCR...they have dependency on the help they receive from UNHCR, which is a big difficulty”. In an urban setting where aid is not distributed like in a camp, it is important that refugees are equipped with the skills and tools they need successfully meet their needs. Although it has not reached all refugees in the city, the organisations working in Yaoundé have been working towards the goal of independence and empowerment for refugees.

Other assistance

Refugees living in Yaoundé do have some aid assistance available to them. Several refugees interviewed complained of medical problems, especially with the children.¹⁷ Access to primary health care is provided through UNHCR’s implementing partner, the Cameroonian Red Cross, and all refugees interviewed (25) indicated that they have received assistance from this organisation.

A problem for some was illness related to malnutrition, such as calcium deficiency and anaemia; for these cases, UNHCR assists the refugees with their special diet needs. For those who have medical problems or are recovering from treatment that requires them to have a caretaker, UNHCR will pay for the refugee who volunteers to care for the patient. Unfortunately medical problems tend to persist because of unsanitary living conditions, malnutrition, and unsafe drinking water, among other things.

As mentioned briefly in a previous section, the organisation CRAT works with urban refugees in Yaoundé to assist with mental health needs. According to a psychologist working at CRAT, many [refugees] come from rural areas, and in urban areas this is a problem- they feel completely lost in the city”, many of the refugees coming from urban areas feel equally overwhelmed when coming to Yaoundé; for some, “depression has become a normal part of their lives.” To assist with their needs, CRAT offers several different therapies, including cognitive

¹⁵ UNHCR, *supra* note 46

¹⁶ D. Summerfield, ‘War and Mental Health, a brief overview’, *BMJ*, Vol. 321, 2000, p. 234.

¹⁷ No persons specified what illnesses they had but rather referred generally to “sickness”, but in discussion with other organisations much of this is associated with mal-nutrition, cholera, and other illness due to their financial and living situation.

behavioural therapy and narrative therapy, among others, as well as the plan for a music and dance therapy program.

Many refugees interviewed discussed the importance of religion and spirituality in their lives, one woman who was in a particularly difficult situation, stated, “God is the only one who helps us.” CRAT offers individualised approaches to therapy, however a psychologist at CRAT stated that through his personal experience, “many of [the refugees] have been more effectively helped using their belief in god... they can better express their issues through their religion – through their spiritual beliefs we can help them find solutions.” As discussed previously, mental health issues can be exacerbated by the living conditions and life struggles of refugees living in an urban setting, however with mental health assistance, refugees can receive the support that they need.

Through UNHCR refugee children are able to access primary and secondary education. According to UNHCR Cameroon representative, education is a critical component to protecting refugee children in Cameroon, as well as in all countries. The domestic refugee law in Cameroon allows for refugee children to attend the local schools¹⁸, however attending school costs money that many refugee families do not have.

In Cameroon, UNHCR assists all refugee children to be able to attend primary school, and is also striving to offer assistance for children in higher grade levels, as “we [UNHCR] understand the risk if we abandon them after completing their primary education”. For some refugees, assistance is available for university education, and even a Masters level degree; the scholarships available for this level of education are made possible through a German organisation, and it is a competitive program.

In addition to UNHCR assistance, the organisation RESPECT offers some scholarship assistance for children to attend schools. This organisation also has implemented a letter exchange program with a school in Canada; this allows the refugee children to practice their writing and communication skills, as well as learn about children in Canada and have the opportunity to teach them about the lives of refugees. This program has been very successful, and when asked about the program, the children involved seem to be very happy to have the opportunity to have “friends” to share with in Canada.

Unfortunately, even with this assistance, not all refugee children are permitted to attend school. For many families, when older children are in school, they are not able to work and help provide for the family. One woman from Chad was living in Yaoundé with her two older daughters (15 years and 17 years) and son (6 years), however only one of the daughters was able to attend school because the boy was too sick, and the older girl needed to stay home and help care for him. This problem of education is not unique to Cameroon, and as livelihood challenges persist, will continue to be a protection challenge for UNHCR and other assistance organisations

Conclusion

Urban refugees face different problems and in many cases are more vulnerable than refugees living in camps. Living in an urban area means that refugees must earn money to be able to meet

¹⁸ Article 9 and 10(1) of Cameroon’s Domestic Refugee Law, see *supra* note 29

their other needs, which is an issue that was consistently articulated during the research and interviews for this project. General academic information provided by various scholars and UNHCR indicate that urban areas pose particular difficulties for organisations as well as refugees.

However it is not likely that the trend of refugees living in cities will change anytime soon, so organisations are compelled to adapt. As discussed previously, UNHCR issued a new policy for the treatment of urban refugees in 2009, which had several improvements and changes from the previous policy (1997), which treated urban refugees as an exception rather than the norm. One of the primary goals of this new policy is to increase the protection space for refugees, conceptualised as an environment in which internationally recognised rights of refugees are respected and their needs are met.¹⁹

UNHCR's new policy also notes that movements to urban settings can "place considerable pressure on resources and services that are already unable to meet the needs of the urban poor"²⁰, this situation makes it challenging to provide a protection space for refugees; these are issues that face aid and assistance organisations in Cameroon. It is difficult to focus attention (both financial and research) to the refugee situation in Cameroon when compared to other refugee hosting countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, which have a significantly larger "population of concern"²¹ such as South Africa, Chad, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.²² This lack of focus and attention makes it very difficult to fundraise and attract international NGOs to provide assistance; compared to situations in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, as UNHCR country representative noted "we cannot compete with those kind of high, complex, emergency programs".

The UNHCR offices in Cameroon, as well as the other organisations, have challenges meeting all refugee needs with a limited amount of resources. UNHCR representatives indicated that they receive between 30 and 40 requests for financial assistance every day, and every week the staff must go through the applications and choose who are the most "needy" and grant them "exceptional allowances". In terms of assistance, UNHCR deputy representative stated that, "we have different types of assistances, it's definitely not enough, but because our resources are so limited we have to share in between a large number of people- and at the end of the day everybody doesn't get a lot but it can make a difference for a few people".

However, UNHCR in Cameroon is making efforts to use the resources available in an effective manner through working with the refugees and working towards better understanding their needs. There are eleven different nationalities of refugees in Cameroon, and every two years each community elects a community leader that also acts as a link between the community and UNHCR. UNHCR, in conjunction with the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, constructed a refuge community centre, located next to the UNHCR office, so each community has a space to work and discuss issues and concerns. Every three months, UNHCR staff meets with the refugee leaders to discuss concerns and work to find solutions together. The opinions and viewpoints of the refugee community are an invaluable resource and crucial to implementing

¹⁹ UNHCR, *supra* note 48

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ "Population of concern" includes refugees, asylum seekers, returned refugees, stateless persons, IDPs, and returned IDPs.

²² Total populations of concern for these countries: Cameroon-106,658; South Africa- 229,601; Chad- 529,090; Uganda- 585,253; Kenya-751,196; and Tanzania-272,789.

projects that yield beneficial results; as the country representative stated, “[many of the refugees] have been here longer than us- some for twenty years... they know how things work and they help us identify problems in the community and how to go about finding solutions.”

For UNHCR working together with the refugee community in Yaoundé is a key component to problem solving and finding adequate solutions. The other organisations interviewed for this research, *Réfugiés sans Frontières*, CRAT and RESPECT, seemed to be the primary organisations, other than UNHCR and the Cameroon Red Cross, that offered some assistance and advocated for urban refugee rights in Yaoundé. These organisations are deeply rooted in the refugee community and in tune with their needs and the issues they face on a daily basis, however there seemed to be an extreme lack of communication and working relationship between organisations.

When asked if there were partnerships between refugee organisations in Cameroon (apart from UNHCR), they all stated that there was not. After spending two months researching and working with refugee organisations in Yaoundé, it is in the opinion of this researcher that the organisations, and the refugee community, would benefit greatly if they were to collaborate on projects and share resources, and because of the small amount of refugee specific organisations, it may be important and useful to reach out to other domestic aid and assistance NGOs in Yaoundé which do not solely focus on refugee issues.

There are many refugees to care for both in urban and rural areas of Cameroon, and everyday more asylum seekers are arriving in the country. Although limited by resources, the organisations working with refugees in Yaoundé, including UNHCR, have identified the primary protection needs for refugees and are working towards achieving a greater realisation of refugee rights in Cameroon.

The amount of work, along with political and social situation of Cameroon can make providing assistance for refugees difficult, whether a domestic NGO or an international organisation such as UNHCR, but as the UNHCR Cameroon country representative stated, “we cannot be discouraged because there is so much to be done.” The organisations providing protection for refugees in Yaoundé have much work to do and a long road ahead, however the organisational and leadership foundations that are now in place will allow them to continue working towards providing effective protection for refugees.

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