The Perception of internally displaced Persons and the role of Social Actors in the Amelioration of their Living Conditions in Cameroon

La perception des personnes déplacées internes et le rôle des acteurs sociaux dans l'amélioration de leurs conditions de vie au Cameroun

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Abstract— *The controversy surrounding the concept "internally displaced persons" is old as the history of migration but the concept is relatively pronounced in Cameroon with multidimensional perceptions from host populations and social actors whose role vary from the provision of material assistance to psychosocial counseling. The perception of the displaced from the socio-political crisis in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon differs and their plight is partially neglected and not directly addressed by national and international instruments that Cameroon have had to ratify. With competition amongst themselves and with host communities over the use of scarce resources, this paper has as objective to investigate how these internally displaced persons are perceived in host communities and to provide an indebt analysis of the role that social actors play in the transformation of the living conditions of the displaced. To arrive at the required results, the qualitative research method was used with interviews, life stories, and observations. The data collected was transcribed and analyzed using the content analysis. After defining the population, a sample unit was selected with care and precision (Copi, & Cohen, 2011) using the purposive snowball sampling technique as opposed to stratified and cluster sampling techniques (Cohen and al., 2007). The results revealed that the affected population are in a transgression from conflicts to the reality of their lives confirmed by the mutual suspicion and conflictual relationships between them. An analysis of the perception of host communities by IDP's, was characterized as a deceptive social perception and that of anti-sociality instilling in them the feelings of auto-marginalization. However, some members of the host community though lacking resources exhibited solidarity and assistance that helped improve their standards of living. The results also revealed the settlement challenges, with some family members and friends serving as "de factor NGO", portraying the perception of partial neglect and inadequate treatment of IDP's and the host communities by local state authorities, Non-Governmental Organizations and other social actors. Hence, necessitating an urgent politico-institutionalized response on the plight of the displaced and host communities in Cameroon.*

Keywords— *Internally displaced persons, host community, vulnerability, social actors, perception.*

Resume— *La controverse autour du concept de « personnes déplacées internes » est ancienne comme l'histoire de la migration mais le concept est relativement prononcé au Cameroun avec des perceptions multidimensionnelles de la part des populations d'accueil et des acteurs sociaux dont le rôle varie de la fourniture d'une assistance matérielle à l'accompagnement psychosocial. La perception des personnes déplacées suite à la crise sociopolitique dans les régions du Nord-Ouest et du Sud-Ouest du Cameroun diffère et leur sort est partiellement négligé et n'est pas directement pris en compte par les instruments nationaux et internationaux que le Cameroun a dû ratifier. Pour arriver aux résultats requis, la méthode de recherche qualitative a été utilisée avec des entretiens, des récits de vie et des observations. Les données collectées ont été transcrites et analysées à l'aide de l'analyse de contenu. Après avoir défini la population, une unité d'échantillonnage a été sélectionnée avec soin et précision (Copi et Cohen, 2011) utilisant la technique d'échantillonnage raisonné en boule de neige plutôt que l'échantillonnage stratifié.et techniques d'échantillonnage en grappes (Cohen et al., 2007). Les résultats ont révélé que les populations affectées sont en transgression des conflits vers la réalité de leur vie confirmée par la suspicion mutuelle et les relations conflictuelles entre elles. Une analyse de la perception des communautés d'accueil par les personnes déplacées a été caractérisée comme une perception sociale trompeuse et celle d'antisocialité leur inculquant des sentiments d'auto-marginalisation. Cependant, certains membres de la communauté d'accueil, bien que manquant de ressources, ont fait preuve de solidarité et d'assistance qui ont contribué à améliorer leur niveau de vie. Les résultats ont également révélé les défis liés à l'installation, certains membres de la famille et amis servant d'« ONG de fait », illustrant la perception d'une négligence partielle et d'un traitement inadéquat des personnes déplacées et des communautés d'accueil par les autorités locales de l'État. Organisations non gouvernementales et autres acteurs sociaux. D'où la nécessité d'une réponse politico-institutionnalisée urgente au sort des personnes déplacées et des communautés d'accueil au Cameroun.*

Mots clés— *Personnes déplacées internes, communauté d'accueil, vulnérabilité, acteurs sociaux, perception.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The identification, perception, settlement and management of internally displaced persons in Cameroon had been a veritable challenge to stakeholders with the absence of an institutional framework. In recent years, the number of internally displaced persons has continued to increase in Cameroon in particular and in Africa as a whole especially because of persistent conflicts, climate change, and the expansion of extremists groups have fuelled some of the fastest growing displacement crises (Eweka & Olusegun, 2016). The Boko Haram crises in the Northern regions and the socio-political conflict in the North West and South West regions have precipitated some of these displacement crises in Cameroon. A convergence of these crises has led many people to be displaced for a second or even the third time exposing, increasing and prolonging their vulnerability, as there are more than twice as many internal displaced persons than refugees are (Olusegun, 2021). The perception and treatment of these displaced are relatively different as their plight appears to be partially neglected and not directly addressed by social actors and international instruments but emphasis is put on refugees. It is not easy to ascertain the number and location of these IDP's as every

hour, every day, new displacements are triggered in Douala and Yaounde with conflicts and tension being the perpetual and legitimate source of the affected. The turning point being the exposure and suffering that these internally displaced persons are passing through. This is attributed not only to the problems of defining IDP's but also because of several institutional, political and operational perceptions of the internally displaced persons (Koning & Nyamnjoh, 2003). The absence of camp settings for IDP's makes it difficult to differentiate between IDP's, normal migrants, and refugees. Therefore, the question of who is an internally displaced person arises and when does an individual cease to be a displaced person? becomes preponderant. How does the host communities perceive internally displaced persons and how does internally displaced persons see their host? Even assuming that a definition of the concept can be agreed upon, it would undoubtedly be difficult to apply in practice and in our context if they have not been well identified.

A large population of IDP's from the socio-political crisis out of the 573, 900 (OCHA, Jan. 2022) are found in the urban areas of Douala and Yaounde where it's difficult to distinguish them from rural-urban migrants (Ndam, 2022). The situation of vulnerability of

these IDP's becomes more serious when they are under looked and the term IDP used in a derogatory and discriminatory manner by some of their host and other social actors. This is when the host community comes into play with their perceptions. This derogatory language even problematizes the paper clearly as there is the frequent usage of some stigmatizing language expressions on the IDP's such as urban as opposed to rural IDP's which risk generating conflicts between rural and urban areas and Anglophones IDP's as opposed to Francophone IDP's as is the case with Boko Haram internally displaced persons. Within the IDP's from the North West and South West, the perceptual differentiation of those from the South West as less problematic than those from the North West risk promoting nationalistic conflicts knowing very well that the problems of IDP's are not homogenous (Andrew, Ako, Elambo & Eneke, 2009). The UNs current working definition of who is an IDP? can only be used to achieve accurate statistics and data for a comprehensive and coherent action for national and international social actors working in this domain (Njapdem & Mbahpong, 2020). Some of the national social actors include; Grass to Grace (G2G) Foundation, Girls For Girls (G4G) Cameroon and Bringing Hearts Together (BHeT) who are also in need of support to continue to support the less privilege and the internally displaced who are also in dire need for support. But, how are the IDP's perceived and what social actions are put in place to improve on the living conditions of the displaced? The purpose of this paper is to provide an insight into this phenomenon of IDP's and an indebt analysis of the role that social actors play in the transformation of the living conditions of the displaced in Metropolitan towns in Cameroon.

II.   METHODOLOGY

In order to ascertain the degree of vulnerability and the perception of internally displaced persons, raw data for this paper was derived from secondary sources, that is books, articles, newspapers, magazines and reports. This was complimented with the qualitative research method comprising of interviews, life stories and observations. After defining the population of the study, a sample unit was selected with care and precision (Copi & Cohen, 2011) using the purposive snowball sampling technique as opposed to stratified and cluster sampling techniques (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The sample population targeted IDP's in Yaounde 6 Biyam-Assi

council, Yaounde 7 Nkolbisson council areas as well as those in Douala 4 Bonaberi council area and Douala 5 Bonamoussadi. The choice of site (Douala) was influence by its proximity to the restive South West region and Yaounde because of current statistics on the number of internally displaced persons in these areas (UNESCO, HCR, UNICEF, NRC, PLAN, 2023). Data was collected between the 30th August 2022 and the 26th Novembers 2022 from forty (40) internally displaced persons, forty (40) members of the host community and five (5) members of local organizations involved with issues related to the internally displaced persons.

III.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three principal articulations constitute the results of this research. That is, causes, perception and the role of social actors in the transformation of the living standards of the internally displaced persons and the host communities.

3.1 Brief causes of displacement of internally displaced persons in Cameroon

Cameroon like other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that have been in conflicts is faced with almost the same problems of displacement like other countries in the Sub region. The high unemployment rate, low wages, poor living conditions and political upheavals. But, the situation on the ground with the crisis in the North West and South West regions is so peculiar that has caused forced massive movements from the conflict zones to Yaounde and Douala. Also coupled with high expectation of opportunities in other regions of the globe East, North and South, the people especially the youth, men and women are oblige to move in their numbers exposing themselves to vulnerability challenges (Gibbi, 2017).

Apart of the socio-political crisis being responsible for the massive displacement of persons from the NW/SW, regions of Cameroon, the push and pull factors are not exonerated. The first of these drivers are the social media propagandas of the conflict scenarios, individual decisions, the wish of parents and peer group influence, poverty, famine engendered by low economic activities in the conflict area. Political intolerance, the controversial role of elites (Nyamnjoh & Roland, 1998) and poor access to the insufficient infrastructures accelerated the displacement of the population from the conflict areas. Though intervening variables occurred during these movements, their primordial motives were geared towards mobility to economic resources and

socio-demographic variables attracted the populations towards these metropolitan towns. This has also been historically inscribed as;

> *It seems probable that the first men were, in one sense, extremely mobile. Lacking weapons, they lived by collecting edible plants and hunting slow-moving animal. Making a living would thus involve constantly moving about [...], with no fireside to return to there would be little incentive for the nomadic hunters to return to the place where he spent the preceding night. He would probably continue his wandering indefinitely, guided only by his limited knowledge of where the food supply would be most abundant* (Eldridge and Associates, 1950: 299).

Like in the days of old, coupled with crisis, the affected population is constantly in search for these amenities that they think guided by their limited knowledge are found in these metropolitan towns like Yaounde and Douala. Much consideration has also been given to socio-geographical context of both the places NW/SW where they had been living and the places where they are going. (Muniz-Solai, 2010), considering how the push and the pull factors affect relationships between the two points. Anchored on the push, pull theory therefore, Lee (1966) conceived the push factors to occur at the point of origin (departure) and act to initiate displacement and pull factors to happen at the destinations (arrival) that encouraged people to the place.

3.2 The perception of IDP's by host communities in Cameroon.

According to Lawson et al., (2001), there are reasons why host communities perception to IDP's is important. They argue that IDP's may be a problem and hamper the growth and development of the community but this work realized that there is:

-The feeling of competition and rivalry between IDP's and host communities: These viewpoints have emanated principally because of the conflicts between the IDP's from the NW/SW and host communities over scarce resources. This scarcity has been triggered by other related crises in the country, Boko Haram insurgent, COVID-19 and the recent Russia –Ukraine crises. This has further strained the relationship and made the host communities to see IDP's as provocators of systematic

violence as they are no longer finding peace as their social and economic lives are threatened; their husbands and wives are no longer safe (Salihu, et al., 2022). The anarchical occupation of space by IDP's in Ndogbong les palmiers, Ndoghem and even in Bonamoussadi in Douala 5 municipality has raised disenchanting voices amongst members of the host communities. The exclusive economic rights are in the hands of the host communities. but with the influx of the displaced, there is competition over the occupation of this resources. An interview with an IDP Ezekiel A, who opened a provisional store in one of the quarters in Douala 4 Bonassama says that;

> *There are stores in the quarters, almost everywhere and constructed in calabout and they have not been touched for years but despite the reinforcement that I have given to own store, [...], we have decided to be [...] in the store to see their reactions* (Ezekiel, A., 02/10/2022, Douala)

The perception and impression the IDP's have here is that their hosts do not want them to grow economically and improve on their economic status whereas the real problem is with the scarce resources. This IDP's perception by the host communities again is real in the Mendong and Nkolbisson neighborhoods in Yaounde where the IDP's are systematically perceived as antagonistic, damaging in natures and uncooperative. This is because of the little cooperation from other social actors operating in the area (Adama, 2022) that needs assist and provide psychosocial help to the displaced. With the trajectories of the IDP's traced, coupled with multiple and frequent forced displacements to places in like Yaounde and Douala, it places unexpected burdens on the resources of the communities where the displaced persons and their host are struggling for survival. This increases vulnerability of the host communities, IDP's over scarce needs and resources making them competitors instead of cooperators.

This has stiffen coexistence between the IDP's igniting pessimistic views, making them see IDP's as strangers, as people to be neglected, rejected, destructive, adversaries, bad and hostile. This possibly because of the activities of the Non-State Armed Groups conflicting with the forces of law and order to produce some of these perceptions. No member of the host communities will be happy and ready to accommodate an IDP's if hypothetically he lost a member of their family in such crises. Salihu et al., 2022) add that this perception is

characterized by anxiety, depression, and stress among IDP's and host communities. Therefore, igniting a gloomy and pessimistic view of IDP's by host communities.

-Social innovation and the "Ubuntu" spirit exhibited by host communities

This social innovation and the hospitality of host communities towards IDP's is viewed as an optimistic perception of the host community on IDP's as it ties with the African proverb which holds that "treat your guest as guest for two days, then on the third day give him/her a hoe" to follow you to the farm. The instrument that recognizes the construction of this perception of IDP's by host communities is the preamble of the Kampala Convention, which reiterates "[…], the inherent African customs and traditions of hospitality by local host communities for persons in distress and support for such communities". The African man is born to socialize and this sociality is expressed in the ability to welcome strangers. The host community by virtue of their Africanity needs to be welcoming to their guest here named IDP's in their communities. This is the philosophy of Ubuntu. Nyerere's view of encouraging the spirit of togetherness, or what was later term villagization, where people were encouraged to leave their villages and settle in the newly created Ujama'a villages (Leander, 2004). This Ubuntu spirit is seen thanks to the host community's receptivity that IDP's have access to economic activities that will allow them autonomous and meet their daily needs. These IDP's have been cut-off from their usual support networks from friends, family members, marriages, exchanges where they obtain information necessary for them to obtain basic social services. The host communities in this wise are even viewed as "an informal instruments of humanitarian aid –de facto NGO's critical to saving lives, building resilience and providing essential services" (Davies, 2011: 34). These essential service are provided to the distress, the vulnerable IDP's in these metropolitan cities by some members of the host community.

Some of the displaced confirm this view themselves who feel safer with host communities and as they are directly integrated into the host communities than in camps. The possibly because of the beneficial effects they will get in receiving them and hence an optimistic social regard. Responding to the question of why the optimistic view of reception and perception of IDP's by host communities, the respondents reminded the researchers on the need for solidarity, kindness and generosity towards one another especially for people who were displaced because of the socio-political crisis. This view of the respondents almost ties with the vision and mission of the Kampala Convention. The second view of the respondent portrays the fact that the host community is receptive but with lots of reservations since apparently nothing goes for nothing.

The study partially concludes that, most of these IDP's who are perceived with optimism are women as women are perceived as a symbol a symbol of peace. Both males and females receive these women in their host. Either most of these female IDP's displaced have lost their husband in the conflict or their husbands are in the bushes or they are out there fetching for daily bread. The perception of the male IDP's by the host community is full with suspicion and adversary since in crisis period nobody seems to be trusted. This last view of optimistic perception of the female IDP's by males host community members is not exclusively for humanitarian reasons but also with the view of social and sexual ties. This optimistic view further exposes IDP's to vulnerability because they are obliged to succumb to adversary since life is very difficult in the cities where they find themselves.

3.3. Understanding the perception of host communities by internally displaced persons

-Sociality versus anti-sociality of the host communities

Man is a social and political animal who cannot live in isolation. He lives and interacts with other members of the community in particular and the society as a whole (Broom et al., 1981). Some IDP's see their host as anti-social, unfriendly, uncommunicative, not sociable, and egoistic. Their sociality described as make belief sociability. Though they are willing but able to associate in normal and friendly ways like other peoples, Merteins et al., (2015) think that in the context of insecurity and resources scarcity, an analysis of the relationship between IDP's and host communities is important and that the relationship is supposed to be tacitly reserved. This social network and interaction pattern permits an understanding of social connections and behaviors related to the conflict that placed them in such a dilemma of socialization. The analysis of some of the actors in the host community and their connection and interaction patterns with the vulnerable can go unnoticed. This needs a vibrant State-Civil-Society consortium (Forje, 1999). There are as well individual

drivers that make them anti-social, difficult to adapt with the IDP's, coping with the way of life of IDP's and difficult to respond to the environment with IDP's. Some of these drivers that make them anti-social are lack of communicable spirit, conflict further existing between the two entities engaged in the struggle over values and claims of status, power, and resources in which the aims of the opponent are to neutralize, injure or make the rival feel uncomfortable over possession. This attitude has been thought to arise from opposing interest involving resources, behavior, divergence and frustrations occurring in a mixed motive relationship where persons have both competitive and cooperative linkages. This anti-social behavior is the belief in the sense of rejection expressed by the IDP's may be as a result of other constraints in the host community. This is intensified by the extra-pressure brought by IDP's and may go along run resulting animosity and possible tension between the two entities. The research also pointed that the region and area to which the IDP hails from matters. The members of the host community in Mendong and Simbock in Yaounde think that the IDP's from the SW region are trustworthy and could easily be associated with as opposed to those from the NW. Though, subjective, this perception index of IDP's by the host as well passes the message of sociality, security and protection to the IDP's. On the other hand, what could ignite the discriminatory perception of IDP's from the regions? Seemingly, the impression some of the members of the host community have is that permits this view is that the South West region is relatively calm, untroubled and could easily be associated with as opposed to the North West. This is however their perception that could be subjective in meaning and needs further insight.

-A deceptive social perception: In a community where people practice reciprocity, that is exchange of things with each other for mutual benefits especially privileges granted, other are tempted to work, be hard working while other are resentfully lazy and uncompromising. The energy and support could be generalized in the sense that they give without expecting a specific outcome while others think that it should be an equal give-and- take (Ajaga, 2004). Some practice negative reciprocity where there is unequal giving and taking. In this perspective, the regard on both parties is different and perceived differently. The internally displaced persons from the socio-political crisis in the NW/SW and their host communities have had to experience these

social regards. The researchers further sought to find out clearly how IDP's see their "host", "they are disinclined to work", is an indicator that appeared frequently in their vocabulary. The concept "son" or "daughters" of the soil is a riding principle that guides this unwillingness to work. The vulnerable are overwhelmed to use any of their reserved energy despite the fact that the host communities have the necessary resources in the form of land, they do not want to use their energy to exploit them. The hosts are characterized by diminishing level of energy, activity and motivation to work but the settlers and the IDP's are ready to work for a living and do anything that can generate them income. Some IDP's think of this indolent attitude, slothfulness and laziness attitude of their host because they [IDP's] are coming to take the few and remaining opportunities available in host communities.

-**Mutual suspicious and conflictual relationships**

Now, in Yaounde and Douala, the activities that led to the displacement of the population had build an atmosphere of fright, hatefulness, malevolent and malign in the minds of the host communities as well as in the minds of the displaced. It very reciprocal here, just as the host population felt suspicious on the presence of IDP's in their communities, on the other hand the IDP's are also suspicious of their host (Tindo, 2021). In 2021, in the city of Yaounde, there had been local explosion around Biyam- Assi and Obili neighborhood; in June and July 2022 alone, two explosions occurred at Mokolo market causing panic, fear, material damages but no loss of lives. This instill an atmosphere of terror in the minds of the local community and internally displaced persons living and working around these vicinities making both parties to be perceived as endangered. In the Moungo Division of the Littoral region notably in Loum, Manjo, Melong, Njombe Penjia that host a number of internally displaced persons from the socio-political crisis in the NW/SW regions, these conflictual relationships had been pronounced. This is because of their proximity to these two regions, there had been repeated human acts of violence perpetrated to continue to sow seeds of discord, fear, antagonism and an atmosphere of terror in the minds of the two entities. This has even pushed some of these IDP's to be moved for the second and third time. With these human act perpetrated regularly nobody seems to be trusted (Tindo, 2021). With this there is skepticism, doubts and uncertainty in the minds of the population as the local community is skeptical about the

IDP's in their community, the IDP's are skeptical about their host and people around them.

With this mutual suspicion, feeling of cruelty, malignant, malicious and fears of being vindictive are in stilled in the minds of the IDP's who perceive their host solidly in that perspective though it could be perceptual illusions. The fears of host tending to hold and nurse grudges and "get back to you" phenomenon's when they feel you are wrong or have wronged them in some way could be very high amongst these IDP's and their host. These malicious intentions evoke here might lead to vengeance that is of paying evil for evil and consequently a cyclical process of violence. This respondent further adds that;

> *"[…], when I was looking for a house to rent in Douala, the question I received constantly was: how many of you will be living in this house? Worse still, my language made them to know where I came from […]"*
> *(Emmanuel, T., 16/10/2022, Douala)*

This constant question, he further analyzed reminded him of the fact that IDP's are seen as problem seekers. One person might show-up but at the end many will living in the house and could be a problem to the host, he insinuated. This atmosphere renders this mutual suspicion perception. Reciprocal because it questions the nature of homo sapiens, who are complex creatures with different ideologies, thought processes and perspectives, which are very much unpredictable. This is a real dilemma to be handled by the IDP's and the host communities necessitating politico-institutionalized response.

-A friendly relational relationship:

In a new environment, one is foreign, unfamiliar, scary and at times even exciting if a friendly relational relationship has not been constructed with people within that community. This is not different with the IDP's and their communities in Cameroon as a friendly relational relationship must be established for a convivial environment to prevail. The continuous influx of IDP's in a community should also raise issues of concern to their host community in terms of friendly perceptions when it comes to interaction. It is true that it takes time to built a friendly relationship in a new community based on truth and trust but this relationship is necessary for the growth and development of the community and that of the displaced. That perception of truth and trust could probably be lacking. This friendly relationship offers a stimulating environment, conducive

environment and a second home to the internally displaced and at such it will take them little time to acclimatize to the surrounding and develop strong friendly relationships. (Axner, 1993). This bond built between the host and the IDP's gives a stable connection between them, fosters durable and lasting relationship that can be of help even when the crises are over and people choose to come back to their places of origin. A so tied friendly relationship does not also come without a prize and the risks of depending too much on friendly relationship are enormous (Takasaki, 2017). Responding to the question: how do you perceive and classify the relationship between you and your host? And, how has the relationship been going on? Only a few IDP's think and believe in making a stable friendly relationship. The notions of friends and families become more pronounced in their perception of relationships. While in a new environment, many variables might hinder the construction that makes it difficult to make new friends and new families in host communities. But, in most cultures "family" or "friends" are not only defined by the people they live with but extended family and friends. Bonding with cohorts and other IDP's as friends is important just as the host communities bonding with other host members is also very important but dangerous because they run the risk of overdependence, that kills innovation and creativity. Befriending local is as well dangerous because it can lead to perceptions, avenues of gossips, slander, malicious intentions, backbiting and a terrain for consultation. Bonding strengthens friendship, respect and care for each other. More families around to help with chores, childcare in cases of emergencies and social support (Aquilino, 2006). One nice thing about this cordiality is how closed they can be and how they give each other a lot of support. This does not mean that all perceptions of friendly relationship with the host and being together are always easy. There can be perception of differences in opinions and some people might live that way because they are obligated to, not because they want to.

-A perception of neutrality: The social regards of neutral relationship between the IDP's and the host community is mostly due to security reasons (Kamta, Frederic, & Scheffran, 2021). Many of these IDP's contact with the host but superficially as they shy away and prefer to be neutral for their safety and security as there exist mutual suspicion. Members of the host community were asked to classify the relationship with IDP's in their municipality. Some admitted of being in contact and

having encountered with them in one way or the other but at distance level. Only a few (between 0 and 10%) admitted cordial relationship and the rest neutral. They think they need to forge ahead, to be stronger after having seen the worst. More collaboration with the host and the host being more collaborative with the IDP's could be dangerous but being connected to social actors appears to be an imperative (Syprose, Ashebir, Carolina, & Alberto, 2014). Both need the services of the service providers called humanitarian actors and taking sides could be risky as scary..

3.4 The role of social actors in the improvement of living conditions of the vulnerable IDP's.

Three key components will characterize this role: Local responses from the municipalities, the logic of NGO in these localities and gender considerations.

-Local responses in favor of the vulnerable IDP's and host community in Yaounde 7

According to Wagley & Harris (1958), a minority group is distinguished amongst other characteristics by unequal treatment and less power over their lives. The vulnerable in the localities of the Yaounde council areas have been of concerned as there is unequal treatment amongst them. The Yaounde 7 council has adopted a marshal plan to regularly assist the affected population of the recurrence of floods in the area though the council building itself has been in several occasions affected by these floods destroying valuables of the council. The presence of the International Institute For Agriculture (IRAD) an arm of the University of Dschang in the council area has attracted and accelerated the displacement of people in to the council area amongst whom are IDP's from the NW/SW regions. There is also the International Institute For Tropical Agriculture (IITA). The category of IDP's attracted to these areas are those farmers and agriculturalist whose principal activities were farming and attracted to the vast lands of IRAD and IITA. With available land, IRAD has remained silent to the cultivations of some of its terrain by the local population especially IDP's. This has been facilitated by the dual labor market theory developed by Michael J. Piore in 1979. To him, the labor market is divided into two categories: primary and secondary sectors (Sagynbekova, 2016). The occupant of the primary sector is largely dominated by natives characterized by satisfactory working conditions, high wages, fringe benefits and employment opportunities whereas that of the secondary sector is dominated by the vulnerable

IDP's where by the benefits are minimal or non-existent and less desirable work conditions. Because of these some of the IDP's and their children have been able to be taken care of by IRAD by providing them and the local population to access to portable water sources that is a veritable problem to the local population. This little assistance accorded the IDP's is visible from the number of IDP children who came to fetch water in the morning and the afternoons. It is also clearly visible during the fruits season where by many of these parents and their children go to beg to harvest mangoes and quavers that are in abundance in IRAD and its neighborhood. Most of these assistance keep IDP parents and children from causing atrocities around. These institutions are indirectly institutionalizing systematic violence and anarchical occupation of space for the benefit of the vulnerable.

-Inclusive identification, treatment and management of IDP's in Yaounde 6:

The high point on the understanding of the treatment and assistance of IDP's in this council area is at the National Center for the Rehabilitation of Handicaps at Etoug-Ebe. The role of this institution is very clear with regard to the perception of the vulnerable. Transformed by the state of Cameroon under the name National Rehabilitation Center For People with Disabilities as a specialized Agency of the Ministry of Social Affairs, since 2009, degree No 2009/096 of 16 March assigned the center with new task extended to the overall management of all types of disabilities. This Center had been preoccupied in the rehabilitation of these vulnerable segments and since 2016 with the crisis in the NW/SW, it has received and are treating IDP's handicaps. In order to effectively accomplish it multi-functions with the vulnerable segment of the population and most especially the IDP's who are massively knocking at their doors for services, the center has been embarking on sensitization campaigns for the IDP's to continue to came for consultations. Educational talks on the incapacitating illnesses as a result of prolong displacements and the production of resources for IDP handicap amongst whom are the physically challenged, the deaf and the visually impaired. This, in the view of fulfilling its mission, which was the provision of basic, services to all category of persons with disability and contributing to the implementation of governments policy. This policy directed towards the provision of holistic care to the IDP's with disabilities as enshrined in their accord, rehabilitations, social reinsertions of

persons with disabilities and their families. As of now the National Rehabilitation Center For People with Disabilities (CNRPH) has confirmed that disability is not inability and vulnerability of the displaced is not permanent and to them "it shall not be permanent", a partial conclusion drawn in this paper. For, even the handicaps, the IDP with disabilities, their "situation" is hypothetical and "situational". All these are an indication that the CNRPH in this council area has been accommodating, taking care, treating and managing the vulnerable population of IDP's with disabilities who had hither to been perceived as marginalized and people to be discriminated upon.

-Accommodation and rehabilitation of space for the vulnerable IDP's in Douala Cameroon:

With little planed urbanization program, some of these inhabitant in this council area live in swampy quarters like Mabanda, "Quartier Bilingue" and "Grand Hangar" habited by IDP's pulled by cheap lands and affordable rents (Salifou, 2020). They have the high possibility of being displaced twice during the rainy season. *The Post News* Paper reported that Thousands of people including Anglophones IDP's in Mabanda Douala, Bonaberi have been affected by the demolition of over 10,000 houses to expand Douala port, uncompensated (The Post News paper, No 2263 of Monday, April 18, 2022: 06). This illustrates that many Anglophone IDP's will be displaced for the second time or even third time because of this demolition. Most of these displaced persons are internally displaced who are about to start a new life but are not given fair treatment. This is again an indication that the internally displaced are not treated on the same platform and a call for focus on their plight. Though, in an interview with the first deputy mayor of Douala 4 on the subject under, scrutiny and the treatment of IDP's, he attests,

> *We do not only treat IDP's well but we also hold constant meetings, exchanges with the youth of Douala 4. The recent one we had with them was on "the promotion of social cohesion and living together: What challenges in a cosmopolitan environment". This one was done in collaboration with the Non-governmental Organization called "Un Monde Avenir"* (Tanko, A., 04/10/2022, Douala)

These exchanges organized by the local council authorities are geared towards sensitizing the youth and the other vulnerable segment of the population living in this cosmopolitan area to denounce certain societal ills. Some of these ills include hate speech, ethnic discrepancies precipitated by massive displacement of people. They are also geared towards denouncing acts that violet the principles of morality, violence, corruption, cynism, debauchery, deprivation of minors, deviants, immoral behavior, wantonness, lack of prudence and indecency. Hence, refocusing the minds of the youth to meets with contemporary necessities to reflect on immorality on all its forms. Again, to refocus the reflection on man, to permit rationality to be above all sensibilities, in order to assure the respect of the human person and common goods, the love of peace in an environment where morality has been seriously threatened by followers of chaos. This, the authorities feel that the youth, the vulnerable and IDP's from the North West and South West regions of Cameroon have been losing hopes in state institutions and even in the local councils but there are hopes as they are partnering with Non-governmental Organizations like "Un Monde Avenir". During these regular exchanges, in the presence of other civil society activists, independent researchers, student researchers, leaders of associations, the NGO's used this opportunity to talk to the vulnerable on damages of drugs, the rise of prostitution, hate speech, identity crisis especially with the influx of IDP's in the municipality. These ills threaten the foundation of social cohesion and living together in a cosmopolitan environment and these talks are accompanied with both material and immaterial assistance.

-Gender perception of IDP's and the social regard of NGO's on the vulnerable in Cameroon

The perception of female IDP's in this study is herald by NGO's operating in the domain of the displaced and the vulnerable. They play a primordial role in the treatment, aid and assistance accorded to the displaced girls and women. One of such NGO's with technical assistance from the Diaspora is Bringing Hearts Together (BHeT). This NGO as the name implies is located in the Douala 4 municipality with special interest on the vulnerable and internally displaced children, girls and women. The perception established is that they are a weaker sex, more vulnerable and at such mostly free women who need assistance, care and protection. This organization has as mission to fight against all forms of vulnerability, corruption, stigmatization, marginalization, and discrimination on women and the girl children especially those in displacement. Women

and girl children are most vulnerable during crisis period by their nature and gender differentiation (Tamekem, 2020). The natural challenge and perception to them during crisis period is that they are dirty because they menstruate. Menstruation is a natural and healthy process for girls and women of reproductive age. With this natural process, Bringing Hearts Together men and women think that during this crisis period, they need to help the IDP's girls and women pass through this process hitch free. Worse because of the negative perception on them. During menstruation, some of the IDP girls and women are stigmatized because of the poor and miserable housing condition and living conditions and are not allowed into certain gatherings or to carry out certain activities because they are considered unclean. In reality, most of these IDP children and women are unclean physically because of their poverty situation. The worse of it is the fact that most of these IDP girls and women cannot afford hygiene resource ladies' pads. Some of these young IDP girls are forced to sleep with men so as to have money to purchase these basic sanitary pads (Ferris, 2008). This put their lives and that of their families at risk of infection of sexually transmissible infections (STD), and other diseases. To Bringing Hearts Together, it is an opportunity for them as the name implies to reach the IDP's in Douala 4 and talk to them on health. Especially on their biological processes, so that while in forced displacement they can be perceived as clean and can menstruate without feeling fear or a shame and without being treated like less or exposed to more vulnerability. It is also an opportunities to BHeT to aid, assist these IDP's with some of these basic hygiene products as a way of contribution towards the rehabilitation of these IDP's and human development.

Closely linked to BHeT with almost the same intervention programs is Girls For Girls (G4G) Cameroon another NGO situated in the Douala 5 municipality preoccupied with issues of gender and deconstruction of the negative perception that the society has for the internally displaced persons, girls at maturity in schools, hospitals, home and churches. Knowing very well where these IDP girls came from, and disregard on the women in host communities, the coordinator of G4G Kinte, L says that they focus their activities first on the sensitization of these vulnerable segments of the population. They have decided to embrace diversity and decided to support one another in the fullest extent possible irrespective of their sex, colors, ideas, differences, backgrounds, social and economic positions but with focus on the females. Most of their talks are firstly, on peace, for a talk on peace is a talk on tolerance, justice, equity and acceptability. They think that if the concept of peace must be applicable, effective and a reality, we need to start talking about it with the little generations, with women who have been openly rejected for they constitute the peaceful future generation that humanity dreams of. We need to let the IDP girls, women perceived negatively by the host communities to understand that peace enriches our communities and individual lives as it directs us to embrace diversity and support one another to the fullest extent possible. The organization G4G have decided to preach the culture of no to racism, no to tribalism, which are negative perception indicators on the women and a yes to tolerance, yes to peace, yes to justice, community building, changing the world, changing narratives, changing lives, hence building a safe nation. Most of the talks are geared towards deconstruction of this negative perception and emphasis on peace, justice, equity and then training and empowering them on life skill activities through workshops. There are other substantial challenges that these IDP girls and women are facing ranging from low-income setting as accessibility, availability and affordability of basic products to the young girls and IDP's women is a challenge (Solheim, 2005). Some of them are therefore empowered with lifetime skills in the production of liquid soap, vinegar, javal water, soya beans that will enable them became financially independent. Some are supported with products as capital to help them start-up businesses in their area of activity and hence putting a smile on the faces of their children and other displaced in an area.

This made them never to feel marginalize, never to feel inferior or be oppressed in life for their situation is just "situational". The situation they say is just temporary for the belief that "God is still watching at his children" is real. The slogan ties with the vision and mission of these organizations of "50 for 50" meaning that "better life for the needy" For, they cannot be living better lives whereas the needy are still in need. Hence, a truism in the philosophy of Julius Nyerere when he opium in his Ubuntu that "I am because we are"(Nyerere, 1976: 66). This is further translated in the expression "a person is a person because of a person" (Nyerere, op. cit., p. 66) for one fundamental goal in Africa is to obtain Ubuntu, that is to develop humanness or to live a genuinely human way of life.

IV.   CONCLUSION

Although, the concept of "internally displaced persons" is relatively recent and pronounced in Cameroon, it has been used at the micro-perspective in the past to refer to simple migration or displacement of population for socio-cultural, economic and political reason. Today, its perception and usage is different with persistent conflicts being at the helm of internal displacement. The plight of these internally displaced persons appears to be partially neglected been analyzed with the realization of emphasis on the plight of refugees whereas it is the same causes that pushed them to be displaced. The multidimensional perceptions, neglect and little literature that makes it not easy to ascertain the number, location and the perceptual differences between normal migrant and IDP's in displacement in Cameroon preoccupied some of the problems of the displaced. This partial accorded to the internally displaced in Cameroon is also principally because of several institutional, political and other obstacles including the absence of camps to host them that pushed some to squat, settle with family member, with other IDP's, in schools, hospitals and in churches. The hub and epicenter of the perceptual differences for IDP's in Cameroon appears to be Yaounde 6 and 7 municipalities as many have sought refuge there. The ramification of the conflicts have been enormous to the populations in the Douala where many have also sought refuge in Douala 4 Bonaberi and in Douala 5 Bonamoussadi that harbors a majority of IDP's

There has been a lack of social cohesion between the IDP's and the host communities due to lack of job opportunities for the many IDP's to occupy themselves and improvement in their living conditions. Many have resorted to diverse activities for survival that exposed them to more risk, vulnerability and warrants the perceptions discussed in this paper. But, these perceptions are reciprocal between the IDP's and the host communities because in conflict periods, nobody seems to be trusted for there is mutual suspicion between them. Hence, increasing their vulnerability coupled with the mismatch and treatment of these IDP's, host communities by social actors notably NGO's with their logic of actions. There is need of empowering the IDP's and the host communities on the necessity to be in solidarity with each other, live in peace for peace is a "conditio sine quo non" for development. The councils and its partners have been attempting to accompany these IDP's and host communities in Cameroon to accompany these goals and in their activities. They are also geared towards providing IDP's and host communities with training and entrepreneurial skills as they are empowered to be financially autonomous. All the challenges, multidimensional perceptions have instead made them to be very strong. Their vulnerability is only situational for "in every dark cloud there is a silver lining".

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