

Original Research Article

Education of Internally Displaced Children in the Context of the Health Crisis Linked to the COVID 19 Pandemic in the Zamai Cultural Universe

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Abstract: Objective: The aim of this article is to analyse compliance with barrier measures in the fight against the Covid 19 pandemic in a context where internally displaced school-age children under the weight of forced displacement as a result of conflict crises (Boko Haram) and natural disasters are also forced to comply with barrier measures linked to the fight against the Covid 19 or Zamai Coronavirus pandemic. **Method:** Qualitative data was collected using standard anthropological data collection techniques, including in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). An interview guide and a discussion guide corresponding to each of the targets were used to collect qualitative data. Direct observation was used to collect data on the environment of the informants, their behaviour and attitudes, their level of knowledge about the education of displaced school-age children and Covid 19. **Discussion:** Impoverishment refers to the loss of natural capital, man-made material capital, human capital and social capital. Nine risks or processes are at the root of the impoverishment of displaced persons: not having land, not having a job, not having a house, marginalisation, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to public goods and services, fraying of the social fabric and loss of educational opportunities. **Conclusion:** In various towns in the Far North Region, in this case Zamai, concentration camps have been set up to house IDPs. Initially intended as short-stay camps, most of them are confined there, sometimes for long periods, in generally difficult living conditions.

Keywords: public goods and services, Covid 19, Boko Haram, natural disasters.

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INTRODUCTION

The violence in February led to the displacement (including commuting movements) of around 1,400 people in the Mayo Tsanaga department. It was also in Mayo Tsanaga that protection monitors recorded the highest number of incidents in February (77%), followed by Mayo Sava (17%) (IRC, February 2022). An internally displaced person (IDP) is "a person [...] who has been forced or obliged to flee or to leave his or her home or place of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who has not crossed an internationally recognized State border" (<https://www.iom.int/fr/termes-cles-de-la-migration>).

In addition to these vast movements forcing people forcibly displaced by the Boko Haram armed

conflicts to take refuge in the department of Mayo Tsanaga, the latter has not been immune to the Covid 19 pandemic. As if by fate, the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic has not spared this vulnerable section of the population in their host towns. At the end of December 2019, China notified the emergence and spread of a new coronavirus (Covid-19). The rapid spread of this disease to other countries in Asia, Europe and America led the World Health Organisation to declare the epidemic first as a public health emergency of international concern, and then as a pandemic.

The sudden emergence, scale and brutality of Covid-19 have plunged the planet into an acute health crisis. The country has experienced two waves of epidemics, the first starting in June 2020 and the second in April 2021. These waves have been compounded by the appearance of several variants of SARS-Cov2 (Alpha, Beta and Delta). (National Communication Plan for vaccination against COVID-19 in Cameroon). In

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Cameroon, a COVID-19 preparedness and response plan was drawn up in February 2020 by the Ministry of Public Health in collaboration with partner administrations and TFPs. Following the detection of two cases of COVID-19 in the Centre region on 6 March 2020, the incident management system was activated within MINSANTE's Public Health Emergency Operations Centre to coordinate the response (National Communication Plan for Vaccination against COVID-19 in Cameroon).

Clearly, governments, including the Cameroonian government, have been forced to implement exceptional measures to limit its spread. However, in the face of this health crisis, unprecedented on such a scale in the country's history, many questions are being raised about the health, quality of life, economy, social relations and education of the children. It is with this in mind that this article looks at the education of internally displaced children, who are not only struggling to find their way back to school, but for those who have the courage despite the trauma of Boko Haram's atrocities, are also having to cope with strict compliance with the barrier measures imposed by the Cameroon government to combat this scourge.

METHODOLOGY

This is a cross-sectional qualitative article. The survey took place in the towns and villages where IDPs are received, mainly in Zamai, in the Department of Mayo Tsanaga – Far North Region of Cameroon in both rural and urban areas. These study sites have also been subject to barrier measures since the start of the COVID 19 epidemic. Data were collected in health facilities (FOSA), community-based organisations (OBC), prisons and communities in the said towns. The study was spread over a period of 2 years, from 2021 to 2023, since it also incorporated data from Dr Noma Eloundou Damien's PhD thesis. The study population included IDPs, school-age IDP children, health professionals in charge of the fight against COVID-19, staff in charge of IDP education, community members and teachers.

The inclusion criteria were any person belonging to the category of informants mentioned, with knowledge of the education of school-age IDPs and of Covid 19; who had freely consented to participate in the study. As exclusion criteria anyone who refused to participate in the study or interrupted the interview after giving informed consent. In terms of sample size, as the study was qualitative, interviews were conducted until the saturation point was reached at which no further information could be obtained.

Qualitative data was collected using standard anthropological data collection techniques, including in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). An interview guide and a discussion guide corresponding to each of the targets were used to collect qualitative data. Direct observation was used to collect data on the environment of the informants, their

behaviour and attitudes, their level of knowledge about the education of displaced school-age children and Covid 19. In-depth individual interviews were conducted with key informants. Guided group discussions were conducted using a discussion guide with leaders of associations, those responsible for the education of IDPs and those responsible for the management of Covid 19 in the study sites (ethnic and religious diversity, school category, etc.). In each study town, a focus group discussion was organised. The in-depth individual interviews and guided group discussions focused on the following themes: knowledge, attitudes and practices concerning the education of school-age IDPs in relation to compliance with the COVID-19 barrier measures; elements of stigmatisation of people with COVID-19; proposals for improving the prevention and management of COVID-19 through compliance with the barrier measures recommended by the Cameroonian government. The literature review was carried out in libraries in the city of Yaoundé and the Far North region, documentation centres and private libraries. Once the data had been collected, the tapes were transcribed and processed using Word software. The analysis was based on content analysis. Jodelet's theory of social representations was used as a guideline for the analysis.

RESULTS

Cameroon has developed a response plan essentially centred on health measures commonly known as "barrier measures" to the Coronavirus. These include precautions that the general population should take. Although they are no longer imposed at all levels of social life, the Covid barrier measures are still de rigueur despite vaccination. These include: wearing a mask in certain public buildings, social distancing at work, in restaurants, at school, at home... washing your hands before and after any activity. Barrier measures are essential in the fight against Covid-19 and its variants.

Non-compliance with barrier measures due to school overcrowding

In the context of a health crisis, in this case the Covid-19 pandemic, it is not easy to talk about compliance with barrier measures when schools are overcrowded. Nowadays, in order to reduce school overcrowding, which is one of the reasons why hundreds of children are not attending school, new structures are being built. In general, IDPs do not always have sufficient information about other facilities that can help them.

Confusion between closing schools as a barrier measure and school wastage due to lack of facilities

To combat the coronavirus, one of the barrier measures was to close all schools. This situation is leading to confusion, as IDPs do not distinguish between being expelled from school to combat the pandemic and not going to school because of a lack of school supplies. On this subject, "development workers should not wait for us to be chased away before paying for school"

(Interview conducted with an Informant on 08/09/2021), to the point where some go months without attending classes. The notebooks came in the second sequence.

The PDI pupils also want to obtain the books free of charge because the teachers who give the exercises do not take this into account. "It's because of the state that I continue to go to school. It's since the CMI class that my father stopped enrolling me in school". (Interview conducted with an informant on 08/09/2021). Others also recognise the benefits of this body, as one informant stated.

Provision of IDP reception schools with materials to help them comply with the barrier measures against Covid 19

The UNHCR has built and equipped with bench tables 05 classrooms in definitive material and 03 in provisional material in nursery schools, then other constructions and equipments with bench tables 34 classrooms in definitive material and 25 in provisional material in primary schools. UNICEF is responsible for building and equipping 126 Espaces Amis de l'Enfant Education/Protection stages, donating 64 hand-washing facilities, building 22 latrines and equipping 1,216 table-benches. In addition, this institution organised the distribution of wash kits consisting of 2,630 plastic buckets with lids, 7,890 plastic cups, 50 metal wheelbarrows, 100 round shovels, 526 jerrycans with taps (hand-washing facilities), 1,578 brooms with wooden handles and 1,224 pieces of soap to displaced pupils.

If we were to consider all these supplies to schools, we would be tempted to believe that all the schools for IDPs in the department of Mayo-Tsanaga are better equipped to combat the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. Unfortunately, this is not the case, as the majority of schools in this part of the Far North region have not received any of these grants.

Insufficient number of desks

In the course of our study, we also noted a shortage of desks, which meant that the surplus pupils had to sit on the floor to take their lessons. "In the 4 classrooms we visited, most of the children from Mogode, Gazawa and Hina did not have any work materials. Above all, many of them have just started the school year and are not in the classroom now that the year is coming to an end. The CMII teacher at the Zamai public school admits that some of them just need help because they are very intelligent. (FGD, conducted on 18.09.2022 in Zamai). What's more, pupils do not always have the teaching materials they need for their education. This is a reality facing the education of internally displaced school-age children in times of crisis due to the Boko Haram conflicts.

Ban on population movements as a barrier measure against Covid 19

How can we ask a population that is forced to move to protect itself from the atrocities of Boko Haram, natural disasters or armed conflict not to move in order to comply with the barrier measures against Covid 19? This is even more the case when it comes to internally displaced children of school age who have the right to go to school. If we look at migration from a geographical and diplomatic point of view, we need to make the procedures for moving around and settling in the sub-region more flexible by strengthening sub-regional integration on the basis of free movement, and the ability to migrate regularly with proper documents. Priority must be given to the design and implementation of policies, tools, methods and strategies that provide a clear understanding of the root causes of both voluntary and forced migration.

As one interviewee explained. "*The first thing is to get them back into society. The state must always take charge of all these children because NGOs alone can't do everything if the state doesn't intervene, their future won't be good*" (Interview conducted with an Informant 23 on 02/02/2021 in Zamai).. Very often, their reintegration in the host towns exempts them from the right to fair compensation. In the context of our study, it is a real challenge to envisage optimal integration or reintegration of IDP pupils from one level of education to a higher level, either from primary to secondary or higher, given the barriers or other difficulties.

State institutions in charge of education to make schooling accessible to all school-age children

The remarkable advances made in school enrolment reflect the considerable efforts made by state education institutions to ensure that schooling is accessible to all school-age children. Given the nature of formal education, commonly regarded as a "universal culture", learning is a matter of concern in all societies of the world. Yet it should be said that education, which encompasses all forms of learning, is merely a stepping stone in this new world that claims to be a small village, (Noma, 2016). However, these advances can be called into question when it comes to complying with barrier measures in the fight against Covid 19.

Isolation for people with Covid 19

People with Covid 19 are advised to isolate themselves. In a context where IDPs have no home, they are advised to stay at home if they fall ill. What's more, if it turns out that it's the head of the family who falls ill and suffers from a chronic illness, it won't be easy for the hosts to isolate him or her at home as much as possible.

Everyone hopes to see their offspring achieve a higher level of education, so that they can play a leading role in the society to which they belong. In addition to children who are legally enrolled in school, the school-age children of internally displaced persons, who are

considered to be a vulnerable group in the education system, receive special attention under the regulations. In this regard, it is important to mention that Cameroon passed the 2005 law that includes IDP children in all schooling services; as one respondent testified, *"That's why, in spirit and in the text, IDP children have no reason not to go to school, because since 2001, Cameroon has institutionalised free primary schooling"*. (FGD, conducted on 18.09.2022 in Zamai). In a context where IDPs really need the moral and emotional support of the host population, asking them to isolate their patient from Covid 19 in a setting where they normally have difficulty finding accommodation is a real battle. It should be borne in mind that the contact time required for contamination requires a certain duration (estimated at >15 min) and proximity (<1 m) of contact.

Host communities

According to survey results, school age varies from one locality to another in the Far North region. In a crisis situation, nationals gather in the same locality, Zamai. Education professionals say that they have not been to school because they are told that they are too old, but *"back home, we don't have this problem. A child in CMII who has attended Mogode, Gazawa and Hina does not have a good enough chance of doing well in the same class"*. Speaking of the age criterion in the Cameroonian education system, it's not logical to find a child aged 15 in CMII. *"A CMI child at the state school in Mogode or Hina won't make it if he or she has to repeat even the same class in Cameroon. The standard is higher. It's true that children speak French in our classes, but mother tongues like Mafa always come back and the children are engrossed in them"*. (Interview conducted with an Informant 18 on 3/02/ 2021 Zamai).

This ignorance or lack of information is one of the main reasons why most IDPs are not interested in formal education. For formal education to be adequate, all the components have to be taken into account to ensure better development in the socialisation of the child. For this reason, we felt it appropriate to explore a number of phenomena, such as the atmosphere prevailing among learners and teachers in the institutions or schools catering for the children of school-age IDPs in Zamai. Moreover, this lack of information also concerns everything to do with COVID 19 for the most part.

In an environment where precariousness is the order of the day, a child who goes to school is a ray of hope for parents to lift them out of poverty. But a child who at the age of 15 is still in primary school has no qualifications for the job market. If they have to go all the way to the end of a general secondary education course, it is likely that this child, because of his or her status as an internally displaced person, will reach the age of 30 or more before he or she can hope to apply for a job.

In the opinion of one informant, who is a student at a Cameroonian university, border schools do not automatically integrate into a slightly more developed system, as is the case in Zamai. In most of the host sites, the reception conditions and the development actors involved mean that these are the sites where IDP pupils achieve great things at school, and consequently occupy commendable positions within the Cameroonian government. Internally displaced children are even *"very intelligent"*. An IDP from Zamai achieved the feat of being one of the junior members of parliament at the 2020 Children's Parliament. The IDP students in my class are very committed. They have a right to go to school if they want to fulfil their potential. (FGD, interviewed on 18.09.2022 in Zamai). Among the thousands of internally displaced pupils in Zamai, if we consider the fact that a singleton is selected as a junior member of parliament to be an achievement, even though it is not even a job, it is quite obvious that more questions need to be asked about the future of this social stratum after their schooling.

Social distancing as a barrier measure in the fight against COVID 19 in a context of Education in times of crisis

As part of the fight against COVID 19, one of the main barrier measures is social distancing in schools. Learners and teachers must maintain a distance of 1 metre from other people. The question that arises is how to apply this barrier measure in overcrowded schools. IDP host towns with more pupils enrolled in overcrowded schools also record higher rates of repetition, drop-out and disparity between age and year of study, suggesting that inadequate infrastructure and, more generally, an impoverished learning environment have a negative impact on pupils.

The lack of textbooks means that teachers have to reproduce all the exercises on the blackboard. This, according to the teachers, does not allow them to make rapid progress with the syllabus. It's hard to look at the internally displaced students in the classrooms. They don't reveal themselves at first glance. *"Infrastructure - buildings, classrooms, laboratories and equipment - is essential for learning in our schools and universities. There is strong evidence that high-quality infrastructure facilitates better teaching, boosts learning achievement and reduces drop-out, among other things"*. (FGD, conducted on 18.09.2022 in Zamai). For fear of being stigmatised, teachers who are made aware of this do not take it seriously. The same goes for traumatising them with the strict observance of barrier measures to combat the Coronavirus.

Lack of latrines in some schools as a factor in the spread of Covid 19

Public attention has been drawn to the fact that the virus is also excreted by faecal route, requiring specific precautions in certain cases. Observations in the field have shown that most of the schools in which

displaced school-age children are enrolled do not have latrines. Waste is dumped in the open. Given the number of children who pollute the environment on a daily basis, it is quite clear that these areas are at high risk of the virus spreading.

The architecture of the schools is also a galvanising factor in the schooling of IDPs. "The classrooms are well built compared to the schools in Mogode, Gazawa and Hina" (Interview conducted in Zamai). But in fact, these children find themselves in classrooms without being able to describe the recruitment process. Clearly not familiar with the procedures or the institutions in charge, these people limit themselves to the information provided by development workers. For example, one IDP informant who had spent several months in the study area said: "My younger brothers and I want to go to school, but we don't know what to do, as the local community leader has asked us to wait". Waiting for an indeterminate period of time can lead IDPs to put an end to their children's education.

Procedures for integrating IDP pupils into Zamai schools

IDPs from Mogode, Gazawa and Hina are generally well integrated into the host communities in Zamai. However, the children are so delicate that one of our interviewees told us: "Although accepted, these children are delicate. In the beginning, they were victims of physical and verbal violence from their friends. But now *"we play together and the school is really good"* (FGD, conducted on 18.09.2022 in Zamai). The young IDP said that at her school "if you report someone who has insulted you as an IDP, they will be whipped". They say they are satisfied with the teaching system at the host institutions, not only because of the English, but also because the teachers are highly qualified and really get on with their work.

The procedures for integrating internally displaced children into primary and secondary schools in Zamai are of vital importance for development. We were unable to obtain the official version from the development players. However, according to our sources, the institutions of the Cameroonian education system responsible for the reintegration of internally displaced children limit themselves to facilitating the enrolment of displaced children of school age in schools. They are then responsible for ensuring that fees are paid on time. In practice, however, this is not the case, because as this informant explains, "The development workers pay us late for school and sometimes they don't pay. Our parents don't have the money to pay us for school all the time. (FGD, conducted on 18.09.2022 in Zamai).

For the teachers and other administrative officials who took part in the Focus Group, to ensure that IDP pupils are truly integrated, they strive to show them

that they are not children apart. This leads us to look at the programmes set up by staff to help IDPs go to school in Zamai.

Closing schools as a barrier in the fight against Covid 19

We find ourselves in a system where education is seen as a fundamental human right for all. It is particularly crucial for the tens of millions of children and young people affected by conflicts and disasters, yet it is often seriously disrupted in emergency situations, depriving learners of the transformative effects of a quality education. Education in emergencies includes learning opportunities for all ages. It encompasses early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocational, higher and adult education. Just to prevent the spread of Covid 19, governments around the world, including the Cameroonian government, have ignored this right by ordering the closure of schools and all educational institutions. As one informant put it: "During Covid 19, not only did we find it difficult to get these children to attend school, but when the schools were closed, it was very difficult to get them to go back once they had reopened; the parents, who had suffered too much trauma as a result of the armed conflict, refused to let their children go back to school". In emergency situations through to the recovery phase, quality education provides physical, psychosocial and cognitive protection that can both help people to live and save lives. Dislocation of family members

This article focuses on the gestures, behaviour and words of the informants in order to examine the educational itineraries of internally displaced children in the host cultural universe. The observations and questions focused on the functions of education in a society in a crisis situation, in particular: school-age children attending school in their own environment and cultural universe, and as a result of the crises find themselves in an educational context that is quite different from the usual one; their position in the classroom, which constitutes the end point or the end of the school career of learners from cosmopolitan cultural universes.

The dislocation of family members is highly detrimental to family and community cohesion. This is because, shaken by the crises and atrocities that have forced them into forced displacement, children, including those of school age, women, the elderly and the disabled become particularly vulnerable, exposed to additional risks.

Forced to go from school to school, to the rhythm of their multiple movements, in search of a formal education

Generally speaking, examining the educational pathways or itineraries amounts to analysing the academic performance of this category of pupils from diverse cultures who are obliged to go from school to

school, to the rhythm of their multiple displacements, in search of a formal education to ensure them an acceptable social and professional integration. It is tempting to talk about "interculturality", an exercise in raising awareness of other cultures and the ways of doing and thinking of people who are not like themselves.

Avoiding gathering places

According to members of the host communities, IDPs are stigmatised because they are perceived as an impenetrable people, as one respondent explains: *"Their behaviour in communal areas such as the market, schools and places of prayer gives a more accurate idea that there is an IDP culture. Some of them, the Mafa and Kanouri, their languages and ways of thinking are sometimes surprising, fascinating and even frightening for local people"*. (Interview with Informateur 16, 11/05/2021 in Zamai).

One of the main barrier measures to combat Covid 19 prescribed by the Cameroon government is to avoid places where people gather. So, to ask them once again to avoid public places as much as possible, especially where the risk of coming across sick people is greatest, and in particular hospital or clinic emergency rooms, is to make them feel even more stigmatised. Most internally displaced people are already very often found in concentration centres, where there are thousands of them. And even those who are outside the camps find themselves in households a long way from hospital emergency departments. So it is clear that instead of subjecting their children to these demands, the parents or environment of school-age IDPs are putting a definitive end to their offspring's education.

Calling freephone numbers when a case of coronavirus is detected

Field surveys reveal that this barrier measure is not applicable in most IDP households in the Department of Mayo-Tsanaga. The extreme poverty or precariousness in which IDPs and even host populations live means that they cannot afford a mobile phone, let alone pay for communication credits, even if they are offered one. As one informant put it: "We're asked to call when we see someone with the virus there. We'll pick up the phone where. And the children who go to school there, we parents don't have the money to buy them phones". Another aspect to note is the lack of electricity in some of the towns and villages where the IDPs live. This lack of electricity also has repercussions on the education of displaced school-age children.

Reflection for people who have given up everything, what learning systems are conducive to offspring

This is just one way of looking at the experiences of Zamai's IDPs. In any case, culture being an inseparable whole, there are many assets and challenges that could make a clear distinction between this perception and the future reactions of the population studied. Kholoud (2005) estimates that these families

expect to return home after a more or less lengthy stay in the camp. This does not motivate parents to send their children to school. While the physical environment may be a cause for reflection for people who have abandoned everything, which learning systems are conducive to offspring?

Cultural variability in the education of internally displaced pupils during the Covid 19 health crisis in Zamai

It is important to describe the learning environment for school-age IDPs in the Covid 19 health crisis in the town of Zamai.

Learning environment for IDPs in Zamai

From the outset, learning environments differ depending on whether you are in a Koranic classroom or a formal school classroom. When we talk about a learning room or learning space, there are two elements that can help us to understand what we mean by "learning environment".

phenomenon: the material structure that facilitates the stay of schoolchildren and the perception of the relationship between learners and teachers. The building is made of permanent local material (mud bricks). This leads us to believe that the layout of the classrooms is a cultural reality and not systematically linked to the crisis situation.

The survey results reveal two main education systems in Zamai: formal education and Koranic education. Linked to Islam, most parents have a preference for the Koranic school. The postures and layout of the pupils in the classrooms do not meet the same standards on either side. Pupils sitting on stones on the floor during a lesson. In the locality of Zamai, the posture of pupils in a learning room or the fact that learners sit on mats, pieces of stone or bags of manioc, the /Dago/ cannot be considered an attack on their integrity. It is a purely cultural fact that is nothing other than a mark of respect for teachers, as one respondent testified: "In any case, since it is a traditional object that also shows children respect for adults, there is no doubt that they feel good when they have this position at the Koranic school" (Interview with an Informant, 10/01/2021 in Zamai).

On the other hand, for non-members of the Koranic school, it would not occur to them to see their children sitting on the floor taking lessons, or following the teachings. As one informant put it: "... the children sit on the floor. I often go to school to look at my children. If I find them sitting on the floor, I feel sick". In the same vein, this situation could be seen as a lack of infrastructure. Here again, this is a matter of culture and shows respect for teachers on the part of learners. For example, in the case of "sitting on the floor", schoolchildren in this locality don't find it very difficult or embarrassing to sit on the floor. It's a cultural position.

It's accepted as part of their routine. We sit on the floor out of respect for our elders" (Interview with an Informant, 11/05/2021 in Zamai).

Use of hydroalcoholic gel and social distancing of displaced school-age pupils in a Koranic school in Zamai

In the context of the peak health pandemic Covid 19, the question that arises is how the barrier measures prescribed by the Cameroon government to combat this scourge can be applied in this context. It is difficult for learners and teachers alike to practise hygiene. But if children have to wash their hands whenever they come into contact with dirt, they have to do it every minute. What's more, it's not a mistake to think that there are no water points for washing hands with hydro-alcoholic gel. But the question that arises in this case is why not replace these devices with bench tables. This thought inevitably leads us back to the conventional school setting in which pupils are taught.

Formal education

In 2021, it is almost unanimously agreed that schooling, i.e. the process of sitting down in a setting and being taught, would be beneficial for everyone. It would have been criminal to think otherwise about the fact being studied than as Yasmi thinks, who translates "education" as /djengue/ and says it means "to read". Our informant says that "education means learning lessons and also learning knowledge" (Interview conducted with informant 4 on 01/02/2021 in Zamai). The same goes for Ousmira, for whom "studying means learning a lot of things for the future" (Interview conducted with informant 5 on 01/02/2021 in Zamai). This means that in Zamai and the surrounding area, almost everyone hardly puts into perspective the a priori meaning of the process of accumulating knowledge

Unlike the Koranic school, which is sacred and requires more respect, in that learners make as little noise as possible, for example, the formal school environment is characterised by noise in and out of time. This leads to less consideration, which in turn leads to "casualness", with the result that students drop out of school. The internalisation of this norm or value is not natural, but cultural. Once they reach school age, Mafa children learn about the dignity and sanctity of the Koranic school and pay particular attention to it.

The Mafa, Kanouri or fufuldé IDP children who, in their villages of origin, had already given pride of place to the Koranic school on the fringes of formal education are simply completing this way of acting in this new community, which favours it. In this understanding of learning spaces that exists in Zamai, there are the learners as a whole and the child as an entity. It therefore seems appropriate to explore the proximity between the learner and the object of learning.

Internally displaced children and formal education

The Mafa language has an expression for education. To talk about education, the Mafa say: /Gi djenge ndo/ which can be broken down into /Gi/ meaning "room" and /Djenge/ meaning "to educate" or "to teach". They add 'ndo' which refers to 'man'. This refers to a single reality which is the SCHOOL. For the Mafa, /n'de a mama/ is made up of /N'de/ which means "to go", the syllable "a" indicates the direction "towards" and /Mama/ means "before". All this explains the movement that allows us to declare that we are moving forward, in other words, that we are "attending well" the formal education system. According to most informants, "education means /djengue/ 'to read'; it means learning lessons; it's at school that you learn knowledge" (Interview with informant 17 on 01/02/2021 in Zamai).

In other words, the IDPs who are integrated into this new community, despite their habits, are willing or could be forced at some point to conform as members of the host community who integrate the group's habits. Can we really say that formal education is a priority for school-age IDP children? In a crisis context, it is not easy to keep children in formal or non-formal education as planned by the actors. Nor is there any question of going back over the actions of the Cameroonian public authorities in the education sector, let alone the support of the State's partners such as UNICEF, UNHCR, etc., in the construction of classrooms.

Prioritising formal education

In Zamai, education is seen as a guide for children "towards the right path" in the sense that it enables them to solve life's problems. It is at the centre of everything else. Nowadays, although internally displaced children are affected, they must benefit from education on a daily basis. On this subject, the respondents said: "*Education is effective, especially for today's children. It guides them and teaches them to be disciplined in society. Education is a priority in my life because it teaches me. Education is important in my life because it allows me to learn new things*" (FGD conducted on 02/02/2021 in Zamai). All learners aspire to a job following education. Such is the case of a displaced student who faces all the challenges of her host community. She is not only committed, but determined to go to school: "*I want to find work and get my family out of poverty. School helps us to succeed in life by giving us a job. (...) To make education a priority, I go to class every day and study my lessons*" (Interview conducted with an informant on 14/07/2021 in Zamai).

For our informants, school must be a priority activity for everyone. In other words, education must be a priority for the whole community. This is the unanimous view of parents who are committed to sending their offspring to school. "*First we do our parental duties at home and then we send them (the children) to school. Education is very useful because an educated child can live well in the community and*

everyone will appreciate that. (Interview conducted with an informant 15 on 28/01/2021 in Zamai). However, these parents may be hampered in their actions by a lack of resources. *"The community accesses education through school and learning the tradition. With education you can grow up and help your parents. Our parents send us to school to study properly. A lot of children don't go to school because their parents don't have enough money"*. (Interview conducted with an informant 10 on 01/02/2021 in Zamai). In view of the above, it is important to understand the perception of educational provision for internally displaced children attending school in the Zamai cultural universe.

Toby Fricker, at a press briefing in Geneva. "Since 2018, more than 300 students and teachers have been abducted. After traumatic experiences, they were all subsequently released," he added. According to the UN agency spokesman, "the targeting of education is endangering the future of a whole generation of children". These "internally displaced" children were living in a safe environment that was conducive to their schooling. They lived their own way of life, with familiar friends and teachers. Families, in their own ecological and socio-cultural environment, did what was necessary to ensure their offspring's integration and education.

Exponential demographic growth in the Far North Region

Given the exponential demographic growth in the North, it would be no exaggeration to say that long before the phenomenon of forced displacement, some families, even those living in their villages of origin, found it difficult to send their numerous offspring to school.

If they still have no property, the situation becomes even more complicated. This is the case of one of our interviewees, who gave us his life story: "I was born in Mora, married to three women with 18 children; I come from the Mayo Moskota district, 7 km from the border with Nigeria. My main activities were selling livestock in the dry season and farming in the rainy season. One fine morning, we were surprised by the unexpected arrival of Boko Haram elements, who looked like soldiers. As well as destroying the property of our communities, one of their targets was the /Djaouro/. They fired live ammunition at him, but no bullet penetrated him" (Interview with an informant, 08/07/2021 in Zamai).

In the far north, /Djaouro/ means neighbourhood chief in Ffuldéd. Once in Zamai, despite the support, particularly food support, "I can no longer develop my commercial farming activities because I have no money and no fields. We only eat once a day, and the size of the meal is very small. We adults are sometimes forced to give up food for the children. (Interview with informant 13, 08/07/2021 in Zamai).

Avoiding "social" contact

In the concentration camps for displaced people in Zamai, the education of school-age children is not the most common thing. One of the main reasons for this is the make-up of the displaced families or the size of the family. As the photo shows, this head of household is married to three women, and has 18 children in an IDP concentration camp in Zamai. There are dozens of cases of similar families. Barrier measures recommend that social contact should be avoided: no shaking hands, no kissing - even with family members, etc. Particular care should be taken with elderly and/or frail people.

Unfavourable conditions for the education of displaced school-age children in Zamai

If we look at the environment in which the IDPs live, we can deduce that overcrowding is detrimental to their children's education. In other words, this phenomenon has a real impact on the education of school-age children, insofar as impoverished parents are unable to pay even the 2,500 Fcfa ECCE fee". The CFAF 2,500 APEE fees charged to parents are already too much for us as parents. And with the number of children many of us have, we have to keep them at home. (Interview with an informant, 08/07/2021 in Zamai).

In Mafa, /vi maya kra/ means "education", which is nothing other than "passing on knowledge". The 'parents' component of the education community generally gave us their understanding of the issue under study. Many of these parents were quick to point out the major challenges they face. On the subject of school, one parent suggested that "it's not very important because the children have to help them with household chores and look for their daily bread". Perhaps they are quick to explain the failings and other slippages that are deeply rooted in the cultures from which they come. This can lead most IDPs to ask to return to their villages of origin, despite the level of insecurity.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

In 2017, the Far North, East, North and Adamaoua regions are initially facing the problem of access to water and basic sanitation services. With its reputation as an epidemiological zone, the Far North remains a high-risk area, especially after the calamities caused by cholera in this part of the country in previous years. When displaced persons and refugees are added to this shortfall, it highlights the critical nature of the phenomenon, which affects 250,000 refugees (who need water assistance), namely 178,000 Central African refugees in the East, Adamaoua and the North, 86,000 Nigerian refugees and around 133,000 internally displaced persons (not counting the 343,000 host populations). 813,000 people are in need of EHA, with a predominance of women (51%) and children (58%).

Hand washing

Frequent and prolonged hand washing with soap or hydro-alcoholic gel is recommended, especially

after using public transport. In terms of the needs in this sector, for displaced people, host populations and malnourished children, the construction of water points and the introduction of sustainable management mechanisms, the construction of latrines in both health centres and schools, and the promotion of good water, hygiene and sanitation practices among the population have been identified as priorities.

Impact of play areas in schools

As we said in a previous chapter, the "babal fidjirdi" or playground is a new element in the perception of a child arriving at a formal school. This space does not exist in the Koranic school where, during the formative years of his personality, the child learnt that this institution, being divine, deserved a great deal of consideration and a great deal of time. This further reinforces the learner's idea that the formal school is really "*something that comes from elsewhere*". In other words, *the beneficiaries say they can do without it*" (Noma, 2016).

And the playground, where children gather to play, has enabled many children to stop coming back to school. Because, in the long run, they understand that if the formal school provides for these moments (recreation), it shows that it is not serious. So there's no point in staying there. In short, research has shown the special role played by the playground. It has been proven for generations that man, regardless of his origins, is a "playful animal" according to Hall (1979). In other words, it is through play that we acquire the models of adult life and develop our children's psychomotricity. Hence the major role of habitual practices, which are sometimes negative, in the formation of individual and collective personalities.

The play space in the context of education should be a place for exchange and another level of learning where children also share their extracurricular experiences. A real place for recreation. Ultimately, failing to recognise the role and importance of play in the development of human beings has "incalculable" consequences. The culture of others is like "second nature" to them (Noma, 2016). Which is simply to say that contact and exchanges in the playground can have a positive influence on the school performance of IDPs.

DISCUSSION

Following the detection of two cases of COVID-19 in the Centre region on 6 March 2020, the incident management system was activated within the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre of MINSANTE to coordinate the response with the main objective of rapidly detecting any cases and limiting the spread in the country. The country has experienced two waves of epidemics, the first starting in June 2020 and the second in April 2021. These waves were compounded by the appearance of several variants of SARS-Cov2 (Alpha, Beta and Delta). (National

Communication Plan for vaccination against COVID-19 in Cameroon).

In Cameroon, a few years after the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1993) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1997), and the participation of the Head of State, His Excellency Paul Biya, in the United Nations Extraordinary Summit for Children in 2002, work on drafting a Child Protection Code was initiated in 2004 by the Ministry of Social Affairs with technical and financial support from UNICEF. There is only one advocacy project for a child protection code. Since then, there has been a major humanitarian deployment in the Far North region, which has been affected by the war against Boko Haram.

On arrival, IDPs are confined to a concentration camp. This change follows on from the difficulties they face, as one informant put it: "There are various protection risks in these places, particularly in the overcrowded settlements. Uprooting itself can pose a number of problems: loss of access to land and other assets, loss of livelihoods and usual sources of income, sometimes problematic access to sufficient food, drinking water, healthcare and education. (Interview with Informateur 18, 13/05/2021 in Zamai). However, in the absence of natural disasters, a significant proportion left the concentration camps and were taken in by families or other host towns. During the health crisis linked to Covid 19, despite the difficulties of adaptation faced by IDPs, they were obliged to respect confinement. This is not always easy in concentration camps.

According to protection stakeholders and depending on the dynamics of the protracted crisis in the region, protection threats for 2022 are likely to remain the same as those identified in 2021, although inter-community conflict over the use of limited natural resources is likely to increase, including ethnic conflict between farmers and herders. In 2022, around 25,000 people will be targeted with peaceful coexistence messages during mass awareness campaigns. In 2021, the protection threats identified can be divided into five main categories of rights violations: (1) family separation due to forced displacement; (2) arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions undermining the population's freedom of movement; (3) killings of civilians and bodily injuries occurring, among other things, during incursions into villages by non-state armed groups; (4) extortion and destruction of property and personal belongings by all parties to the crisis and criminal gangs; (5) abduction of adults and children mainly to forcibly join non-state armed groups.

Protection monitoring in 2021 showed that extortion and destruction of property accounted for the majority of incidents recorded in the intervention zones, followed by incidents of physical aggression. While men are the primary targets because they are the traditional

owners of property and homes, women and children are exposed to violence and abuse, exacerbated by the lack of effective access to social services. Of the 435,000 people requiring physical and legal protection interventions in the three divisions affected by the conflict, 74% are targeted by protection partners in 2022, including 61,000 women and 200,000 children. Protection interventions are planned and implemented in line with the sector-wide approach under the leadership of the line ministries.

Saliba-Couture (2019) makes it clear that security objectives are increasingly seen as a priority in policy-making. Whereas previously they were clearly separated and development actors were reluctant to combine them, today the implementation of security measures is often seen as a necessary condition for development.

These include the release of toxic gases from Lakes Monoun (West) in 1984 and Nyos (North-West) in 1986; the eruptions of Mount Cameroon in 1982, 1999 and 2000; and the almost annual flooding throughout Cameroon. Cameroon faces humanitarian crises that can be grouped into 4 categories: armed conflicts, food and nutrition crises, epidemics and natural disasters. The intensification and cross-border spillover (raids, suicide attacks, criminal activities, displacement) of conflicts in neighbouring countries have led to the displacement of large numbers of people from the Central African Republic and Nigeria, as well as internal displacement.

Reports show that "this is due in particular to high levels of several vulnerability factors" (OCHA, 2017) (displacement, malnutrition and the condition of children under the age of 5) and exposure to natural hazards (such as floods and drought) and human factors (including conflict). To cope with new arrivals, particularly in Africa where most internally displaced people are taken in by relatives or in host communities.

CONCLUSION

Displacement impoverishes individuals, families and communities. Internally displaced people often lose their land and possessions, and thus their livelihoods and access to health and education services, while hosts sometimes exhaust their resources. In formal schools, where classrooms are overcrowded as a result of forced displacement due to Boko Haram's atrocities, or in a Koranic classroom where the small stones on the floor represent the "chairs" where learners try to follow the lessons given, this does not always encourage compliance with the barrier measures against Covid 19. Clearly, in the context of the education of internally displaced school-age children, given the difficulties faced by this vulnerable group and the living conditions of the host populations, this promiscuity does not contribute to the application of the barrier measures recommended by the Cameroon government. This situation calls on the government and its partners to

implement preventive measures in their programmes or strategic plans, and to ensure that they are applied.

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