

MINISTRY OF TERRITORIAL ADMINISTRATION AND DECENTRALIZATION

DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL PROTECTION

Cameroon Civil Protection Report, 2008/2009

Civil defence through life-saving actions

With assistance from:

- United Nations Development Programme, UNDP
- United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF
- Cooperation and Cultural Action Service, French Embassy SCAC
- National Hydrocarbons Company, SNH
- Local Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance, FEICOM
- National Civil Engineering Laboratory, LABOGENIE

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Theme: *Civil defence through life - saving actions*

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This book is the sixth edition of a yearly publication on civil protection in Cameroon. All events reported cover the period between 1 December 2007 and 30 November 2008. Some of the views herein expressed do not necessarily reflect the position of the Government or its partner institutions, especially contributions from journalists and various researchers.

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FOREWORD

Since the 18 January 1996 reform, the government of Cameroon has focused much attention on decentralization. This issue features permanently in political discussion forums, thereby expressing the desire of all and sundry to see public administration in Cameroon chart a new course. Faithful to their commitments, the authorities have embarked on providing appropriate solutions for the general interest. By signing Decree No. 2008/378 on the administrative organization of Cameroon on 12 November 2008, and Decree No. 2008/377 of 12 November 2008 stating the responsibilities of heads of administrative units and that relating to the organization and functioning of their services, the Head of State, H.E Paul Biya sought to speed up the implementation of the decentralization process in the country. These measures by the President of the Republic place civil protection at the centre of the responsibilities of regional and divisional authorities and are peculiar in the sense that they underscore the option taken by public authorities: providing an appropriate response to the multiplicity of accidents and disasters in the country.

The visionary nature of the decrees cited above is in line with the President's intention as stated in Decree No. 2004/320 of 08 December 2004 to organize the Government, in which civil protection had already been identified as the second of three priority areas of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINATD).

The year 2008 once more showed the important place civil protection is increasingly occupying in government policy in Cameroon.

Pertaining to crisis response, public authorities were greatly mobilised to efficiently handle the influx of Chadian refugees to Kousséri, and cope with the serious floods that hit Yaounde and Garoua.

At the level of international cooperation and planning, three aspects of a wide spectrum crowned the efforts of the State in the Civil Protection sector, namely:

- The signing between MINATD and UNDP of a convention to finance the National Programme for the Protection and Rehabilitation of Lake Nyos, amounting to about CFA 24 billion;
- The implementation of Risk Prevention Schemes in the Mount Cameroon and Lake Monoun regions within the framework of the GRINP project (Management of Natural Risks and Civil Protection), agreement signed with France;
- The decision of the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) to set up a Regional Centre for Civil Protection in Cameroon.

• At the level of dissemination, the introduction of courses on civil protection in the university of Yaounde II, coupled with conferences in various higher institutions, took a different turn with capacity building lessons in the management of crises intended for administrative authorities of the three northern regions of the country, in partnership with UNICEF, and the participation of MINATD through the Department of Civil Protection in the International Business Forum (Promote) which took place from 5 to 14 December 2008 in Yaounde.

It afforded an ideal opportunity to sensitize citizens to the risks they are exposed to on a daily basis and establish contacts with enterprises, institutions or organizations wishing to support the civil protection sector in its efforts to reduce risks and disasters.

As for the rest, following the need to reduce the risks and disasters, the theme of the Cameroon Civil Protection Report, 2008, 'Civil Protection through Life-Saving Actions', does not only show Civil Protection as the assisting arm of the State through the several public institutions involved daily in this sector, but is equally a clarion call for each and everyone to actively participate in this venture where the citizen constitutes the pivot in the relief chain outside specialized institutions.

**MARAFI HAMIDOU YaYa,
Minister of State, Minister of
Territorial Administration and
Decentralization**

PREFACE

Despite several actions aimed at sensitizing the population on preventive measures, many Cameroonian families are still stricken by the death of their relatives due to disasters. A good number of these deaths could have been avoided if techniques to efficiently respond to dangerous situations with a view to reducing the consequences and ensuring the survival of persons through emergency first aid actions were properly applied. The theme of the Cameroon Civil Protection Report 2008, 'Civil Protection through Life-Saving Actions' reminds us that first aid remains the primordial link in the rescue chain before the of intervention specialized emergency services.

This civil protection report acknowledges that first aid techniques can be applied in several areas. Specifically, they could refer to all first aid and emergency medical assistance techniques administered to the wounded or the sick by someone who is not necessarily a medical doctor when a person's life is in danger due to an accident, an illness or a breakdown of the system, such as a malaise. First aid techniques also include techniques for the rescue or evacuation of people in danger. A special study has been devoted to this sensitive issue, in a bid to fully understand it in Cameroon.

The Cameroon civil protection report for 00 , does not deviate from the option adopted two years ago which consists in carrying out an in-depth study using a methodology which integrates qualitative and quantitative techniques. Here researchers have facilitated the understanding of first aid actions by listing a number of indicators to disseminate this notion among the population. As a modality of this dissemination, they bring to light estimates on the perception and knowledge of such actions. The history of first aid actions in Cameroon is not left out as it indicates that solidarity which is part and parcel of African societies can be an avenue for the optimization of the dissemination of such actions.

A section is also devoted to specialists, because, even though the population may often be inclined to taking life-saving actions, they need to master the art. It is perhaps for this reason that there is a contribution by an expert of the Fire Brigade who, through the use of simplified diagrams and useful reminders on the human anatomy, underscores the urgent need to master the basics of first aid action for the rescue of victims faced with death. The lesson is made more explicit through box diagrams which constitute a collection of actions to be carried out in case of specific and more recurrent situations.

The 2008 edition of the Cameroon Civil Protection Report is equally in line with the columns already known to readers:

- An inventory of the major disasters that occurred in 2008. This annual report situates Cameroon under the constant threat of climatic, technological, sociological and transport-related disasters.

- An analysis of government's civil protection policy.

The difference and innovation as compared to previous editions is the bilingual nature of the 2008 edition, which takes into consideration the increasing and urgent need to conform with the sociolinguistic composition of Cameroon, as well as the reality of the international environment marked by the steady rise of the English Language.

***Dr Jean Pierre NANA,
Director of Civil Protection***

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Part one:
Inventory of disasters in Cameroon for the year 2008

Chapter 1

Devastating floods 1

Introduction

“Every year?;” This worry expressed by a desperate flood victim in the north of Cameroon is telling of the spate of climate-related disasters in the country. Every year during the same period, in the rainy season and virtually in the same areas, residents face hard times with considerable and unusual amounts of water that flood their dwelling areas, wreaking havoc and causing much distress. Beyond emotions, an objective analysis of the phenomenon clearly reveals that a combination of climatic, geomorphic and principally demographic factors have exposed some regions of our country to recurrent flood disasters. In the course of the year 2008, Yaounde made news once more with its disasters when the Nkolbisson neighbourhood in particular was seriously hit in April by floods which caused severe material damage. As usual, the northern part of Cameroon was not spared either; its population equally suffered from the raging floods.

This chapter aims specifically at analysing the events as they occurred, within the framework of civil protection. The issue here is to examine the causes of the disasters. In concrete terms, this report is cause-oriented. The triggering factors as well as the combination of the exact natural and human elements that turned simple rains into floods are going to be investigated upon. In this light, the incidental effects of the event shall be briefly determined. Hazards and vulnerability shall thus be juxtaposed to better analyze the disaster (I). However, beyond the disaster *per se*, disaster management measures should be considered. Thus, some light shall be shed on government policies in the management of disasters (II).

Author: Joseph Keutcheu

I. Disasters as a combination of hazards and vulnerability

Reports on this year’s climate-related disasters point out that they were once more caused by the combination of hazards and local vulnerability. Hazard here is referred to as the probability for the occurrence of a natural phenomenon which is potentially dangerous and likely to cause damage to human lives and property. In this case, it is the probability for the occurrence of very heavy rains. Situations of vulnerability relate to people, property and the environment exposed to various threats. Whether in Yaounde or in the northern part of Cameroon, the hazard/vulnerability combination played a triggering role in the disaster.

1. The damage of the Nkolbisson floods in Yaounde

In the morning of 4 April 2008, from 10:30 am to 2 pm, a torrential rain poured on Yaounde, the capital city. Observers expected the flood-prone areas of the city to be at the mercy of heavy rains. But, nothing happened, thanks to the City Council sewage cleaning works. Sewer-cleaning operations undertaken down town helped to avoid the usual floods. Yet, the Nkolbisson neighbourhood was severely hit by the torrents of rain. At Ekorezock and Nkoumassi precisely, residents suffered a disaster that resulted in severe human and material damage.

§: *Human toll*

- 235 families aggrieved;
- 1277 victims;
- 400 displaced;
- 02 dead

§ *Material damage:*

- 150 houses over flooded;
- 50 houses damaged;
- 10 houses wrecked.

The Nkolbisson area is, therefore, a case-study for civil protection issues; a neighbourhood where the convergence between hazard (heavy rains leading to floods) and vulnerability (overpopulated slum) is clearly obvious. Here, the crammed up nature of this area denotes a major sociolocal trend. A retrospective analysis of the Mefou and Afeme riverbeds occupation reveals that this process has risen exponentially between 1990 and 2008. They are areas with high flood hazards. Furthermore, the wrong sizing of a new pipe during the levelling works on the Nkolbisson intersection has amplified these hazards.

The probability of the occurrence of disasters was heightened by a circumstantial element, that is, a bridge construction worksite on the Afan Oyo road, in the outskirts of Yaounde. In fact, in order to carry out construction works, a dam was built on River Mefou to hold its water back. As expected, the dam effectively kept water from flowing normally, thus causing a backflow towards the upstream, which finally led to floods after the rains we mentioned earlier.

2. Fear of collateral damage as the northern part of the country is hit

In July 2008, torrential rains and floods hit the northern part of Cameroon. Garoua was seriously affected with 27 neighbourhoods afflicted and 9 people reported dead amid significant material damages. The Muskuari dam on the Garoua Bridge was completely submerged, while in Kokoumi- Dargala, Pitoa, Padang, Bamé, Pabla, Djamboutou, Taïpée, etc., harvested maize and sorghum were damaged, houses destroyed, causing people to move to far-off villages beyond the river. Roads and bridges were destroyed and the town was cut off from the rest of the country. 5,000 households were aggrieved.

Besides, these floods raised concerns in the health and agribusiness sectors. In fact, without exaggerating, it appears that these floods have exposed the area to serious incidental crisis. From a purely sanitary perspective, they have caused a shortage in drinkable water and exposed the population to respiratory infections, malaria, and diarrhetic diseases like cholera. As concerns food and agriculture, 80 percent of the cultivated lands in Garoua and around were destroyed along with their crops. There are fears that in the region will experience severe food crisis with famine.

How can it be explained that the disaster ravaged just Garoua and its environs?

In fact, the climatic and morpho-hydraulic characteristics of the Benoué Basin favour such floods. The main bed of River Benoué is a large flood area made up of lateral basins above Garoua, with a narrower section between Garoua and Malape, followed by another flood plain at the confluence with River Faro. The average slope downstream towards Lagdo is not steep enough, and so water meanders out of the river into vast unstable sandy beaches. The even soil topography is partly to blame for huge clay-dominated deposits (Muller and Gavaut, 1996). Relatively heavy rains may thus occasion floods.

It is also worth noting that Garoua has a sharply contrasting two-season climate: a longer dry season (November to May) and a shorter rainy season that lasts from May to October (Olivry, 1986).

Besides, escalations are most often observed either in one season or the other, significantly impacting the flow of water into the Benoue. As a matter of fact, it rained abnormally in 2008 (nearly 1,350mm). Cracks then appeared on the Muskuari dams, as well as marks of inward erosion on the main dam downstream face, while other facilities were destroyed (roads and houses mainly).

II. Implementing public policies on flood prevention and management

1. Reaction of Government and its partners

As usual, public authorities and their national and international partners immediately dispatched relief assistance to victims in the disaster areas, be it in Yaounde or in Garoua. Their first action consisted in comforting and giving the victims psychological assistance. In this regard, the President of the Republic expressed his sympathy to the Nkolbisson victims. A government delegation led by the Prime Minister also visited the disaster area to sympathise with the aggrieved families. Public Authorities gave the Garoua victims just the same psychological comfort.

The authorities did not, however, limit themselves to mere compassion expressed to the afflicted population. In this regard, the Department of Civil Protection in the Ministry of Territorial Administration alongside the National Fire Brigade dispatched vigilance teams on the field, just as did the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Women's Affairs to bring relief to the Nkolbisson victims. These visits enabled them to:

(DPC/MINADT, 'Report on the Nkolbisson disaster at Ekorezok', Yaoundé, MINADT, April 2008)

- evacuate and treat some victims at the Yaounde Central Hospital;
- accommodate displaced people at the Tsinga Family and Gender Welfare Centre;
- provide food and drug supplies to displaced families;

The Chantal Biya Foundation also took active part in the relief operation by providing more assistance to Nkolbisson flood victims, mainly basic needs and food.

Besides, the National Disaster Prevention and Management Programme (NPDP) held an emergency joint meeting with the UN humanitarian services in a bid to step up assistance to the Nkolbisson victims. Once more, the UN services proved very eager to help. As concerns the Nkolbisson victims, they received a cash donation from UNICEF through DPC, as well as drugs from the WHO via the Ministry of Public Health..

The UN partnership was also effectively operational during the Garoua crisis. Volunteers of the Cameroon Red Cross distributed blankets, buckets, tents, and mats to the most afflicted families who also received hygienic material, treated mosquito nets, and chemicals to disinfect water. These volunteers also sensitized people to the need for clean water and hygiene to stave off epidemics.

Moreover, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Federation has just launched an emergency request for CH 438,118 in relief and to flood victims in Garoua and Chad. For immediate operations, the federation has already disbursed CH 46,402 from its emergency fund (DREF).

However, to consider government action only through what is done to cope with disasters would actually present a fragmented view of the situation. It would be, therefore, also necessary to look at preventive actions.

3 ibid

4 Ibid.

Refer to 'Red Cross Assistance to Flood Victims in Cameroon and Chad', 9 September 00 [online], at www.ifrc.org, reference of 4/ / 00

This is reminder that while Garoua was invaded by floods, some areas in neighbouring Chad were living the same nightmare with almost similar damages.

7 DPC/ MINATD, op. cit.

2. *Placing flood prevention high on the institutional agenda*

In public policies analysis, an agenda means *'the platform of issues that require public debate or the decision of legitimate political authorities'* 8. The issue here is to consider the inclusion of flood prevention into the agenda as part of efforts made by public authorities. In effect, our intention is to highlight the fact that public authorities view the issue in its proper perspective, especially in the Yaounde and Douala City Councils, which of course opens up the possibility for a sustained improvement in this regard. It has been observed that over the years, flood issues have grown to become a topic of political stakes. By political stake, we mean any issue at the heart of public debate because it has become a bone of contention between political stakeholders with opposed ideologies; an issue which has captured the attention of a significant number of political stakeholders who either seek to impose sponsor or take a stance vis-a-vis it 9 Given the human, social and economic consequences involved, this flood issue is gradually being considered as one of the prime concerns of the Douala and Yaounde city councils.

Suffice it to note here that municipal authorities readily used floods that had occurred in these towns in previous years as 'political springboards'. These floods exposed the hollowness of popular statements like *'making ends meet'*, *'we have no other choice'*, *'where do you want us to settle then?'* which sought to justify why houses were built in areas unsuitable for development, on drains. The political springboard is in part the consequence of a sudden change in public opinion as people increasingly understand the relation between unplanned housing and disasters. The 'political springboard' results above all from the government commitment to address the matter and go beyond emotions to handle civil protection issues. According to Keeler, 'political innovation can only succeed when various constraints that usually hinder government's action give room to a 'political springboard', thus leaving a free way for policy initiatives to be launched'. 10

The Douala urban centre comprises 'plateaus' and plains. A large number of residents settle just 'anywhere', even in swampy valleys (Tadonki, 1999). Some inhabitants are therefore exposed to various hazards related to the environment and human activity. Monsoon storms affect Douala most of the year. The same can be said of Yaounde where people in slummy areas, so much so that floods have become one of the most recurrent challenges of urban development just like in Douala. In order to prevent these recurrent floods, these city councils have carried out accommodation works on sewers and cleaned out main drainage beds. Besides, people were sensitized to the risks of dumping refuse into rivers, coupled with forceful slum clearance in potentially dangerous sites 11. The outcome of the operation is becoming obvious.

In the course of this year, as it seems, Douala has coped much easily with the floods, or, at least, has been less hit. In the city of Yaounde, floodprone areas like Poste Centrale were more or less spared by the usual floods.

Padioleau J., L'Etat au concret, Paris, PUF?

9 Garraud P., « Politique électro-nucléaire et mobilisation. La tentative de constitution d'un enjeu », Revue Française de Science Politique, vol. 9, n° 3, juin 1979, p. 449 ; Garraud P., « Politiques nationales : Élaboration de l'agenda », L'Année Sociologique, n° 40, 1990, p. .

0 Keeler J., Réformer. Les conditions du changement politique, Paris, PUF, 1993, p. 3. 7

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the flood prevention effort was supported by the media. Apart from broadcasting official press releases, they also joined in the public sensitization campaigns through their committed slogans. On this flood issue, media contribution was not just limited to releasing official policies in the making or activities on the ground. The media helped in denouncing the hazardous living conditions of the residents, which raised awareness on the existence of risky settlements. In 2008, the press thus got more involved as it collaborated with the authorities in addressing flood issues

Conclusion

Ultimately, the Nkolbisson and Garoua floods once more showed that a participatory approach is necessary for effective disaster prevention and management. This in effect is civil protection which involves both 'the summit' and the 'base'. At the summit, it encompasses preventive measures like sensitization activities, public works to clean out drains, etc. At the base, it involves awareness by the population of areas that are unsuitable for development because they represent a high risk of disaster (Drains, swamps, slumps, etc). Instead of being destined by fate, the Nkolbisson and Garoua floods were in fact the consequences of a break in one of the links that connect stakeholders at the "summit" and those of the "base" on civil protection issues.

So, if people had not built in areas unfit for development, the floods would not have been that devastating.

Refer to *Cameroon Tribune*, 8 April 2008

Refer to *Le Messenger*, 8 August 2008

III. Report on the Ekorezok disaster in the neighbourhood of Nkolbisson

I. DESCRIPTION:

A. Type: floods

B. Date: Friday, 4 April 2008

C. Time: From 10:30 am to 2:00 pm

D. Place: Ekorezock and Nkoumassi (Nkolbisson, Yaounde VII Subdivision, Mfoundi Division, Centre Region.

E. Causes: *Evident*: rainstorms

Other supposed causes:

- The reduced size of the new pipe used in the renovation works on the Nkolbisson intersection; its diameter was smaller than the former one and water could not thus flow smoothly;
- Unplanned building of houses which encroach on riverbeds;
- The perpendicular form of the confluence between the river Mefou and its Afeme tributary. This does not allow the tributary to easily flow into the main river.
- The construction of a dam on the Mefou River at Afan Oyo which could result in the backflow of water upstream observed after the rains.

F. The toll:

1. Human toll:

- 235 families aggrieved;
- 1277 victims; 9
- 400 displaced;
- 02 dead instead of 3 as announced by various sources.

2. Material damage:

- 150 houses flooded;
- 50 houses damaged;
- 10 houses wrecked.

II. ACTIONS TAKEN

A. By the Government:

- The Head of State's comforting of the aggrieved families;
- Visit on the site by a government delegation led by the Prime Minister, Head of Government;

B. By the administration and the operational team:

1. Dispatch of the vigilance teams of the Department of Civil Protection (Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization).

2. Intervention of the Fire Brigade Unit, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Women's empowerment and the Family to provide relief to the victims ;
3. Evacuation to and treatment of some of the victims at the Yaounde Central Hospital;
4. Accommodation of the displaced families at the Tsinga Centre for Women's Empowerment and the Family;
5. Food and drug supplies to displaced families; 30
6. Emergency meeting of the National Disaster Prevention and Management Programme (PNPGC) with UN Humanitarian Agencies.

C. By UN Agencies:

1. Cash assistance by UNICEF to DPC to be shared out to the victims;
2. Drugs from WHO via the Ministry of Public Health.

D. By other humanitarian partners:

Provision of basic needs and food to victims by 'the Chantal Biya Foundation'

III. EXPECTED EMERGENCY ACTIONS:

A. Concerning health assistance:

- Treatment of some patients at the Emergency ward of the Yaounde Central Hospital;
- Supply of water;
- Construction of latrines;
- Ditch cleaning of the Mefou river bed at its outlet;

B. Concerning humanitarian and social assistance:

- Support to school children;
- Supply of food to the victims;
- Construction of playgrounds.

C. Concerning infrastructure:

- Widening of the pipe at the Nkolbisson intersection;

- Redevelopment of the dam built on the Mefou River.

IV. PROSPECTIVE ACTIONS

A. Identifying, with the assistance of the engineering department of the Yaounde City Council, obstacles that could hinder the smooth flow of water in the various rivers in Yaounde and its neighbourhoods;

B. Comprehensive survey of the Mefou watershed in order to get more accurate dimensions for future civil engineering structures.

C. Requesting the UN Agencies to better oversee the implementation of the provisions of the National Contingency Plan;

D. Clearance of the flooded areas and housing of displaced persons;

E. Monitoring/evaluation of the crisis by a multidisciplinary team.

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Chapter 2

Sociological disasters: a year of turmoil¹³

Introduction

The year 2008, more than any other before then was a year of turmoil for the Cameroon government and its citizens who had to grapple with a series of social crises. The high cost of living underemployment and the high rate of employment in the informal sector obliged Cameroonians who had hitherto been relatively calm to take to the streets. Just as some social classes were voicing grievances for better living conditions (I), there was an influx of refugees from Chad, following an aborted coup in that country (II). At the same time neighbouring villages clashed over political disputes while others were at daggers drawn because of a football match (III).

I. February with its social unrest

A good number of people still did not understand why several months after attaining the completion point of the HIPC Initiative and with the expected upturn in oil prices on the international market, people still faced pretty hard times. From the beginning of the year, consumers barely coped with the regular price hikes while economists speculated on the galloping inflation. It was against this backdrop of a tense social climate compounded by a strike action called by transporters' union that some towns witnessed riots that resulted in deaths and loss of property.

1. One week of looting and vandalism

During the last week of February, the masses took advantage of the transporters initiative and took to the streets. In spite of the government measures reducing fuel prices the situation rapidly went out of hand. In towns like Douala, people increasingly demonstrated. In Bafang, Nkongsamba, Njombe and

Mbanga for instance, private property and public facilities were burnt down by hords of angry youths who seemed to have found ideal condition to vent their frustrations.

3 Author: Franklin L Kamtche

The situation was even more heated in Yaounde, the political capital. Besides the fact that old tyres were burnt on the streets, workers found it hard to go to their job sites and movement from one end to another became an uphill task. Young men took to the streets and blocked the roads for several hours.

In Douala, the economic capital, overexcited demonstrators targeted public structures and many business establishments, breaking into them and looting.

2. Reaction of the government and the civil society.

In a press briefing broadcast in the evening of the first day of the riots on national television, the Minister of Communication, who based his argument on the national political map, warned all political stakeholders, namely the leaders of some opposition political parties whom he accused of taking irresponsible youths hostage and inciting them to perform illegal acts not minding the repercussions.

It was time for stocktaking at the helm of the State. In an address broadcast on radio and television on the second day of the demonstrations, the Head of State, H.E. PAUL BIYA firmly requested his stray young fellow countrymen to desist from civic irresponsibility and further carrying out any acts of vandalism. The forces of law and order were then deployed on the streets to restore order nationwide. Several people were arrested and tried, and the guilty, together with their instigators were jailed. The riots helped unveil an atmosphere fraught with tension, especially, on the issue of civil servants' salaries. The authorities weighed the options and acted promptly. The Head of State took a series of emergency measures to increase civil servants' salaries, but above all, to reduce taxes on basic commodities and inputs.

While the government sought to restore peace and order, parliamentarians returned to their various constituencies to hold meetings with their constituents. They tried to comfort all those who had lost either property or family members. They urged youths to get organized and take their fate into their own hands since it was clear that another factor that sparked off the upheavals was the fact that youths lack a sense of direction. Opinion leaders and clergymen stood behind these patriotic actions, which worked efficiently judging from the fact that life has returned to normal.

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II. Coping with Chadian refugees in northern Cameroon

Incidentally, Cameroon had to cope with the aftermath of a political crisis in the neighbouring State of Chad.

1. Seeking a safe haven in times of war

That same February, tens of thousands of Chadian refugees flooded into the border region in northern Cameroon. They were fleeing from N'djamena, the Capital of Chad, where government troops were engaged in fierce fighting with rebels, killing 160 people. According to early reports, some 30,000 Chadians were said to have crossed into Kousseri across the river Chari, which bounds both countries. In the days following 3 February, there was a crowd of distressed persons from diverse origins. 58,905 people

were registered at the border, 30,000 of whom were exposed to various hazards and 87 wounded. Though most families were accommodated at the Mandana transit camp at the entrance to Kousseri, many others had to find shelter in public facilities such as schools, mosques and museums. Still in shock, the refugees were hungry, lacked water and food, and were exposed to the cold.

According to another report, 'churches, private homes and hospitals are still overcrowded in that border town of Cameroon located on the banks of River Chari, where 20,000 to 30,000 Chadians have taken refuge following the outbreak of war in Ndjamena on 2 February. Though they have to barely cover a short distance to cross the metal bridge across the river into Chad, the refugees tarry on, in order to ensure that the fighting has actually stopped, since there is no word on the whereabouts of the 3000 rebels who launched the attack against the town'. Some of the refugees who said they had seen the worst in their country feared for their lives. Rumours of a witch-hunt and other frightful information were rife

2. The reception of Chadian refugees

Humanitarian assistance came without delay. In addition to the local joint committee put in place to handle the crisis, a ministerial delegation made up of the Secretary of State in charge of Defence, the Delegate General for National Security and led by the Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, visited Kousseri to assess what had been done so far and then gave further instructions, inter alia:

- Transfer of injured persons to other resettlement sites (Maltam, 30 km from Kousseri)
- Speeding up preparatory activities on the site prior to the arrival of the UNHCR to provide water and build latrines.
- Boosting safety measures;
- Deployment of the forces of law and order;
- Support and assistance to families and unaccompanied children.
- Assistance to Cameroonians residing in Chad and wishing to come back home, and finally logistic support to the joint local crisis committee in fuel, communication and cold meals.

Special attention was paid to:

- Pro-active intelligence collection in order to forestall all hazards and malevolent acts.
- Improving on the lighting of the border police post in particular and the entire riverside border;
- Cordoning off and combing of the area.

Furthermore, a technical team worked to identify various vaccines necessary for the health safety of the victims and people living in the border region (poliomyelitis, meningitis, cholera, measles, etc.) while the joint local crisis committee proceeded with the counting of the refugees and identifying them precisely (sex, age). It further analyzed the risks and advantages of the Maltam I and II sites in order to pre-empt troubles in the aftermath.

Thanks to the UNHCR, food supplies, tents and mosquito nets, etc., were dispatched to Kousseri from the East Region where refugees from the Central African Republic and other countries now reside.

14 These details are found in a press release by IRINEWS, February 2008.

15 Department of Civil Protection's Report on the crisis.

37

The International Red Cross Federation catered for the urgent needs of the refugees and had 500 latrines built to avoid a health crisis in a suddenly overcrowded town. The UNHCR helped transfer some of the refugees to the Maltam refugee camp, located 32 km from Kousseri.

France also helped through the French embassy in Yaounde: "The first plane of the Delegation for Humanitarian Intervention (DAH) of the French ministry in charge of European and Foreign Affairs (MAEE) landed on 8 February in Maroua with humanitarian workers and cargo. Two vehicles immediately left for Kousseri where the humanitarian assistance, supplies 24 000 litres of water per day", a note from the diplomatic mission pointed out.

III. Intertribal confrontations

Many confrontations opposing neighbouring communities were observed in 2008. But we are only going to concentrate on those which significantly impacted national life.

1. The conflict between Olidi and Yive communities

The South-West Province, which hitherto had featured in this report, because it faced threats from Mount Cameroon or the vagaries of the sea, which sometimes cast away several unwanted passengers, was once again in the limelight this year owing to an intertribal crisis. Early in April 2008, a conflict erupted between the Olidi and Yive tribes which according to official sources left 02 people dead in Akwaya and 8000 others displaced. One of the parties was accused of fighting with the help of armed men from a neighbouring country, 'using war weapons and practising scorched earth tactics and other war techniques similar to those of the guerrilla' 6,

Reports by journalists on the spot and explanations given by a parliamentarian from the Manyu constituency confirmed that *'the people of the area are being assaulted by people coming from a neighbouring country'*. The root-causes of this conflict are land disputes and claims of ethnic identity; leading to resurgence of old disputes between Olidi and Yive communities 7 and connected with recent political developments. The above-mentioned parliamentarian revealed that *'the July 2007 twin council and legislative elections brought a Yive at the helm of the council as mayor. Since last 31December; the confrontations have become increasingly violent'*. That decision did not go down well with the Olidis, who chased their opponents towards the Nigerian border. Such grievances added to age old land problems that have often pitched the people of this part of the country against one another. According to another person from the area, the assailants sought support from Nigeria in order to attack some 15 villages of the area, leading to the displacement of about 8,000 people and the death of two Cameroonians.

2. Looting in Akonolinga

Though February was a very difficult month for administrative authorities in charge of educating and protecting the population, the other months equally made the headlines. A case in point is the Akonolinga incidents which resulted from the poor handling of information pertaining to a cup of Cameroon tie between the local football team, Foudre of Akonolinga and Aigle of the Menoua from the West region. The natives of Akonolinga had been informed that their team and coaches who had gone to play in Dschang were given very poor treatment two weeks before. A disclaimer was not made early enough and this incited supporters of the local team to retaliate by attacking people from the West. In the end, one person died and much damage was done to property.

16 Interview by *Mutations*, processed on 4 April 2008.

17 Both are villages of Akwaya Subdivision.

Conclusion

At the social level, the year 2008 showed that although Cameroon's social fabric was apparently harmonious, it was indeed fragile, as evidenced by violent agitation that could, at any moment, degenerate into a crisis. A case in point is the July 2008 fire incident at the Douala Central prison, which was followed by a collective attempt by prisoners to escape, and which resulted in the death of 09 of them.

All in all, 2008 was regularly rocked by severe disasters that had a bearing on the set up of community life in Cameroon. Despite the multiple efforts made by the government, all disputes are yet to be settled. In the north for instance, repeated kidnappings orchestrated by robbers armed to the teeth are a concern to the authorities and the forces of law and order. The situation warrants real brainstorming in a bid to work out effective strategies to protect persons and property in this porous region, where Cameroon shares an extensive common boundary with neighbouring States and, above all, in a region where trafficking of sophisticated weapons is rife .

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Chapter 3

Traffic-related disasters¹⁸

Introduction

In 2004, the World Health Day was celebrated under the theme: 'road accidents are not destined by fate'. That same year, the World Civil Protection Day was celebrated under the theme: 'Civil Protection and Road Safety'.

This seemed just the right occasion to launch a comprehensive campaign against road accidents. The pace was set through an open letter signed by four members of government to wage a fierce war against this calamity which is becoming so frequent on our roads. At the time, two ghastly road accidents⁹ had occurred at Ebombe and Nkombiban II and had left an indelible mark in the minds of Cameroonians. Thence, the government took new measures, if not to eradicate, at least to reduce the frequency of these accidents that result in heavy material, human and economic losses. In effect, Cameroon's roads are known to be very deadly.

Statistics from the Ministry of Public Health reveal that an average 1200 people die each year through road accidents, while insurance companies estimate material and property losses at more than CFA 21 billion francs⁰. Several initiatives have been taken in various government departments in charge of road safety and particularly, in the Ministry of Transport to curb this scourge which plunges families into mourning and slows down the pace of the country's economy.

It is however surprising that despite efforts made to reduce accidents; the carnage on our roads is on the increase. The year 2008 was no exception to this rule and according to the World Health Organization (WHO), road accidents worldwide are the third cause of mortality in general and first cause of the influx of wounded patients in hospitals. Roads in Cameroon have remained very deadly, with the Douala-Yaounde and Yaounde-Bafoussam highways topping the chart. As concerns other modes of transport, accidents announced caused more fright than real harm (II), which might justify the special attention paid to road safety measures (III).

18 Author: FanKem

19 The two accidents left dead and 0 injured; refer to REPC 2004, p. 9

20 www.apanews.net, 20/ 11/ 2008

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I. Road accidents

Like in the previous years, there were a lot of road accidents in Cameroon. However, this study shall concentrate only on those that caused at least 10 deaths.

1. The Yaounde-Douala highway

Cameroon could have lost many important personalities who miraculously survived road accidents: an archbishop, a parliamentarian, a musician, etc. But many other road users were not that lucky. Two road accidents occurred in this highway in 2008 each causing at least ten deaths. The first case occurred on 8 June 2008 in Edea in which 10 died and 12 people were seriously wounded. Investigations by the police and gendarmerie indicated that the accident was caused by excessive speed and the faint lights of a bus carrying twenty-two passengers, which crashed into a parked timber truck. According to these same sources, and in addition to the above causes, eye witness reports from survivors give the impression that the driver was drunk. He, therefore, lacked the composure that is much needed in the event of an obstacle.

The second deadly accident occurred on 18 September 2008, some ten kilometres away from Edea: a public transport vehicle carrying retailers from the Edea market and driving at breakneck speed towards Douala. At a certain point, the driver embarked upon reducing the speed considerably. In fact, he had found himself behind a truck and could not drive any faster.

He then attempted to overtake. His steering wheel being on the right, the visibility was seriously reduced²². Yet, he went on with the overtaking though he was not certain the road was clear. As soon as he had started overtaking, he found himself face to face with a trailer he unfortunately had not seen before attempting to overtake. The collision was fatal. Ten passengers died, several others were severely wounded. Ten more deaths coming to add to the chart of death tolls due to the inexplicable negligence of the driver worsened by the right hand drive which is not even authorized by the Ministry of Transport²³.

21 Ibid.

22 Refer to 'la Nouvelle Expression', 28/10/ 2008.

23 On 25/04/2008, the Minister of Transport issued an order to outlaw, as from 0 / / 00 , the use of right hand drive vehicles on Cameroon roads.

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2. The Yaounde-Bafoussam highway

The small towns of Ngomo and Yemkout seem to have built their reputation around most fatal accidents. The accident that occurred in this area on 2 April 2008 was, to say the least, due to an unusual cause: a bus owned by a travel agency driving from Bamenda to Yaounde at night with no headlights. Since the accident took place at 5 am, it could be said that the car had been travelling the whole night without lights. A driver, who narrowly missed this accident, testified that the driver of the damaged 'Coaster' 'was using the headlights of the 'Dyna' ahead of him to drive'. As he raced on irresponsibly, he found himself face to face with a 13-ton truck. The final toll was 15 dead, including the truck driver, and 14 wounded.

The Secretary of State for Transport, as well as other teams from other related government services went down to the site of the accident some time later. This move by government certainly showed that it was concerned with this tragedy which aggrieved many families. In his declaration on Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV), 'the Secretary of State accused the gendarmes positioned not far from there 24'. The ordinary Cameroonian citizen believes that given the hour at which the accident occurred, it was very likely that the driver had 'crossed' many police and gendarme control posts which are found along that highway day and night. We, therefore, wonder how that was allowed to happen. Accusations and counter-accusations then followed. Officials of the travel agency, who were accused of having allowed a defective bus to ply the road, defended themselves over CRTV Bamenda regional station by saying that 'the bus had no technical fault and the driver was one of the company's best 25'. The conclusion one can draw from the story is that the travel agency was negligent, compounded by the driver's irresponsibility and crowned by the complacency of road safety officials.

3. In the West Region

Bana is a sub-division with a mountainous relief, located on the Bangangte to Bafang road. On 14 April 2008, a little more than one kilometre away from the Cameroon Evangelical Church, Baveu-Bana parish, an accident occurred killing 12 out of 29 passengers 26 6. These people had left Yaounde in a truck hired by the Secretary of State for Defence in charge of the Gendarmerie, and bound for Nkondjock to attend the funeral of a junior officer's wife.

Prima facie evidence shows that the accident was due to excessive speed and tiredness on a road that the driver did not know very well. Investigators gave as evidence the strongly imprinted tyre marks left on the tar at the spot where the truck skidded.

The Bafoussam-Foumbot highway is mostly used by vehicles linking the West and northern areas of Cameroon. The traffic here is denser due to the fact that Foumbot subdivision is the bread basket of other parts of the West, Centre and Littoral Regions. Day and night, foodstuffs are transported from here to satisfy the demand of various towns. This, of course, heightens the risks of accidents on this road. The most deadly accident recorded this year on this road occurred on 25 April 2008 at 'Koveu', where many other accidents had occurred in the past. The collision was between a public transport vehicle from Bafoussam bound for Foumbot, and a personal car coming from the opposite direction 27. This collision resulted in the death of 12 passengers, leaving many others injured.

4. The Douala-Buea highway

Another severe accident took place in the night of Monday to Tuesday 4 November 2008 at about 9: pm at 'Total Ndo' in the neighbourhood of Bonaberi. A transport vehicle from Douala bound for Buea collided with a truck transporting sand and coming from the opposite direction. The collision was so violent that the bus was virtually reduced to pieces by this heavy carrier that dragged it along for several metres. The truck was bound for Douala and driving at a very high speed. The driver had tried to dodge a pothole by driving into the oncoming lane. The other driver attempted the same move and both vehicles found themselves face to face. 16 people died on the spot and many were wounded.

24 The Daily newspaper *Mutations*, 04/04/2008

25 *Mutations*, op. Cit.

26 www.kaiwalai.com, 20/11/ 2008

27 www.royaumbamoun.com , 20/11/ 2008

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II. The other modes of transport

1. Sea traffic accidents

On 7 July 2008, along the Kribi seaside resort, a boat with people from West Africa on board was shipwrecked. This boat had left the town of Oron in Nigeria and was heading to Libreville, the Gabonese capital. The Department of Civil Protection (DPC) identified 22 Beninese, 8 Burkinabes, 10 Ghanaians, 1 Malian, 12 Nigerians and 1 Cameroonian, that is 54 people in all. Given the high number of under-aged passengers (16 under-aged girls and two new born babies were actually on board), the Cameroon police suspected the existence of a network involved in child trafficking 28.

Evidence given by survivors and the police, indicates that the boat was in fact dilapidated and overloaded. It must have been shattered by waves off the Cameroon coasts. All those shipwrecked were rescued by the Cameroon Navy alerted by fishermen in the vicinity of the site, the area around the oil terminal of the oil pipeline. The 54 survivors were unharmed and were accommodated in a reception centre in Londji hospital. Nigerians, Burkinabes and Beninese found aboard were repatriated to their respective countries by their consulates.

As for the Ghanaians who stayed on in Cameroon they were taken to the Bepanda children's observation home and left under the care of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

2. Near-crash at the Garoua airport: more fright than harm

The end of November marks the Pilgrimage period in Mecca. As usual, hundreds of our Muslim compatriots were ready to go on pilgrimage to Mecca which is one of the seven pillars of Islam. A Niamey Airlines Company plane was hired to fly the pilgrims to Mecca. In the night of 24 to 25 November 2008, the landing gear of that plane with pilgrims on board exploded at take-off on the tarmac of the Garoua airport. Even though it turned out to be a storm in a tea-cup, it still will be remembered that a humanitarian situation happened there, with thousands of pilgrims at the airport waiting for their trip problem to be solved. Fortunately, on 26 November 2008 'Niamey Airlines Company applied for and obtained from the civil

aviation authorities the authorization for two new aircrafts to land in Garoua 29. These two aircrafts enabled the pilgrims to accomplish their Hadj, in spite of the incident that had happened a few days earlier.

28, www.apanews.net, published on 10 - 07-2008

29 From a letter of the Director of the Civil Aviation Authority, quoted by *Mutations*, 27/11/ 2008

III. Some measures to reduce accidents

Looking at the number of accidents that occurred on our roads, uninformed observers could be asking themselves what the government does to reduce this recurrent phenomenon. The government has already identified the main causes of these accidents (the driver, state of roads and vehicles) and has taken measures to redress the situation, though the outcome is still unsatisfactory. This study shall limit itself to measures implemented since 2004, when the government signed the open letter aimed at keeping road accidents in check.

1. For drivers:

A good number of studies have shown that the human factor is the first cause of road accidents in Cameroon. This is the reason why special emphasis has been laid on rules to be observed by drivers³⁰:

- Systematically fasten his seat belt;
- Avoid overtaking dangerously or at corners when visibility is poor;
- Avoid overloading;
- Avoid parking badly;
- Avoid driving when drunk or after taking drugs;
- Avoid using phones while driving;
- Comply with the rules of priority;
- Avoid excess speed;

³⁰ These rules are to be recalled in an open letter of four government ministers against road insecurity, 2004.

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- Equip the vehicle with first aid/tool kit;
- Alert the emergency services (SAMU (Emergency Medical Assistance Service), CNSP, FMO) in the event of an accident;

2. At the socio-institutional and technical levels

- Institutionalization of the CEMAC reflective number plate;
- System approach to and extension of road worthiness checks;
- Securing transport documents (driving license, vehicle registration card, etc.)
- Tracking of irresponsible drivers (using radars and breath analyzers)
- Regulating traffic hours for heavy carriers on some highways;
- Prohibiting cars with right hand drive.

3. On highways

- Regular maintenance of highways;
- Innovations on road signs with new types of road signs that sensitize drivers by putting fear in them;
- Renewal of horizontal marking on tarred roads, and more systematically in urban areas;
- Identification of and improvement on spots with high accident frequency;

Conclusion

The high frequency of road accidents in Cameroon calls for individual and collective awareness. Eradicating them, or at least reducing their frequency should be the concern of each and every one of us. During the first eleven months of this year for instance, 69 road accidents were recorded on the Ngaoundere cliff 3 1. The very high mortality rate recorded this year due to road accidents is a reminder that enough is enough. Of course, the state of roads and vehicles could explain some cases of accidents, but man is the primary cause of them all. It is therefore his duty to find long-lasting solutions to this tragedy, by driving responsibly. Measures taken by government should not be considered as being expedient, a sort of abrupt remedy in an area where human lives are at stake and thus require road users to drive more responsibly. The constant improvement of basic road infrastructure is evidence of government's resolve to eradicate the scourge. However, for these measures to be effective, they necessitate the full involvement of all and sundry.

31 Data was from Gendarmerie sources, published by *Mutations*, 19/11/2008.

Chapter 4

Technology-related disasters 32

Introduction

Like all other countries in the world, Cameroon is increasingly witnessing disasters related to technological advancement that cause environmental, economic and human damage. This study shall focus

mainly on the cases of pollution in Douala and Ebaka (Belabo) as well as the accident that occurred at the 'Brasseries du Cameroun' (a brewery company) in Bafoussam.

I. Douala, August 2008: the chlorine pollution

1. The site

Ndogbon is located in the Douala IV Subdivision, in the Wouri Division, with one of the largest industrial zones of the country. As new companies come to establish near old ones, the area becomes a time-bomb, pregnant with numerous risks. Though not as populated as other neighbourhoods, this area is witnessing an influx of people who come there to seek for jobs.

2. Signs perceived by residents

According to some witnesses, it was an attempt to illegally destroy barrels of chlorine in the jurisdiction of the Douala IV Council that drew the attention of council and government authorities to the pollution problem that had already been affecting people living in the area. Most of them were complaining of cough and respiratory problems. People decided to treat themselves by drinking palm oil that had become the unique antidote which could subdue the pain they were feeling in their respiratory tracts. A hotel operating in the neighbourhood almost closed down because lots of its customers could no longer stand the stench that was spreading all over the place. A lady working in an industrial unit in the area was hospitalized.

32 Author: David WaFo

The daily newspaper 'Mutations' reported: *'For some days now, noxious gas fumes have been causing harmful effects comparable to those caused by chlorine: residents complain of headache and skin burns, while the flora around the suspected area has become entirely yellowish³³'*.

All these signs noticed for some 10 days in August 2008 were similar to those that residents of the Yongo neighbourhood in Nkapa experienced in June 2006. According to the Douala IV Sub-divisional Officer, the Ndobbo threat is a sequel to the Nkapa case. Indeed poisonous products discovered in this small town 25 km from Douala finally got to Ndobbo where they endangered the health of more than a hundred residents. The ad hoc committee set up at the governor's office had then instructed that the said barrels be destroyed at sea by a joint team comprising the fire brigade and the navy. During the shipping, the substance leaked and killed a member of the team. The newspaper 'Mutations' reports that 'due to that tragic accident all the barrels were finally not destroyed³⁴. And that's why some finally landed in Ndogbon.

3. Reactions

The persistent complaints of the Ndobbo residents caught the attention of government officials who immediately sought ways to control the plague. They visited the area, during which visit a worker from a Chinese plastic shoe processing plant fell unconscious. This field trip helped to assert that: *'the toxic substance was the remainder of chlorine from the environmental disaster record of Nkapa in 2006'*³⁵. Ultimately, the government took the following provisional measures: *'the putting in place of a lifeline perimeter including ten or so dwelling houses or business places. The residents were requested to*

evacuate the site and the businesses close to the source of emanations to suspend their activities, while waiting for the government to solve the problem'.³⁶

33 *Mutations* No2228, 01/09/ 2008

34 *ibid*

35 Letter No. 140 L/C19.04/SP of the Subdivisional Officer of Douala IV dated 27 August 2008.

36 Message of the Subdivisional Officer of Douala IV to the Senior Divisional Officer of Wouri, Message No. 039/MP/C19.04/SP of 28 Août 2008. The Subdivisional Officer reported to hierarchy as follows: 'I have the honour to inform you that chlorine emission is being felt in the Ndobbo neighbourhood, on an industrial site that has been abandoned for several years by the Société NECAM-ENTRETIEN that produced camel water. ... According to witnesses the said gas is contained in a tank with a capacity of 00 litres from where it has been emanating for about ten days, intoxicating people and animals, and destroying the surrounding vegetation».

These measures were confirmed by an order of the Senior Divisional Officer proscribing access to the emanation area of a toxic substance³⁷.

At the same time, a commission was set up to manage the situation. It was made up of representatives of the governor's office, the Provincial Delegation of the Environment and Nature Protection, the Wouri Divisional Office, the Douala IV Subdivisional Office, the Douala IV council, the forces of law and order and the owner of the site. The same order declared the site safe and healthy. It read: 'Residents, commercial or non commercial establishments concerned by the above-mentioned order of 14 October 2008 are henceforth free to carry out their usual activities on the Ndobbo site in Bonaberi...'

II. The asbestos pollution in Ebaka (Belabo).

This type of pollution is very rare in Cameroon. Commonly used to ensure water-resistance in buildings or ships, asbestos is highly valued because of its numerous properties and low cost price. Exposure to this substance causes various types of cancer, especially lung cancer and mesothelioma, an inoperable tumour in the chest and the abdominal wall. This is why in 1997, the World Health Organization (WHO) listed asbestos as a carcinogen, which led several countries to prohibit the manufacturing, importation and marketing of items containing this substance. This was the highly dangerous substance that some Douala city dwellers were exposed to in 2008.

1. Facts and reactions

It is this highly dangerous substance that brought the village of Ebaka, Belabo to the limelight. A daily newspaper revealed on 4 June 2008 that the 'Centre d'Enfouissement Technique (CET) (the technical waste disposal centre) of the Cameroon Oil Transportation (COTCO) Company' buried 7 (seven) tons of asbestos in its Ebaka pit. This information, later confirmed by COTCO officials, frightened the inhabitants who, though not having details about asbestos, knew that it is an extremely dangerous substance. Moreover, some even blamed it for being the root cause of the decay of their farm crops.

37 Order No. 144/AP/C19/SP dated 29 August 2008 of SDO for Wouri .

The panic was such that the Sub-divisional Officer for Belabo held a public meeting to explain the situation and calm down the population. Everybody was on the alert while the COTCO safety mechanism

was on maximum alert. As such, even the bus hired by the company and carrying the Sub DO and the mayor of Belabo found it difficult to cross the gateway. Explanations given by technicians to reassure the population only met with suspicion and scepticism. The situation was all the more complicated, as COTCO could no longer be trusted. A former Member of Parliament, chairman of the association of elite of that area had this to say : *'At the beginning, COTCO did not admit that it had disposed of asbestos here. They only talked of waste without specifying what it really was.'* Anyway all the people expected was that the waste be evacuated to make their environment as healthy as possible.

III. The accident at the 'Brasseries du Cameroun' in Bafoussam

1. Background and facts

On 1 October 2008, the Banengo neighbourhood in Bafoussam was particularly agitated. In effect, at about 7.45 am, a boiler exploded at 'Brasseries du Cameroun' brewery plant, plunging the whole town of Bafoussam in turmoil. Inhabitants said they thought an earthquake had occurred as the noise was deepening and houses shook.

The Brasseries Company is located in a densely populated neighbourhood. Its fence lines a busy road that links Bafoussam to Bamendjou. Not far from there is the Banengo school complex with a government kindergarten and a primary school. The headmaster of the complex said that the school had even been moved a few meters further to create roads for the company's warehouses. The company is thus located in a highly risky area. Fortunately, the accident that occurred that Wednesday which is a working day, had not taken place during peak hours. The consequences on human beings would have otherwise been dreadful!

The end cap of the exploded boiler fell exactly where many students gather every morning between 6.45 and 7.20 am to wait for taxis or school buses! This accident occurred just as four repair technicians of a metal industry who had come from Douala a few days before to repair the brewery's equipment were already putting finishing touches to their work. Two welders who were welding outside above a boiler that was functioning were blown away by the heavy explosion. One of them fell dead some 200 m from the brewery and five meters away from the neighbouring school yard. The other one glided through the air for about 80 meters before falling just at the edge of the road. He did not go farther because he had been held by iron bars emanating from the explosion. These iron bars damaged the roofs of many homes and obstructed traffic on that busy road for more than three hours before a crane came to clear the huge heap of iron and steel scrap which human hands could neither lift nor move.

2. Reactions

The authorities were not indifferent in the face of the disaster. The administrative authority, the State Counsel and the forces of law and order immediately went to the disaster site. They saw to it that traffic was restored and went for a crisis meeting.

The company did not stop working. After the explosion, which had distracted? The workers, they all went to their work.

But the headmaster of the school complex said he had had a lot of difficulty keeping the children in class. He thus decided to cancel the break period that day to ensure that pupils remained in class and to prevent them from rushing to the place where the victims fell and causing another accident.

Conclusion

It follows from the foregoing that there is a close relation between technological advancement and industrial hazards in the world in general and Cameroon in particular. Apart from the above-mentioned disasters, we can mention the accident which occurred this year in GMG-HEVECAM where a worker was crushed in latex by a machine. Various accidents drew the attention of Cameroonians to various types of hazards as well as the health and security threats and underscored the need for increased vigilance in factories.

Chapter 5

The disaster journal: A 2008 review by *Cameroon Tribune* 38

Introduction

In reviewing the issues that came into focus or to the attention of the observer or journalist during the year 2008, it stands out clearly that Cameroon is exposed to a wide range of disasters. This diary of disasters is a compilation of events reported by the government daily newspaper 'Cameroon Tribune', and thus lists a number of events analyzed with figures, and which enable us to gauge how vulnerable Cameroon is to natural disasters. However figures cannot express the scope of various events occurred, which analysis is vital to understand the facts, the circumstances in which they occurred, so as to enable the development of disaster response plans.

1. The disaster data for the year

A quick overview of the events reported here by the newspaper shows discrepancies between the number of monthly emergency situations and that of related victims.

Table 1: Events reported by Cameroon Tribune in 2008 (Full on National Risks Observatory Website: www.onr.cm)

Month	Number of events	Number of deceased persons	Number of injured persons	Number of affected persons	Total
January	14	5	32	35	72
February	12	4	11	0	15
March	7	5	36	10	51
April	6	25	0	500	525
May	3	1	0	0	1
June	8	32	50	0	82

July 5 4 83 10 97
Aug. 8 14 107 0 121
September 13 32 65 0 97
October 3 2 4 20 26
November 8 29 10 0 39
December 2 4 0 60 64
Total 89 157 398 635 1190

Source: Calculations from Cameroon Tribune data
3 Introduction and analyses: Guy K ngamy

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The number of disasters peaked in the periods January-February and August-September, while an impressive number was recorded in June and November. This trend is analyzed in the following bar charts: See National Risks Observatory (NRO) Website: www.onr.cm

Graph 1: Disaster trends throughout 2008 : See NRO Website: www.onr.cm

0
2
4
6
8
10
12
14

Janvier Mars Mai Juillet Septembre Novembre Nombre d'événements

Source: Statement from Cameroon Tribune data

An in-depth analysis of this data shows that damage caused to the society does not follow the same trend like the events reported. In fact, when the number of victims is added up, especially the dead or the injured and compared to the disasters that made these victims, the graph is quite different. Disasters hit the peak in the middle of the year, with a gradual rise towards the top in July, and a gradual fall towards September and November. This regular trend is broken in April and May, and later in October, before and after the peak respectively.

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Graph 2: Trends in the average number of casualties (dead and injured) per disaster: See NRO Website: www.onr.cm

0,0
2,0
4,0
6,0
8,0
10,0
12,0
14,0

16,0

18,0

20,0

Janvier Février Mars Avril Mai Juin Juillet Août Septembre Octobre Novembre Décembre

Victimes

Source: Statement from Cameroon Tribune data

II. Significant events

Yaounde, 5 January

A transport vehicle crushed into a parked truck at the entrance to the city, on the Douala Yaounde highway. Eye-witnesses said the driver was on high speed. Passengers say he had drunk ten or so sachets of whisky. The collision split the car in two, leaving one lady dead and 15 people seriously injured, with considerable damage to property. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9009/5208, 07.01.08)

Douala, 7 January

A six- room building was burnt down by fire in Mabanda in Bonabéri. A tenant was said to have left his gas bottle open, resulting in loss of property. (In Cameroon Tribune N°9012/5211, 10.01.08)

Yaounde, 11 January

A gas bottle exploded in one shop and burnt four shops in the Mokolo market, resulting in considerable damage to property. It resulted in considerable loss of property. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9014/5213, 14.01.08)

Yaounde - Akonolinga, 12 January

A personal car skidded off the road linking Yaounde to Akonolinga. The driver was said to have lost control of his vehicle, killing three people and seriously injuring five others. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9017/5216, 17.01.08)

Buea, 22 January

An electric cable sets fire on Malingo Street in Molyko, Buea. Some victims said this was due to clandestine power connections. It left 35 people homeless and caused considerable damage to property. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9022/52210, 24.01.08)

Vema-Ebolowa, 02 February

A tree felled by a hand-logger fell on a motorcycle carrying two people in Vema, a village 30 km from Ebolowa, injuring persons damaging the motorcycle. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9048/5247, 29.02.08)

Yaounde, 10 February

Three shops and a screen printing workshop were burnt down in Essos, Yaounde. A witness said two tyres were found in two of the shops, which lead people to believe it was arson. It resulted in considerable loss of property. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9036/5235, 13.02.08)

Douala, 17 February

A semi-permanent house caught fire in Makèpè-Missokè and the fire spread to two other houses, killing two little girls and resulting in considerable loss of property. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9040/5239, 19.02.08)

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Douala, 18 February

Fire broke out in Bonadibong due to the negligence of a housewife. Fire- fighters succeeded in putting it out, it burnt down six houses. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9041/5240, 20.02.08)

Douala, 18 February

Bush fire lit by farmers caught on dried banana leaves, electric cables and a semi-permanent house went wild in Bepanda Camtel, destroying the stands of four timber-vendors and causing considerable damage to property. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9041/5240, 20.02.08)

Yaounde, 22 February

A car driven at break neck speed killed a 13-year old girl a stone's throw from the family's home in ODZA. Gendarmes said the driver missed a bend and ran into four children: the other three were seriously injured.(In *Cameroon Tribune* No. 9044/5243, 25 February 2008)

Douala, 9 March

An adolescent drowned in a private swimming pool in Bonapriso. Panic stricken, the two youngsters with whom he came to swim ran away. 03 people died. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9055/5254, 11.03.08)

Bangangté-Yaounde, 9 March

A ghastly accident occurred on Bangangté-Yaounde road killing one person and injuring 35, 04 seriously. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9056/5255, 12.03.08)

Yaounde, 19 March

Heavy rains and hailstorms destroyed a family's home in Biyem-Assi, Yaounde, leaving about a dozen people homeless. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9063/5262, 24.03.08)

Yaounde, 24 March

Heavy rains resulted in a landslide in Mimboman, leaving a forty-year old woman and her three-year old son trapped in their home: The toll : Both of them died and much property was lost. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9065/5264, 26.03.08)

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Efok, 1 April

A truck collided with a passenger car driving from Bamenda to Yaounde. Gendarmes said the driver had problem with the headlights and relied on those of a car in front of him. He was trying to overtake when the mishap occurred killing 15 people and injuring. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9070/5269, 02.04.08)

Yaounde, 4 April

Following heavy downpour, the Nkolbisson neighbourhood was flooded, leaving three people dead and almost 500 others homeless. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9073/5272, 07.04.08)

Douala, 8 April

Fire surprised three children in their sleep in Bonaberi. They shouted out for help, but the neighbours, who thought they were being assaulted by bandits, locked themselves in and never helped. They all died with considerable loss of property. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9075/5274, 09.04.08)

Yaounde, 25 April

Nkolbisson was once again over flooded following heavy rains resulting in considerable damage to property. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9088/5287, 28.04.08)

Kribi, 25 April

Young people who went swimming were caught in rough sea waves. Only two out of six of them were rescued by fishermen. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9092/5291, 6 May 2008)

Douala, 31 May

A cotton stockroom caught fire at the Douala sea-port. Some sources said it was due to the phenomenon of auto-ignition of goods stored in the warehouse. Material loss was estimated at some one billion CFA francs. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9109/5308, 2 June 2008)

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Loum, 12 June

There was a violent collision between a truck and a passenger car. The causes of this accident that occurred overnight are yet to be known. Some people said the truck driver dazzled, while others said the passenger car had missed a bend and ran into the truck. It left 07 dead, 12 injured with loss of property. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9119/5318, 16.06.08)

Maroua, 14 June

A public transport car travelling probably at high speed from Maroua to Mora skidded and fell into a ditch: killing 4 people and injuring ten others. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9119/5318, 16 June 2008)

Edea, 15 June:

An 18-seater transport car travelling to Yaounde collided with a truck driving from the opposite direction killing 8 people and injuring many others. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9119/5318, 16.06.08)

Yaounde, 16 June

Due to brake failure, a truck violently bashed a taxi at Carrefour Rails in Ngouso, hitting even pedestrians in the process. The truck driver escaped after killing 02 people, injuring 09 others and causing damage to property. (Cameroon Tribune No. 9120/5319, 17.06.08.

Njombe, 28 June

A travel agency car skidded and hit a broken down van parked on the pavement. The driver had probably dozed off as a result of tiredness. 09 people died and some 15 others were injured. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9129/5328, 30.06.08)

Kribi, 7 July

A boat sailing from Nigeria to Gabon beached on the coasts of Cameroon. The crew realized that the ship was taking in water through a large hole. Some 50 were shipwrecked. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9136/5335, 9 July 2008)

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Njombe, 25 July

A motorcycle carrying three people collided violently with a semi-trailer. The driver of the trailer escaped but was later caught: 03 people died. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9149/5348, 28.07.08)

Ebone, 29 July

Two transport cars collided at night a short distance from Nkongsamba. Some witnesses said the accident was due to excess speed and nasty weather. One person died and 30 severely injured. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9152/5351, 31.07.08)

Edea, 2 August

Two cars driving on the Douala-Yaounde highway in opposite directions collided at night near the Edea toll gate. Some sources blamed the accident on rain. One person died and 09 others were injured. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9154/5353, 04.08.08)

Douala, 2 August

A raking fire erupted at 'Ancienne Pharmacie Omnisport'. It originated from a short circuit due to poor power connections: 03 houses, 03 shops, a tailor's shop and a restaurant were burnt down. Damage was estimated at some 50 million CFA francs. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9154/5353, 04.08.08)

Douala, 20 August

A raking fire erupted at the New Bell Central Prison in Douala. It was said to be a deliberate act perpetrated to cover a collective attempt to escape. 09 people died and 78 others were injured. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9166/5365, 21.08.08)

Limani, 28 August

A tanker caught fire in Limani in the Mayo Sava Division, Far North Region. The tanker got stuck in the mud, and as it struggled to get out, some fuel spilled out and spread on the ground. As a different car tried to start its engine, the spark ignited the fuel, killing two people and injuring 17 others, with considerable material damage. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9173/ 5372, 1 October 2008)

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Yaounde, 7 September

A truck hurtling down the Mvolye hill hit a motorcycle carrying two people. The truck apparently had a flat tyre. It killed 02 people. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9178/5377, 08.09.08)

Ebolowa, 14 September

A bus driver who actually acknowledged he was tired missed a bend on the Ebolowa-Ambam road, hit a panel truck driving from the opposite direction, killed 04 people and injured 34 others. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9185/5384, 17.09.08)

Edea, 18 September

A semi-trailer driving from Douala violently bashed a transport bus. The lorry driver is said to have dozed off and crossed his lane to hit the bus on the other side. After the accident, he took to his heels, after killing 11 people and injuring 02 others. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9187/5386, 19.09.08)

Yaounde 25 September

After inhaling carbon monoxide, two adolescents died in a home in Elig-Effa. They had slept without putting off the fire the charcoal burner in their room. It killed 02 people. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9194/ 5393, 1 October 2008)

Douala, 27 September

A travel agency passenger car violently hit a loaded timber truck parked by the roadside. Driver was said to have been dazzled by the headlights of another car. 04 people died, 12 were injured with considerable material damage. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9193/5392, 29.09.08)

Guirvidig (Far North), 27 September

05 people got poisoned after eating red millet treated with insecticide. 05 children were killed, while 03 other persons suffered from food poisoning. (In

Cameroon Tribune No. 9194/ 5393, 1 October 2008)

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Bafoussam, 1 October

An industrial accident occurred at 'Brasseries du Cameroun' Company in Bafoussam. Three workers from a service company were caught in an explosion, which killed 02 of them and injured the other. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9195/5394, 02.10.08)

Yaounde-Obala, 3 November

A passenger bus and a private car collided in Nkozoa. The bus driver, who was on top speed, lost control of the vehicle, killing 05 people and injuring some 10 others,. In Cameroon Tribune N°. 9218/5417, 04.11.08.

Douala, 3 November

A passenger bus ? Carrying 19 passengers collided with a heavy duty lorry in Bonaaberi. The driver who was at speed break wanted to sway potholes went the accident occurred, killing 13 people and many injured with material damages. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9219/5418, 05.11.08)

Nkol-Melen, 8 November

A public transport bus collided with a lorry carrying plants on the Yaounde- Bafoussam highway in Nkol-Melen, some 30 km away from Yaounde. The bus driver was trying to overtake a cocoa transporting lorry, another bus which was trying to overtake the lorry carrying plants was hit by the lorry transporting cocoa. 10 people were killed and many injured with significant material damage. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9223/5422, 11.11.08)

Yaounde, 21 December

A five seater car carrying 11 people collided with another car on the Akonolinga road. The driver had been struggling to overtake two cars at a road bend. 04 people died with considerable material damage. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9251/5450, 22.12.08)

Limbe, 24 December

A raking fire erupted in Old Market. A tailor is said to have left his iron on and had gone for lunch: 15 tailor shops with Christmas dresses burnt down. The damage was estimated at 10 million CFA francs. (In Cameroon Tribune No. 9255/5454, 29.12.08)

Part two:
Measures taken by the government and its partners

The Department of Civil Protection in action: achievements and prospects³⁹*Introduction*

Taking into account the fact that disaster management is increasingly taking front stage of the implementation policies for a sustainable and coherent development in Cameroon, the Department of Civil Protection during the past twelve months realized concrete actions in seven main areas. In order to support government initiatives for the 2008 financial year, the actions of the Department of Civil Protection were thus based on risk prevention, personnel capacity building, cooperation, crisis management and follow up, implementation of the National Disaster Prevention and Management Programme, communication and lastly, strategies to implement in view of the financing of the civil protection sector in Cameroon. Faced with the prevalence of risks (floods, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, fratricidal confrontations...), to which the country is exposed, these concerted actions were taken, which are both curative and preventive. From an operational point of view, these activities have brought together external administrative services as well as the grassroots population and communities themselves.

I. Actions implemented in 2008

Within the framework of its permanent missions, the Department of Civil Protection facilitated the celebration throughout the national territory together with the International community on 1 March 2008, of the World Civil Defence Day organized each year under the auspices of the International Civil Defence Organization and whose theme was 'civil protection and lifesaving actions'.

Besides, the Department of Civil Protection took a step further by setting up the National Risk Observatory (NRO) through two actions: the acquisition of new computers and the publication of newsletters on risks and meteorological issues.

³⁹ Author: Franklin L Kamtche

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As regards human resources, there has been a consistent and gradual capacity building for the staff of the Department of Civil Protection. In order to prepare for future challenges, they must constantly get in touch with experts of other nationalities and attend training on civil protection. To this effect, they took part under the supervision of ICDO (International Civil Defence Organization) in a training on the conduct of civil protection operations, a fact-finding trip under the supervision of the FIPOL (Fund for the Fight against Maritime Pollution) and in other fact-finding trips especially in Sweden, Finland, Tunisia and Kenya.

Personnel of the Department of Civil Protection and other partners received training on first aid while those who had the capacity were lectured on disaster medicine in the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Yaounde.

The Department of Civil Protection can be proud that a course on civil protection is being offered to Students of the Faculty of Law in the University of Yaounde II while a civil protection

module was introduced in the training of officers in the Yaounde Combined Military Academy. This is aimed at making these training activities permanent.

Concerning cooperation and international prospects, the Department of Civil Protection has launched, in conjunction with the UNDP and the EU, which have already raised CFA 8 billion francs, the civil protection component of Lake Nyos Safety Programme estimated at CFA 23 billion francs.

Moreover, the Department of Civil Protection is following up the implementation of the Natural Risk Management and Civil Protection project, which is the result of the Cameroon/France cooperation. This concerns precisely the drawing up of a Risk Management Plan for the Mount Cameroon and Lake Monoun areas, which is near completion.

Cooperation with Germany and Japan was re-launched, while the Cross-Sector Programme 'Emergency' supported by UNICEF and coordinated by the Department of Civil Protection, and which aims at managing and preventing humanitarian crisis affecting women and children, is evolving.

At the international level, it is worth mentioning that activities related to the setting up, in Cameroon, of a Civil Protection Regional Centre (CRPC), after formal approval by the Executive Committee of the ICDO (International Civil Defence Organization) during its May 2008 session, have finally been launched.

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Due to the 2008 crises, the Department of Civil Protection managed and followed up some situations. Without getting into details, the provision of aid to disaster victims each time it was deemed necessary, as well as disaster management, especially the influx of Chadian refugees in North Cameroon, road accidents and floods in Garoua in the North and Yaounde in the Centre, should be mentioned.

In order to avoid amateurism in rescue operations and the management of victims, a training workshop was organized for the joint crisis management committees in the North, to train administrative authorities of northern Cameroon.

The year 2008 also witnessed major progress in the implementation of the National Disaster Prevention and Management Programme. In collaboration with UNICEF, a National Contingency Plan was made public; and one of the pilot tools in strategic forecasts, the Disaster Relief Organization Plan (ORSEC) for the Mfoundi Division, , as well as a risk prevention plan for the AES SONEL Control Dam under construction, were drawn up.

Following a tradition established since 2002, the Cameroon Civil Protection Report, a real showcase of actions carried out, was launched under the theme Safety in the workplace. Lastly, plans aimed at raising emergency funds to finance civil protection within the framework of the HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) initiative were discussed under the supervision of the Department of Civil Protection and the Department of Financial and Material Resources, MINATD. Pursuant to the mission given to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization by the Prime Minister's Office, a decree was drafted on the setting up of a Disaster Management Solidarity Fund. A seven-hectare site for the construction of the

forthcoming Civil Protection Regional Centre and the Civil Protection Warehouse was identified. The main actions carried out are found in the table below.

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Table: Annual activity report of the Department of Civil Protection for 2008

Heading Implemented actions

Risk prevention

Celebration of the World Civil Defence Day organized under the auspices of ICDO (International Civil Defence Organization) on 1 March throughout the national territory;

Celebration of the International Disaster Prevention Day under the auspices of the UNISDR on 8 October 2008;

Functioning of the National Risk Observatory through the acquisition of new computers and the publication of newsletters on risk and meteorological issues.

Capacity building

Training, at the ICDO, of many senior officials from both the Department of Civil Protection and other administrative services on the conduct of civil protection operations

Fact-finding mission to the FIPOL (Maritime Pollution Control Fund);

Study trips to Sweden, Finland, Tunisia and Kenya by various staff of the Department of Civil Protection;

Training course on First-aid for the personnel of the Department of Civil Protection and other partners;

Participation in disaster medicine courses at the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Yaoundé;

Introduction of a civil protection course for students of the Faculty of Law, University of Yaounde II;

Training course on civil protection at the Yaounde Combined-Services Military Academy;

Participation in the DAVOS Forum, i.e. International Disaster and Risk Conference Global Forum;

Cooperation and international prospects

Launching with the UNDP and the EU of a National Programme for the Protection and Rehabilitation of Lake Nyos estimated at CFA 23 billion francs of which 8 billion has already been raised;

Follow up of the implementation of the 'Natural Risk Management and Civil Protection' project , the result of cooperation between Cameroon and France;

Relaunching of cooperation with Japan and the Federal Republic of Germany;

Development of the Cross-Sector Programme 'Emergency' with UNICEF, coordinated by the Department of Civil Protection, for the prevention and management of humanitarian crises affecting women and children;

Launching of activities for the setting up in Cameroon of a Civil Protection Regional Centre following formal approval by the Executive Committee of ICDO during its 2008 session;

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Follow up and management of Crises

Providing assistance to disaster victims throughout the national territory;

Disaster management: Influx of Chadian refugees in Tcholliré

Road accidents

Floods in Garoua in the North and Yaounde in the Centre

Organization of a Training Workshop of Joint Crisis Management Committees in the North for administrative authorities of the northern regions

Implementation of the National Disaster Prevention and Management Programme

Publication of the National Contingency Plan in collaboration with UNICEF

Drawing up of the Mfoundi ORSEC plan

Drawing up of a Risk Prevention Plan for the AES/SONEL dams

Communication

Publishing of the fifth report on the state of civil protection in Cameroon under the theme '*Safety in the workplace*'

Strategy to finance the civil protection sector

Continuing reflections under the auspices of the Department of Civil Protection/MINATD and the Department of Financial and Material Resources/MINATD aimed at raising funds for civil protection within the framework of the HIPC initiative;

Designing and forwarding of a draft decree on a Disaster Management Solidarity Fund pursuant to the mission assigned MINATD by the Prime Minister's Office.

Forthcoming construction of a warehouse on the 7- hectare land identified for the construction of the Civil Protection Regional Centre.

Source: Department of Civil Protection

II. Government activities planned for 2009

The action plan of the Department of Civil Protection for the year 2009 focuses on the following major areas:

1. Risk prevention

Apart from mass sensitization, drawing up of a media plan and mobilizing partners of the Department of Civil Protection and administrative authorities, for the celebration of the International Disaster Reduction Day and the World Civil Defence Day, efforts shall be made to strengthen the capacity of the National Risks Observatory (NRO) through the acquisition of more equipment and the adoption of a meteorological data transmission system. From an operational point of view, pilot Disaster Assistance Organization Plans (ORSEC) shall be designed and completed in Menchum (North West Region) and Noun (West Region).

Moreover, through the delimitation and control of safety perimeters as well as surrounding areas, a joint action with the National Fire Brigade for the implementation of the National Programme for Safety in Lake Nyos is envisaged. Meanwhile, training workshops and fact-finding missions shall lead to a preventive management of the ongoing construction of AES/SONEL storage dams.

2. Training, information and communication

Fact-finding missions carried out by staff of the Department of Civil Protection within international organizations will enhance their training on the conduct of civil protection operations. As concerns the public, the selection of candidates and follow-up of courses with the support of the Red Cross and the Fire brigade Unit trainers will facilitate training in and simulation of rescue operations for MINATD personnel and other partners.

In view of launching sensitization programmes on public and private media, agreements shall be reached with different communication structures within the national territory. This year will also witness the designing of the International Disaster Prevention Strategy Platform (IDPS)

Additional funds will ease the writing of the 2008/2009 report on the state of civil protection in Cameroon, while permanent data collection will result in an optimum management of our web site as well as the designing of a civil protection diary. Preparation and publication of a diary for the Department of Civil Protection will not be left out either.

3. International cooperation and planning

Besides increased lobbying with international partner institutions notably those of the United Nations systems, four other priority activities will be undertaken in civil protection services. During the first quarter of 2009 and, thanks to the contribution of the Cameroon Government, the Department of Civil Protection intends to implement the Natural Risks and Civil Protection Management project, with the support of the SCAC (Cooperation and Cultural Actions Service). It will also finalize studies aimed at creating an ICDO sub regional centre in

Cameroon. An agreement with the International Red Cross Federation will enhance safety in risk zones. In October, Cameroon will carry out its statutory mission within the ICDO.

Still within the framework of international cooperation, the implementation of the National Disaster Prevention and Management Programme includes the designing of a safety plan for risk-prone areas. For this financial year, emphasis will be on the finalization of a contingency plan through simulation exercises and the rehabilitation of social infrastructure in the conflict area following clashes between natives of Bali Nyonga and Bawock villages last year, and which had disastrous consequences. The project, conceived to be funded by HIPC funds, is ready.

4. Follow-up and management of disasters

Following the recommendations of the audit carried out by the French mission in its services in November 2007, the Department of Civil Protection will launch a survey aimed at resizing it. There are prospects throughout the year to provide rehabilitation aid to disaster victims.

As regards logistics, a 2009 budget forecast could help in the acquisition of new equipment, namely two cars. The launching of the IRCOSIF project, for its part, requires the boosting of the follow-up committee presided over by the Secretary- General of MINATD.

5. Strategic forecast

After Government intervention in the finalization of the framework agreement on international assistance approved by the National Assembly following consultation with the EU and other multilateral and bilateral partners, the Department of Civil Protection will draw up, edit and disseminate civil protection instruments in Cameroon.

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Table 3: Plan of Action of the Department of Civil Protection for 009

General and specific objectives

Identification of projects to implement

Necessary actions for the implementation of selected projects

Risk prevention

01. Organization of the World Civil Defence Day on 1 March 2009

Sensitization

Media plan

Mobilization of partners

02. Organization of the International Disaster Reduction Day

Sensitization

Media plan

Mobilization of partners

03. Reinforcement of the
National Risk Observatory
(NRO) activities

Acquisition of equipment
Adoption of a meteorological data transmission system

04. Designing of ORSEC pilot plans (Mfoundi, Menchum, and Noun)

Fact-finding missions
Documentary research
Reports

05. Launching of the National Safety and Rehabilitation Programme in Lake Nyos

Monitoring of safety perimeters
Delimitation of areas surrounding lakes

06. Preventive management of AES/SONEL dams

Training workshop and fact-finding missions

Training and information

07. Training on the conduct of civil protection operations Fact-finding missions of senior staff of the
Department of Civil Protection within international organizations in the area of civil protection

08. Setting up of the ISDR platform

09. Follow up of the training of MINATD personnel and other partners in first-aid and simulation of risk.

Organization of courses
Selection of candidates

10. Launching of sensitization programmes in public and private media

Agreement to be reached with the said media

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International cooperation and planning

11. 'Natural Risk and Civil Protection' project

Implementation of the Convention

12. Finalization of surveys for the setting up of an ICDO Regional Centre in Cameroon and development of
site

Reports

Marking out and surveying the area

Architectural plan

13. Project agreement between the Department of Civil Protection and the Red Cross (IFRC)

Plan for the safety of disasterprone zones

14. Statutory mission at the ICDO to attend Executive Council sessions

Fact-finding trips

Follow up and management of Crises

15. Rehabilitation aid to disaster victims

Processing of applications

Fund Raising

16. Studies for the resizing of the Department of Civil Protection requested by the audit team of the French Mission

Setting up of a working committee

Survey mission

Summary report

Implementation of the National Disaster Prevention and Management Programme

17. Rehabilitation of social infrastructure for Bali/Bawock disaster victims

Setting up of a working committee

Survey mission

Summary report

18. finalization of the contingency plan through simulation exercises Hold a MINATD/ UNDP/ UNICEF tripartite consultation

Strategic forecast

19. High level advocacy for finalization of the framework agreement on international assistance ratified by the National Assembly

Hold talks with the EU and other bilateral and multilateral partners

Communication

20. Drawing up, editing and disseminating instruments on civil protection in Cameroon

Putting instruments together

Editing them

21. Drawing up of the Cameroon civil protection report for 2008/2009

Additionnal fundraising

22. Management of the web site of the Department of Civil Protection

Data collection

23. Preparation and publication of a diary for the Department of Civil Protection

Data collection

Logistics

24. 24 Acquisition of new cars for the Department of Civil Protection

Follow up of related files at the PM's office and MINEPAT services

25. 25 launching of the IRCOSIF project.

Boosting of the follow-up committee presided over by SG/MINATD

Source: Department of Civil Protection

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Chapter 7

Cameroon civil protection in the media⁴⁰

The path being traced by the Department of Civil Protection is like a furrow in an agricultural wild land and is increasingly becoming perceptible. Judging from echoes from specialized national and international newspapers, one can acknowledge that the reputation of this department goes beyond Yaounde and Cameroon as a whole.

1. At the national level

ECOVOX, an ecology and sustainable development magazine published by the 'Cercle International pour la Promotion de la Création' (CIPCRE, International forum for the promotion of creativity), dedicated its 36th edition of July-December 2006 to the question of disasters. In about forty pages, the magazine gives a panoramic view of the types of disasters, places in the world where the worst cases of disasters occurred, impact of these disasters on life and the environment etc. Proposals were also made to 'prevent risks'. The guest of the magazine, Mr. Jean Pierre Nana, Director of Civil Protection in Cameroon's Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, in a three-page interview, shed some light on the understanding of disasters. We learn that, disaster is, 'the meeting of exposure and hazard' or 'a serious event whose consequences on human life, property and the environment are above the response capacity of the local community'. As he also said, there are various disaster-prone areas and types of risks in Cameroon; these are volcanic eruptions (such as recurrent Mount Cameroon eruptions), gas emissions, mass movements, invasion of insects and elephants, etc. All these exposures naturally lead to asking about what preventive measures have been put in place.

As written in ECOVOX, the focal point of the interview with the Director of Civil Protection was the presentation of the strategic plan of the Cameroon government for civil protection; this strategy is a three-fold plan implemented before, during and after disasters.

40 Author: André Marie yimga

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Prevention operated through the National Risk Observatory (NRO) is an important aspect of this strategy. To give meaning to the proverb that prevention is better than cure, it operates by collecting, analyzing, broadcasting and stocking information on natural and industrial hazards to forewarn the population against potential risks. Another component of prevention is the National Contingency Plan that stands as a kind of nationwide rescue organization.

Finally, the ECOVOX guest, from a general and pedagogic perspective, made an overview of the world's hot spots: the tsunami in South East Asia, Katrina and other hurricanes in the Americas and earthquakes'. He also talked of the activities of the International Civil Defence Organization. The conclusion of the guest that 'hazard is the same everywhere: only exposure level differs' was the second major headline of ECOVOX.

II. Cameroon civil protection as viewed from Geneva

During the year 2008, the *Revue Internationale de la Protection Civile* (World Civil Protection Review) in its English and French editions focused on Cameroon. The International Civil Protection Journal wrote on Lake Nyos in May under the title, '*Lake Nyos Rehabilitation: On the Road to Civil Defence Success in Cameroon*'. During the year 2008, the *Revue Internationale de la Protection Civile* (World Civil Protection Review) in its English and French editions focused on Cameroon. This is a retrospective view of humanitarian actions carried out as from the day after the disaster occurred, security measures around the lake, scientific and technical solutions such as degasification (successfully tested since March 1995), setting up of a warning system, material and psychological support to victims and the extended Nyos rehabilitation programme. This programme, whose implementation is already under way, aims at providing Nyos and the surrounding areas with basic facilities such as water, electricity, schools, health centres, roads etc., as well as facilitating the return of people who were resettled in various areas in Menchum division.

In November 2008, the International Civil Organization Review once more got interested in Cameroon, especially in the Department of Civil protection, MINATD. In a bid to better understand and assess the functioning of this institution in charge of the protection of citizens, their property and environment, the review wrote, as headline news, an article entitled: 'Cameroon Civil Protection Outreach: Changes and Prospects', published in the 2007-2008 Cameroon Civil Protection Report. Cameroon thus found itself compared with other countries but, also and more importantly, confronted with the overall question of prevention and response to disaster. The review notes that, '*the analysis of major civil protection systems in the world show recent progress consisting in a shift to civil protection systems focused on emergency response to new organizational models that invest resources on forecasts and prevention activities*'.

As concerns Cameroon, what is highlighted is 'the adjustment of civil protection to social changes' through communication, training and action. From this perspective, adjustment of risk management to the urban context, education on risks in order to avoid people viewing it as a fatality, and the appropriate and rational use of government means in case of a disaster are all

taken into account. All these elements give the Cameroonian civil protection model particular attention and recognition since it is acknowledged that *Cameroon has remained consistent in its will to push forward, always aiming at best performances, the search for efficiency in actions and thus contributing to a change in the perception as well as in civil protection actions in the country* As acknowledged in the review, beyond the Cameroon model, civil protection issues can better be tackled from a global perspective and successful examples should serve as models: *'comparing various systems and available instruments will enable rapid evolution (...) Together, we can learn best practices and establish potential mutual aid systems to better understand risks and different responses to provide'*.

See: www.onr.cm

Chapter 8

Promoting Civil Protection at an International Business Forum

I. Discussing disasters in business circles

The 3rd International Business Forum (Promote 2008) that took place from 5 to 14 December 2008 at the Yaounde Conference Centre saw the participation of almost 1 000 exhibitors including the Department of Civil Protection (DPC). The Business Forum (Promote) is a triennial rendezvous of international dimension organized by Inter-Progress Foundation under the patronage of the Cameroon Government. In this respect, this edition was the best opportunity offered to enterprises to promote themselves and open up new prospects. Promote offered to participating companies:

- An exhibition stands to display their know-how;
- An advertising space on the internet or in all documents designed and published for the show;
- To register and take part in debates;
- To sponsor and/or look for special partnership.

The Minister of State's decision to instruct the Department of Civil Protection to participate in this 3rd International Business Forum was, however, in line with government policy as concerns the prevention of disasters which is:

- To publicize the Department of Civil Protection and inform on its duties;
- To sensitize on risks and dangers that citizens are exposed to everyday;
- To initiate contacts with other enterprises, institutions or organizations wishing or likely to support the DPC in its fight to eradicate or at least to reduce disaster Risks

II. Communication for education

In order to make its way amongst businessmen concentrated on economic transactions, the Department of Civil Protection had to work out very efficient strategies. The infrastructure put in place for the purpose needed to be appropriate. The decoration of the stand had to be as attractive as possible in order to attract the greatest possible number of visitors. Thanks to advertising literature such as folders, advertising brochures, various editions of the Cameroon Civil

Protection report and documentation from partners such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the DPC had enough to hold visitors and the like spellbound.

The Department of Civil Protection (DPC) used the slogan ‘Prevention, Intervention and Relief’ to explain its missions. During the 10 days of the Fair, many teams were very busy in and around the stand to attract as many people as possible. The approach consisted in telling the visitors where the DPC’s headquarters was located and then explaining the contents of the advertising documents given them, before letting them go. Films on some disasters that happened in Cameroon and in the world were also shown in order to make things more concrete and attractive for better sensitization.

III. Capitalizing on encouraging results

This approach, based on proximity which is common among commercial agents, was fruitful. It should be pointed out that question on the prevention and management of disasters attracted the attention of the general public, particularly that of pupils and students who came to the fair. Practical activities such as the simulation of first-aid actions and other attractions drew some 1200 visitors to the stand. Major Nana’s expertise put at the disposal of the DPC came to promote the value and quality of the show. The exhibition of first-aid and emergency actions was sometimes witnessed by over 50 people at the same time.

Each time such exhibitions were announced, people came running from all over the fair ground to watch. Students and pupils were so pleased with the investment in their favour that they requested that posters carrying the ‘ten instructions to protect oneself against disaster risks’ produced by the Minister 3 of Territorial Administration and Decentralization be displayed in their respective schools. University students promised to establish ‘Civil Protection Clubs’ in their respective schools. As concerns international cooperation, the DPC’s mission at the Conference Centre was also fruitful. The DPC made contacts with bilateral and multilateral stakeholders like the embassies of Israel, Belgium and the High Commission of Canada. Contacts with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) opened the way to explore new partnership opportunities with that sub-regional structure, in view of setting up local units for the strengthening of the capacities of member states in the field of disaster prevention and management. At the media level, contacts were initiated with international media organs such Radio France Internationale (RFI), Canal+ Horizon and the Swiss-based Edipresse.

IV. Coping with numerous expectations

At the end of this rather successful experience, the Department of Civil Protection is now to face new and numerous challenges, notably how to live up to expectations, considering all that was suggested by the visitors. ‘*The future of the DPC will never be scoped without Promote 2008*’, the Director told his collaborators at the evaluation meeting. In fact, all new contacts will be capitalized to build new fruitful partnerships in order to reduce disaster risks and better protect human beings and property. Therefore, new avenues will be explored in the area of prevention, intervention and rehabilitation. The DPC counts on sensitization campaigns, better media coverage of its missions and activities by creating radio and TV programs and a regular updating of its website in order to remain closer to Cameroonians.

4

Memo No. 0066/NS/MINATD/DPC/SCOOR On the operational organization of the DPC's participation in the 3rd International Business Forum 'Promote 2008' under the distinguished patronage of the Head of State, President of the Republic.

Supervised by the Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, this event will be organized as follows:

1. GENERAL COORDINATION

Mr. Ngbwa Alphonse, Secretary-General of MINATD.

2. 2) FOLLOW-UP AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

Mr. Nana Jean Pierre, Director of the Department of Civil Protection.

3. 3) COMMISSIONS

• Commission 1: Logistics and stand-by

Chairperson: Mr Kuitsouc Dominique CEA3/CEP

Rapporteurs: Mrs Mbessa Lucie

Mr Ngwe Samuel

Members: Mr. Tchakounte Robert

Mr Ngoufack Nestor

• Commission 2: Partnership and Policy Projections

Chairperson: Mr Tchuenta Gilbert

Rapporteurs: Mrs Gnintedemo Estelle

Mr Minla'a Arnaud

Members: Miss Avomo Yvette

Mr Amougou Louis de Gonzague

• Commission 3: Communication, Public Relations and Protocol

Chairperson: Mrs Yap, Mariatou CEA2/CEP

Rapporteurs: Miss Koploug Danielle

Miss Oly Francine

Members: Mr. Etoundi Joseph

Mrs Fouda Anicette

M.abbo Abdoul Bagui

• Commission 4: Technical Secretariat and Centralization

Chairperson: Mrs Etoundi Stephanie, CEP/DPC
Facilitator: Mr Abada Simeon, CELCOM/MINATD
Rapporteurs: Mr Mvogo Janvier
Mrs Mfegue Thérèse.
Members: M. Ebo'o Roland
Mrs Ngakoue Gargette
Mrs Mbassi Pascaline
Mr. Endouzoumou Gabriel, CELCOM /MINATD.

I urge all members of the commissions to actively commit themselves for the success of this very important event. 5 December 2008

(Signed) *Marafa Hamidou YaYa*

Box 1: First-Aid Rules and Actions

The three most important rules of first-aid and emergency care are:

- Avoid exposing oneself or others to danger through one's action;
- Suppress the danger or mark out the area (Warning signals) to avoid worsening the situation (that of the victim or a third party).
- Call for emergency assistance as soon as possible; it is usually the first thing to do by someone who has not received any first-aid training.

Warning (to alert and prepare for relief action)

When?

After having secured the place of the accident (you and others are safe).
For instance, disconnecting the current, if it is an electric accident, marking out the place with visible signals if it is a road accident...

Why should you alert?

Alerting the emergency services is extremely important. When this is rightly done, rescue teams immediately come with adequate means.

Who should be alerted?

Emergency toll-free numbers:

- SAMU/(Emergency Medical Assistance Service) 119
- Fire-Brigade..... 118
- Police: law and order.....117
- Gendarmerie: law and order.....113
- DPC: administration.....22.21.13.10 (toll free)

Indicate them:

- The phone number from which you are calling;
- The location of the accident (Town, street, number, near... (a well known building or business, etc.)...)
- The nature of the accident and the persisting risks;
- The number of people involved in the accident
- The apparent situation of the victims
- The first-aid measures already taken

NB: Never hang up before the emergency team asks you to do so.

Box 2: Prevention is better than cure

Most of the disaster situations we face in life derive from very small things we neglect or ignore. Getting acquainted with such knowledge and putting it into practice can really improve on or save a lot of lives. Here are some examples:

1. In case of fire:

Facts

- a) A badly extinguished cigarette has been thrown into a waste-paper basket or on a carpet and then.....
- b) When there are power cuts, we always resort to candles; to combat mosquitoes, we use mosquito coils. When not well positioned, these objects can set fire on our curtains, bed-sheets and so on...
- c) It may happen that while we are cooking the gas runs off. While waiting that a new bottle is fixed, we resort to a kerosene cooker. Mounting the new bottle near the kerosene cooker may provoke an explosion and set fire all over the place...
- d) We may be frying food in a frying pan and oil catches fire. Panic-stricken, we run away to look for help. When we come back we find the house is on fire ...

What to do?

- a) Cigarette butts should be well extinguished and not thrown into waste-paper baskets;
- b) We should rather use kerosene or electric lamps than candles and when we use candles, we should position them far away from cloth and other household flammable materials;
- c) Whenever we buy a bottle of gas, we should ensure that it is tightly locked and we should not open it near a fire source;
- d) If the oil in the frying pan catches fire, use a wet floor rag to cover the utensil from the inside (from oneself to the frying pan).

2. In case of floods

Facts

The processing of domestic wastes is one of the major causes of floods in our towns. As a matter of fact,

a) They are often thrown into waste-paper baskets which are higher than the children in charge of emptying them;

b) In rainy seasons, they are thrown into water drains with the hope that they will be carried away by rainwater.

In any case, all this refuse blocks or obstructs the drains and channels the rain and wastewater into houses. Building in marshy areas is equally a source of floods. These geographical structures are the waterbeds of streams which get narrowed due to human constructions, thereby causing floods and discomfort.

What to do?

We should throw our wastes in appropriate places and avoid building in flood-prone areas.

Box 3: How to prevent household accidents

1. The emergency drug box should be well locked and kept out of the reach of children.
2. Always check the expiring date of the drugs before use.
3. Mark out dangerous products and avoid putting such products in packages that have previously contained food products. For instance, putting kerosene (which is now coloured) into a fruit juice bottle.
4. Avoid lighting a barbecue with petrol, which is a highly volatile product, for you can easily receive flames on your face.
5. Do not store petrol in your house.
6. Put the handle of the frying pan against the wall while cooking.
7. Do not allow electric wires or other dangerous objects on the ground.
8. Never forget to stop your electric meter before changing a bulb or before any other work on the circuit.
9. Avoid spraying water on an electric device (e.g. a high pressure cleaner).
10. In case of burn, cool the burnt surface as soon as possible (spray with water).
11. When a child has fever, reduce the temperature by wrapping him in a wet towel;
12. Avoid sleeping in a tightly closed room with wood or charcoal fire (you may suffocate).
13. In case of fainting: lay the victim on his side and get rid of every object likely to wound him.

14. Caution to be taken while handling:

- Toxic agents: Hold your breath when you enter an unventilated room with smoke. The rescue manoeuvre should not exceed 30 seconds.
- Fire: To enter a premise on fire, take maximum protection by covering yourself with wet cloth. Protect your hands and face.
- Explosion due to gas escape: avoid operating power switches, electric bells and pocket lamps: this might generate a spark that can cause fire.
- Electric shock: disconnect the current before touching the victim.

Chapter 9

Partnership in the implementation civil protection programmes 41

Thanks to the advocacy that the DPC has been conducting for a few years now, two main programmes are being carried out on the field relating to the prevention and management of disasters. These are the '*Natural Disaster Management and Civil Protection*' (GRINP) project and the '*Lake Nyos Rehabilitation*' Project.

I. The Lake Nyos Rehabilitation Project.

Following the Lake Nyos Disaster that resulted in August 1986 in more than 1,700 dead and almost 10,000 displaced, the Cameroon Government found it necessary to understand and control the situation and then, plan the rehabilitation of the victims. In order to consider all the aspects of the problem, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2007 opened two phases of talks intended to fully identify the situation and work out a plan and control the vulnerability of the region. Experts have come out with a four point plan to be implemented in five years:

- The protection of the Lake Nyos Zone;
- The rehabilitation of displaced people and support for the production sector;
- The management of sustainable resources and the protection of the environment;
- The improvement of structuring infrastructure.

Specifically, the '*Lake Nyos Protection*' component seeks to eradicate or, at least, reduce the risks of physico-chemical disasters of the area, by trying to understand what really happened in the past and then looking for means to prevent the reoccurrence of the phenomenon.

4 Author : Franklin L Kamtche

After having scientifically and technically agreed on the necessity of degassing and developing the surroundings of the lake, the first gas-releasing stripper went operational. Others will follow. In the same perspective, a contingency plan for the Menchum Division is being worked out.

The component on the '*rehabilitation of displaced people and support for the production sector*' seeks to understand the cultural, social and economic basis of the survivors before working out rehabilitation and support strategies to empower them to settle in their original sites. Short-term

actions on realistic targets regarding anthropology, geography, economy and civil protection have been identified: how are these communities traditionally organized? (Families and relatives, religions, leadership devolution methods, land management customs, survival strategies and conflict management); also considered were specificities as concerns the relief, climate, hydrology, activities and mobility of populations; the identification of their basic social needs, how they usually manage to supply them and finally, a contingency plan (delimitation of a safety perimeter around the lake) and updating of data on disaster.

The component on the ‘management of sustainable resources and protection of the environment’, seeks to ensure that the rehabilitated population carry out their activities in biodiversity-friendliness, by harnessing and preserving the natural resources available. In other words, to eradicate the risks of chemical pollution due to accelerated degassing activities and to bring the population along to be really involved in preventive and active fight against the deterioration of ecosystems; and finally to map out and give land to people according to their activities (farming, grazing, forestry, environment, etc.), and agree on methods to protect fish and wildlife in the region.

Finally, the component on the ‘improvement and development of structuring infrastructure’ will enable the rapid implantation of basic equipment such as roads and electrification, which in turn will ease the movement of persons, information and goods, as well as the transition to modernity.

II. The ‘Natural Disaster Management and Civil Protection’ (GRINP) Project

Supported by the Cooperation and Cultural Action Department of the French Embassy, the Natural Disaster Management and Civil Protection (GRINP) project at present focuses on the preparation of contingency prevention plans (PPR) for the Mount Cameroon Area (Fako Division) and that of Lake Monoun (Noun Division). It seeks to improve on disaster prevention and the management of emergencies around Mount Cameroon and Lake Monoun, and to find adequate solutions to recurrent emergencies to avoid heavy losses, as in the past, in these highly sensitive areas. To achieve this, it is necessary to carry out the following:

- Protect inhabited spaces and economic activities;
- Stabilize of settlements to enable a monitored development of some regions presenting high disaster risks;
- Mitigate (through better management) human and economic damage in the event of a disaster;
- Develop disaster prevention plans with a participatory approach in the target areas.

Whenever confronted with disasters, the government resorted to various emergency actions. But in spite of efforts such as sensitization, prevention and management of disasters, which have been carried out for a few years, many people continue to consider disasters as ‘the

will of God' and think they should only cling on to Him to be spared. It is therefore imperative for the public authorities to set up prevention plans with the assistance of foreign partners for a proactive management of disasters. The plan for the prevention of disasters around Mount Cameroon and Lake Monoun is in line with this approach.

On-going studies will lead to the mapping of target zones with their extensions, occupation plans for risky zones and subsequent regulatory measures , the creation of a safety perimeter ; the designing of a regulatory file for the authorities concerned accompanied by an introductory note and finally the production of reports, computer files and digital maps.

Chapter 10

Activity Report of the National Fire Brigade (see www.onr.cm)

Operational activities of the National Fire Brigade for 2008

Type of intervention

Jan. Feb. March April May June July Aug. Sept Oct. Nov. Dec. Total

Fire 131 193 100 87 82 85 59 67 64 82 83 129 **1162**

Road

Accident

23 24 23 25 26 23 19 41 20 35 33 44 **336**

Emergency relief

34 43 44 43 39 44 39 60 59 55 47 47 **554**

Assistance to individuals

11 15 14 18 16 18 17 22 16 15 20 25 **207**

False alerts 8 16 15 13 7 7 9 16 11 15 15 11 **143**

Animal interference

2 2 1 1 1 1 2 0 1 1 2 1 **15**

Protection of property

0 3 1 2 3 1 2 0 2 2 0 3 **19**

Water- electricity

-gas

4 0 1 1 1 0 0 0 4 3 0 5 **19**

Floods -landslides

0 0 0 0 0 0 1 0 0 1 0 0 **2**

Removal of corpses

7 3 4 2 6 4 4 4 7 9 7 1 **58**

Drowning 0 0 1 2 0 1 0 1 3 1 2 0 **11**

Other interventions

1 0 0 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 **2**

Total 221 299 204 194 181 184 153 211 187 219 209 266 **2528**

File Survey on first-aid action in disaster situations in Cameroon

INTERNATIONAL CIVIL DEFENCE ORGANIZATION ICDO

Message from Mr Nawaf Al-Sleibi Secretary-General of the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO)

On the occasion of World Civil Defence Day 1 March 2008 '*Civil Defence and basic first-aid techniques*'

I wish I knew what to do! ». Who amongst us has not witnessed an accident at home, on the road, or at the workplace, and not felt bitter about not knowing what action to take? When a serious accident occurs, the first few minutes after the event are critical. Knowing the appropriate action to take can save one or several lives whilst waiting for the emergency services to arrive.

Today, in the majority of countries, numerous operational and voluntary first aiders assist emergency services and, in particular, the civil protection forces, through State-accredited associations. Notable examples include the Red Cross and Red Crescent national organizations. Added to these are people who for professional reasons were required or strongly encouraged to undertake specialized complementary first-aid training.

Despite these measures, the number of first aiders is still largely insufficient. Two or three minutes is all it takes to die from a haemorrhage or respiratory arrest, whereas the time required for the emergency services to arrive on the scene varies between a few minutes and a few dozen minutes, depending on the organization of the emergency services in each country. Reducing this time to less than five minutes nationwide would simply be too costly. The only economically viable solution is to increase, as much as possible, basic first aid training among the general public. It would be better to have a multitude of individuals who know essential basic life-saving techniques than a handful of first aid specialists.

To do this, the existing complete courses on first aid leading to a national diploma qualification are not appropriate as the courses cannot be delivered massively in a matter of hours. However, experience has proven that basic first-aid techniques can be learnt rapidly as they are simple enough to be grasped by all.

This is why public authorities should implement all necessary measures to ensure that basic first-aid training is made as widely accessible as possible so that everyone will know what to do when faced with a victim of in emergency situation.

The task is difficult to accomplish as, in the majority of countries, knowledge of first-aid is not compulsory for anyone and few people decide voluntarily to learn these skills. However, certain States have succeeded in implementing an efficient policy on first-aid training, notably when applying to obtain a driving licence.

It therefore seems possible to ensure that a maximum number of people receive this basic training and civil defence services are best placed to train the population in essential life-saving techniques.

As a matter of fact, civil protection agents who undertake daily rescue operations on the ground would be most effective at spreading the message to the population and instilling in them best practice

procedures to undertake before the arrival of the emergency services. This would not only benefit the health and wellbeing of the public, but would also serve to enhance the image of the Civil Defence Organization.

This is why, on the occasion of World Civil Defence Day, 1 March 2008, the ICDO is inviting all States to consider, together with the support of their civil defence services, establishing and implementing a training programme on basic first-aid techniques to be delivered to the greatest number.

Nawaf Al-Sleibi

ICDO Secretary-General

Chapter 11

Planning of the survey⁴²

Introduction

In his message to the world community on the occasion of the World Civil Defence Day celebrated on 1 March 2008, the ICDO Secretary-General reiterated the need for professional relief workers for the whole human society that is more than ever before exposed to various disasters and risks. However, he did not fail to show his preference for a wider dissemination of simple first-aid techniques which most of the populations can easily master and which could help in saving human life before the arrival of specialists or doctors for more professional treatment. In the same vein, many countries in the world and particularly in Africa orientated the World Civil Defence Day towards sensitization and first-aid training actions as noticed in Algeria, Tunisia and Cameroon for example.

In this context, a survey on first-aid in a country could either identify the initiatives of public, private and associative sectors on the matter or, focus on communities to assess the perception and the level of first-aid knowledge with a view to ensuring an optimal reduction of disaster impacts on human life. In other words, the question was to know whether such a survey could be handled from an upstream or a downstream approach, with the risk that each option could likely lead to a poor appraisal of the situation.

The downstream option was finally adopted for the reason that communities, households and individuals are those who, on a daily basis, as accidents occur, are called upon to bring first-aid to rescue a human being. However, institutional stakeholders who play a key role in the dissemination of first-aid information and knowledge were not left out. This is why the methodology adopted included both quantitative and qualitative survey techniques.

⁴² Author: Guy K Ngamy

I. Preparing and undertaking data collection

Data in this survey was collected in November 2008 following preparation that ran through October of the same year. The preparatory step mainly centred on defining the nature of data to collect, collection tools, the geographical area of the survey, and sampling methods of the survey population.

1. Quantitative data

The quantitative data published in this survey was collected from households, targeting adult population sampled at home. In selected towns whose profile is given in the list below, the investigator had to apply the itinerary technique that consists in choosing a crossroad in a residential area and applying a regular sampling interval. As a consequence, the number of itineraries covered per given town depended on its dimension and density. Similarly, the number of surveyed households on a given itinerary depended on its dimension and population density.

When the survey agent arrived at a household, he first of all contacted the head of the family, and in their absence, their spouse(s). When none of them could be reached, questions were asked to the eldest person available or lastly to any inhabitant aged at least 21. After selecting the person to interview, the researcher asked questions and filled the answers in the questionnaire. The respondent/informant could freely read the questionnaire as the interview unfolded could not fill it (be it alone or in the presence of the interviewer).

Quantitative data was then collected using a relatively short questionnaire targeting the following points:

- Respondents' experience on various disasters;
- Perception of the importance of first-aid to victims;
- Personal attitude regarding rescue action;
- Knowledge of appropriate actions in given situations;

Close-ended questions were pre-coded and answers corresponding to coding figures entered earlier. Open-ended questions on their part were counted manually prior to a coding of answer modalities.

2. Qualitative data

In each survey area, interviewers met divisional public service heads in charge of education and public health issues and their investigation was oriented towards two directions:

- Sensitization initiatives
- Training actions

The strategy in this qualitative survey was to obtain from authorities of these two key sectors of social life, information on implemented, programmed or on-going actions aimed at equipping their respective service users with first-aid knowledge. More specifically, as perceived before the survey, some activities in the educational environment are geared toward health and firstaid tips appropriate for the student population. Thus, data was collected from the divisional service heads in charge of post and extra

curricular activities; they were essentially related to initiatives centred on training and sensitization on first aid in school institutions under their authority.

In addition, as regards health, the team did not go to hospitals but to service heads of health districts where the survey was conducted. There equally, it had been felt that this aspect of the activities of health districts could comprise a first-aid component, thus the domain investigated was that of community health. Data collected was thus related to information, education and communication activities and the survey was interested in the education of the population on first aid. Besides this particular research, interviewers in some areas also got interested in quick intervention means that health structures have to enable them take over after the local actors have carried out first aid in case of major disasters.

II. Geographical area of the survey

In order to perceive the delimitation of the geographical area under study, it is undoubtedly necessary to look at the delimitation policy of the survey area before presenting the geographical distribution of respondents.

1. Selection of survey areas

Survey areas were selected on the ground of the situations of disasters that occurred in 2008. Consequently, some areas of the country have not been included in the survey because of lack of information on some major events recorded during the past one, two or three years. Given areas were selected in each survey zone with regard to occurrence and sometimes, recurrence of disasters in the recent past. The following table summarizes events which guided the selection of survey zones and furthermore, of towns and villages in the said zones.

Table 4: Defining survey zones

Zone Major events recorded

Far north Influx of refugees into Kousseri, explosion of a truck at Limani (Mayo Sava)

North: Floods in Garoua

North: West: Landslide in Menchum and Boyo

West: Road accidents, landslide in Bafoussam

Centre: Floods, road accidents in Yaounde

Littoral: Floods, road accidents, technological disasters

South west: Floods in Limbe, maritime traffic accident in Tiko, etc.

Source: White Dove inventory of disasters, 2008

2. Geographical distribution of respondents

From the guidance above, areas were selected as survey sites and population estimates were got from current official documents. In the absence of recent statistics on population, data used was obtained from the Cameroon Road Network Master Plan, which used population estimates per division and per town to conceive a rational road investment policy was adopted. This data was fine-tuned by local estimates that were themselves based on projections from the General Population Census in 1987. Finally, a sample of about a thousand persons was retained to be investigated upon. Taking into account the response rate which varied from one town to another, as well as some data collection constraints, the survey population finally had the following geographical set up:

Table 5: Spatial distribution of sample

Survey zones Localities

Expected number of respondents

Actual number of respondents

Far North

Kousseri 30 30

Maroua 60 60

North Garoua 45 46

North west

Bamenda 45 44

Wum 15 14

Fundong 15 14

West

Bafoussam-Town 60 39

Bafoussam-Rural (Batoukop) 15 15

Centre

Yaounde 210 184

Bafia 30 30

Nkometou 15 15

Ayos 15 15

Littoral

Douala 270 280

Nkongsamba 45 45

Njombe 15 15

Edéa 45 45

Pouma 15 15

South West

Buea 30 30
Limbe 30 30

Total 19 towns and villages 1005 967 (see more illustrated in www.onr.cm)

Source: REPC 2008 data base and survey guide

III. Profile of the sample

In order to describe the final sample retained, it is important to focus on the living environment: This will make possible a comparison of rural and urban areas. It is also important to present the educational level as well as the socio professional status of respondents taking into account the fact that the former sometimes influences the latter. Equally, normal population reference points such as age, sex, position in the household must also be considered.

1. Place of residence

Survey towns were the centres of major stakes from the triple demographic, economic and environmental stand points. While distributing the sample according to population density, we were bound to follow a certain 'economic hierarchy' between localities: the Littoral, for instance where more than 40 percent of respondents were concentrated, is the region where about 60 percent of companies in Cameroon are located. Concerning the rural populations, respondents were mostly exposed to life-threatening disasters; and since their memory of disasters was essentially limited to road accidents, such rural settings could be considered as transit points of city-dwellers moving from one town to another.

On the whole, the distribution of the sample indicates that 78.3% of people living in urban areas were interviewed and 21.7% in rural or semi-urban areas. It is important to note that they are essentially located in the Centre, Littoral, West and North West.

2. Socio-professional status

The educational level of respondents was more than the minimum required to rationally express their perception of first aid, though it should be acknowledged that more than one fifth (21 percent) only had primary school level. Nevertheless, even with that low level, the attitudes and behaviour they said they would adopt in emergency situations were of great importance in the survey, given that first aid being is more of a practical experience than a question of reflection. The remaining respondents were of secondary and high school level as can be seen from the table below:

Table 6: Level of education of respondents

Frequency Percentage Percentage validated

With no schooling 40 4,1 4,2

Primary education 207 21,4 21,7

Secondary education 522 54,0 54,6

Higher education 187 19,3 19,6

Total 956 98,9 100,0

Missing system 11 1,1 967 100,0

(see more illustrated in www.onr.cm)

Source: REPC 2008 Data base

Following the same trend as that of educational level, the analysis of the occupations of respondents shows that less than one fifth of the population is made up of public and private sector low-class workers. It is also worth noting that the active population, be they students or the jobless, constituted about a quarter of respondents interviewed. Self-employed people in the formal or informal sector, employees or employers made up almost two fifth of the sample. The socio-professional distribution of respondents is more explicit in the table below:

Table 7: Professional configuration of respondents

Frequency Percentage Percentage validated

Unemployed 188 19,4 19,6

Student 59 6,1 6,1

State agent 35 3,6 3,6

Senior official in the public sector 126 13,0 13,1

Senior official in the private sector 10 1,0 1,0

Private employee 143 14,8 14,9

Private employer 31 3,2 3,2

Self-employed 367 38,0 38,2

Others 1 0,1 0,1

Total 960 99,3 100,0

Missing system 7 0,7 967 100,0

(see more illustrated in www.onr.cm)

Source: REPC 2008 Data base

3. Position in household

The novelty in this survey was that the number of male respondents was by far superior to women, a margin of more than 15 points, that is 57.9 against 42.1 percent. Men were more frequently encountered than women. This trend, in a country where from all population-related surveys, figures always show that the number of women is superior to the number of men, can be explained by the fact that in accordance with the African Culture, the women we encountered alongside their men tended to let the men speak. This behavioural pattern is pertinent as 67.3 percent of the sample was made up of married persons as against 32.7 of unmarried ones; again, descendants of household heads in this group accounted for 12 percent which shows that unmarried family heads were less numerous among the respondents. Another way to view this sample set up can be to consider that the people who presented themselves as family heads constituted more than half of the respondents, that is 54%, which could be added to spouses, who made up 25%, to reach the conclusion that more than four fifth (4/5) of respondents played the social role of family

heads. According to the same trend, the ages of respondents ranged from 31 to 50 years and the statistical chart below clearly shows that respondents of less than 30 years of age, even when added to the 9% of respondents aged more than fifty, could not make up even one third of the sample.

Graph 3: Age of respondents, in percentage of sample



Source: REPC 2008 Data base

Conclusion

At the end, the profile of the typical respondent in this survey could be viewed as follows: ¼-town dweller, at least secondary school educational level, household head or spouse. Males account for more than 2/3, married and aged more than 30. This is the typical profile of respondents in this survey on understanding, perception and knowledge of first aid in the Cameroon population. Data collected served as a ground for a reflection on intervention infrastructure and actions undertaken by various walks of Cameroon society aiming at large scale education, sensitization and training in first aid. Of course, this survey could not avoid the current perceptions of the people about first aid, since existing literature shows that Africa in general and Cameroon in particular have an ancestral, thus pre-colonial approach to emergency assistance medicine. Finally, following a quiz on accurate actions to take in given situations, answered by respondents, this study will attempt a summary appraisal of the capacity of Cameroonians in first aid before presenting some practical teaching of actions to take when faced with victims of various disaster-related injuries.

Chapter 12

Emergency medicine in pre-colonial Cameroon 43

Introduction

Is the practice of emergency life-saving techniques in Cameroon a phenomenon imported from the imperialist West as other similar situations would make us believe? Was the perception and knowledge, the mastery and prevention of possible disasters a part of the daily lives of our ancestors before the arrival of the triumphant westerners? Speaking of first aid in pre-colonial times brings us to the debate on traditional medicine, notably with regards to reanimation and minor surgery 44, and also on the mystical and religious

beliefs surrounding the need to save lives. It is a question of finding out whether traditional medicine envisaged or applied emergency medical techniques or first aid for the injured and sick; whether there was any first aid in ancient Cameroon which has been forgotten today. To answer these questions, it is necessary to look into the situations that warranted the practice of emergency first aid actions and examine the different methods and techniques of traditional emergency first aid. This calls for the analysis of the causes, stakeholders and practices inherent to the desire for first aid, that is, ancestral first-aid actions in Cameroon.

1. Situations and stakeholders of first aid in ancient Cameroon

The community life of the people of pre-colonial Africa always required the application of common knowledge to help others, that is, to save lives. From the start, it has always been a question of efficiently treating injuries or wounds ⁴⁵. Is it necessary to target a turning point date during which these practices were used? This is difficult to say because the Egyptians already distinguished themselves with health knowledge that depended on primitive medicine, long before the beginning of our era.

43 Author : Sylvie Landela

44 http://www.croix-rouge.fr/index/partner_campagne.html;http://www.croix-rouge.fr/index/partner_campagne.html

45 *ibid*

And when one knows that the majority of sub-Saharan people claim that they are culturally related to the Pharaonic Egypt, we are made to believe that long before the development of Hippocrate in Europe, Africans were already experimenting more or less primary practices related to the treatment and consequently to the survival of the population ⁴⁶.

1. Situations requiring first aid

In Cameroon as in all other traditional African countries, community life was governed by an original political, economic and social order. This was an ancestral organization that had the particularity of being mainly bound to the supernatural beliefs greatly inscribed in their minds: the cosmogonies. Also, these communities perceived the world as a well established order. In general, this world was perceived as being difficult and oppressive. It was a source of fear. Also, people sought to forecast it, to bypass it and avoid its terrors. One could distinguish two major groups of disasters faced by Cameroonians in the course of history. The first type stems from the forces of nature. In the case of natural disasters such as floods, falling trees and landslides, man admitted that before the forces of nature he was helpless.

Though this confession of impotency was physical, the reaction was magical: the population tried to carry out activities that sustained the hope of neutralizing the effects of disasters or simply the prevention of their occurrence through miraculous accomplishments. The second type of disasters directly involved human beings in their daily activities. These are notably domestic and military disasters. As in the first case, this second type of disastrous situations occurred and could be graded: injuries, burns, drowning, outbreak of fire in the village, tribal wars.

2. Stakeholders involved

Faced with all these cases, there were different types of actors who were in charge of the management of disasters. The first group of people involved was the community as a whole that was

obliged to undertake actions to provide prompt help to victims as soon as the disaster occurred on the basis of the remarkable solidarity that existed in the African tradition. Women were found at the centre of these prompt interventions.

46 The reader will profitably refer to Cheikh Anta Diop's 'Nations nègres et culture', Paris, Présence africaine, 1972

The woman, who holds the central place in the home and takes care of domestic activities that affect all the parts of the family, naturally became a fine psychologist in the traditional communities. This quality implicitly enabled her to participate in situations of distress as a psychological tonic for all. Thus, during tribal wars for example, the women who rarely went to the battle field except for witches and soothsayers 47 had the preventive duty to hide and manage young people, aged persons and the disabled 48. For the Ewondos for example, this duty was reserved for a specific class of women, the first wives, probably because they already had the experience of handling polygamous homes.

The woman who was highly involved in procreation and agricultural production also faced many casualties and disasters related to domestic and farming activities. Certainly, this is why at all times and in all places, she has wisely extracted from the earth recipes used to help people in distress. These recipes which are still used till date are nicknamed 'grandmother's recipes', for they have existed from time immemorial. They include the application of egg yolk or a fatty solution on fresh burns, the inhaling of pit toilet odours to reanimate convulsing children, the placing of a peace plant in front of the door to ward off evil, drinking of water in the night after a bad dream to cleanse oneself of possible ill luck, etc. However, one may question the efficiency of these formulae and techniques. Did they really soothe the pain? Did they merely prevent the worsening of the malaise?

It is common place that in the event of a disaster, traditional healers usually intervened as real specialists, generally after first aid has been given to the victims. However, it happened that after providing on- the- spot first aid to the victims, the first people who were present on the site felt the need to transport the victims directly to the nearest specialist. In his capacity as both a healer and a priest, the traditional healer was very close to the people whose demands were usually fulfilled.49.

This usually called for the use of preventive techniques based on magical and religious powers as was the case during armed confrontations between ethnic groups where diviners and soothsayers played a central role on the warfront. 50 While drawing from the elements of nature and supernatural powers, Cameroonians have invented emergency aid techniques to save their communities.

II. The effectiveness of techniques used

1. Common knowledge and specialized skills

First aid actions during disasters in pre-colonial Cameroon are intimately related more or less to the mastery of precise traditional medical activity by non-specialists like housewives. But, generally, these actions were incumbent on the specialists, the traditional healers, who also constituted a respected source of information; an incontestable recourse for treatment. In the days of French tutelage in Cameroon, one of the founders of the Ad Lucem Foundation recognized the deep rooted exercise of sanitary practices despite the little influence of western medicine and the fact that it had been practiced for over half a century: *'I have nothing to say about the medicines frequently used by the masses as purgatives or as anti-diarrhoea*

treatments, as tranquilizers or as sedatives or as worm treatments. In any case, the effectiveness of this local pharmacopoeia is sufficient for the natives to maintain their confidence in it

51 This was because traditional healers had the reputation at the same time to find out the cause of an illness (epidemic), as well as some disasters. At this level, they operated in two ways: by exploiting the natural resources and the use of supernatural forces.

2. Mastery of the natural environment

Indeed, the healers possessed an in-depth knowledge of the substances found in medicinal plants, their general therapeutic indications and their various curative powers. They also used leaves, seeds, stems, tree backs or roots to treat different symptoms.

47 See Bah thierno, in «Guerre pouvoir et société dans l'Afrique précoloniale centre, le lac et la côte du Cameroun», Thesis for a PHD in History, volume 1 et 2 , Université de Paris I, 1985 .

48 Mveng-ayi, M.-«La formation et l'équipement des années du pays Beti au début du XX siècle», *Revue Camerounaise d'Histoire*, No1. , 1971, pp.16- 17.

49 Kenneth L. Leonard, «Les guérisseurs traditionnels africains : l'économie de la santé», in World Bank, Review, No2. May 2001 , p. .

50 S L Andela BamBona, 'Les femmes et les Allemands. Histoire du dynamisme au Sud-Cameroun Allemand, 1884-1945' Dissertation for a Post-graduate Certificate, University of Yaounde I, 2002, p.

51 L.P Aujoulat in his proposal found in P.J. Cousteix, «L'art et la pharmacopée des guérisseurs Ewondo (région de Yaoundé), Yaounde, special number, IRSC, 1961, p. 10.

Their alleged contact with the ancestors and the supernatural forces enabled them to confirm their formulae and to systematize their medications. Most traditional healers turned out to be both herbalists and soothsayers. Dr Louis Paul Aujoulat confirms this in the following lines: *in Black Africa- and in Cameroon, the supernatural is not separated from the natural and fetishist practices mingle with therapeutic methods which are both acceptable* 53. In reality, he continued, the healer was capable, in the religious domain, of neutralizing the ominous forces released by the patient through his ignorance or carelessness as well as, in the medical domain, of preparing and applying active drugs against the symptoms described by the patient "54.

As practitioners using natural products, these herbalists in emergency health situations for example, used well- prepared medications that were administered according to varying prescriptions and treatment methods. Thus, after consultation, they could administer some medications for internal use such as herb teas, infusions, and macerations of leaves, stems and roots External treatments were administered by anointing with oil or robbing with ointments, incisions of abscess and reduction of fractures or fixing of bone fragments using bamboo devices 56 Nevertheless, one can question the efficiency of these techniques when faced with large scale disaster situations such as drowning of people, floods or landslides. As a rule, traditional medicine whose methods do not give preference to observation of the causes (aetiology) has not succeeded to adapt to the need of change.

3. Supernatural interventions

In the supernatural domain, the techniques used seem to be different. Contrary to western medicine which is said to be modern, and whose methods mainly project the biomedical causes of diseases 57, traditional medicine relies on supernatural beliefs, with a rather holistic approach⁵⁸.

52 <http://www.un.org/french/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol19n4/194guerisseurs.html>.

53 P.J. Cousteix, « L'art et la pharmacopée des guérisseurs Ewondo (Yaounde region), Yaounde, special number, IRSC, 1961, p.9.

54 Ibid, p. 29.

55 Ibid, p.31

56 Ibid, p.28

57 <http://www.secorisme-pratique.com/pages/dossiers/histoire.html>; it is 400 BC that Hippocrate started the bases for this type of medicine in the western world, he confirms that illness is a natural phenomenon and natural medicines has to be used to fight the illness.

58 Ibid.

In this setting, situations of sanitary calamity or disaster gave rise to the distinction of the simple cases treated above and the more complicated ones, the nocturnal illnesses, that is, those whose nosological classification entailed completely different diagnosis and therapy in the situations above. Thus, the treatment called for a supernatural intervention.

Among them, the nocturnal illnesses were the most destructive: worms transmitted by witchcraft (Nson), injuries caused by witchcraft⁵⁹, soul trading (Famla, kon), etc. We may also include malicious diurnal malaises needing emergency treatment in the form of magical and religious therapy. These illnesses are in essence manifestations/retaliations of infringements of social laws. They require a magical purifying treatment that entails a ritual that annuls the likely repercussion on the whole clan. Here, the inhaling, fumigations, steam baths and enemas are associated with the pronouncement of curses and incantations that bind the patient and the therapist to supreme bodies. Therefore, the possibility to cast a spell on the enemies as in a situation of war, or the possibility to thwart their action involves prevention through the preparation of antidotes.

Conclusion

First aid actions were therefore effectively used in traditional Cameroon long before contact with the West. They appear to be the willingness and a set of techniques aimed at providing emergency assistance to people in distress. Nevertheless, if the disasters were traditionally managed with relative success, it is also true that the very strong link between the Cameroonian and nature obliges him to associate the possible causes of disasters to supernatural powers, and to resort to the same powers to solve the disasters. However, pre-colonial first aid techniques have not satisfied the expectations of the population given that the different actors were not able to systematize their mastery of the medical art. Therefore, we understand how a new technique imported from the West was able to override the traditional first aid practices, thus relegating them to the rank of simple recipes that are still trusted by very few people nowadays.

59 L. MALLART GUIMERA «La classification Evuzok des maladies», first part, in *Africaniste Journal*, T 47-Fascimile, Paris, CNRS, 1977, p.14.

Chapter 13

Social perceptions of first-aid policy 60

Introduction

Can we summarize common knowledge on first-aid action in Cameroon? Can we do without all the conscious devices developed by potential recipients of first-aid actions? Can we summarise the practical thought of the population concerning first aid? Evidently, this is not possible. For this reason, during our investigation, we retained as observation and analysis site the social perceptions or representations of the actions regularly carried out in the course of assisting people in situations of distress. By social representations, we mean a type of current knowledge called common sense. For Moscovici, social representations are created *'in the course of interpersonal communication'* and are meant for *'the building of behaviour and communication between individuals'*. In the same line of thought, Jodelet defines social representations as *'the modes of practical thought oriented towards communication, understanding and the mastery of the social milieu, material and ideal environment'*. The purpose of convening people's representatives to a meeting on first-aid action is to enable them to understand the social phenomena related to the management of the disasters.

It is a question of exposing the interactions between practical thought and practice in the area of popular actions in the management of disasters. In other words, the goal is to indicate that practical thought on first-aid actions stems from ongoing practices in the Cameroonian society based on culture. This practical thought nourishes and perpetuates the first-aid actions or contributes to their transformation. Thus, perceptions, behaviours, representations of space and the expectations of each become objects of in-depth survey and no longer, as was formerly perceived, a *'soul supplement'* that only comes in to crown a survey on civil protection.

In order to highlight social perceptions, we have conceived an appraisal grid that brings out three main themes: the notion of first-aid actions, the emergency principle in first-aid actions and the undertaking to carry out a first-aid action or not to do so.

60 Author: Joseph Keutcheu

The appraisal grid is also aimed at evaluation: it makes it possible to measure the differences between the observed situations and the desired situations, while respecting the essential values: human protection, the preservation of property and the environment.

I. The notions of first-aid action

Like any other social activity, first-aid actions are carried out through a system of representations whose features are interesting or even imperative to analyze. One of the features is precisely the understanding of the notion of 'first-aid actions'. In order to probe into the mastery of the notion of first-aid actions, the questionnaire envisaged the following questions: 'In your opinion, what is the meaning of first-aid actions?' Before delving into the practice of first-aid action itself, consideration was given to the understanding of the practice by those involved, and this was done through an open-ended question, that is a question without proposed answer options provided to the interviewees. Thus, as indicated on the pie chart below, on a sample of 967 respondents, 602, that is 62.3%, understand 'first-aid actions' as 'any

action to save a person in danger' 246, that is 25.4% consider first-aid actions as the vital actions before the patient is taken to the hospital. We see straightaway that these answers are not too far from the definition that is generally accepted of 'first aid actions': *'First aid represents all the techniques of assistance provided to people who are victims of an accident, of a disaster, of a health problem or a social problem that compromises the state of their health in the short run. These techniques attempt to provide efficient answers in the event of life danger and are aimed at minimizing its consequences while ensuring the survival of the victims by administering to them with the first emergency treatment'*⁶¹ »

61 According to 'le Guide national de référence de la formation au première secours (GNRFPS)' edited by the training board and civil security associations, Ministère de l'Intérieur (France), 2007; this document can be downloaded from website www.interieur.gouv.fr. See also the 'guide des gestes qui sauvent de la Croix-Rouge française', found in the site www.croix-rouge.fr.

Graph 4: Definition of first -aid actions by the respondents (in percentage)

27%
67%
6% 0%

Gestes de première nécessité avant l'hôpital

Toute action pour sauver une personne en danger

Amener un accidenté à l'hôpital

Posséder un matériel adéquat*

(www.onr.cm)

Source: REPC 2008 Data base

What can we deduce from this? What can one retain from this investigation into the perception of the notion of 'first aid actions'? The first lesson that can be drawn here is that, generally speaking, the population has an acceptable understanding of the notion of 'first aid actions'. In fact, by putting together the answers that are close to the real definition of first aid, namely '*... to provide efficient answers in the situation of endangered life aimed at minimizing the consequences while ensuring the survival of people through the provision of emergency first aid to them, namely, to take the victim of an accident to the hospital*', all actions to save a person in danger, actions of vital importance administered before the hospital we shall see that 93.7% of the people interviewed know quite well what is meant by first-aid actions during an accident. If we relate these answers to the ages of the respondents, we shall find out that the perception of the notion of first aid actions is distributed almost in the same proportions according to the age groups. So, in the age group that ranges from 21 to 30 years, of the 227 people interviewed, 57 think that first-aid actions refer to the necessary life-saving actions before the hospital'; 143 think that they refer to 'Any action aimed at saving a person in danger' and 17 think that they involve taking the injured person to the hospital. Within the age group ranging from 31 to 40 years, the number of answers is distributed respectively as follows: 97, 241 and 20 out of the 360 people interviewed. Meanwhile for the age group ranging from 41 to 50 years, the answers are distributed as follows: 64, 169 and 16 out of the 250 people interviewed. In the age group above 50 years, the answers were distributed respectively as follows: 28, 45. 5 out of 81 people interviewed. Thus, 95.5% of people in the age group that ranges from 21 to 30 years know quite well what

first aid action in case of an accident is. This percentage is 99.4% in the age group that ranges from 31 to 40 years, 99.6% in the age group ranging from 41 to 50 years and 96.2% in the range above 50 years.

Table 8: Understanding first-aid actions according to age groups (frequency) 21-30 yrs 31-40 yrs 41-50 yrs Above 50 years Life-saving actions before taking the victim to the hospital 57 97 64 28

Any action aimed at saving a person in danger 143 241 169 45

Carry an injured person to the hospital 17 20 16 5

Possessing the adequate material 2 0 0 0

NSP 6 1 1 2

Others 2 1 0 1

www.onf.cm

Source: REPC 2008 Data base

After analysing these results, we can say that understanding the notion of 'first aid actions' is already in itself a positive point because it enables the actors to better consider the emergency of the situation in case of disaster.

II. The principle of emergency in first-aid actions

Three questions enabled us to probe into the rationality of persons interviewed with regard to emergency in case of accident: 'At what moment should we carry out these first-aid actions?', 'On the whole, faced with an emergency situation, what should be done first?', 'According to you, what is the most important act that an ordinary citizen can perform in case of an accident?' In an overwhelming manner, as the table below indicates, the interviewed persons think that first-aid actions are appropriate 'immediately' after the occurrence of the event. Indeed 85.9% of people think that it is vital to intervene 'immediately' so that lives may be saved.

Table 9: Appreciating the urgency of first-aid actions

Frequency Percentage

Immediately 817 85,9

After some minutes 30 3,2

After assessment of the situation 104 10,9

Total 951 100,0

www.onf.cm

Source: REPC 2008 Data base

The awareness of the need to intervene urgently is present almost everywhere; when a serious incident occurs, the minutes that follow are decisive. A large proportion of the people interviewed are quite aware of the fact that numerous lives can be saved while awaiting the arrival of assistance. In most cases, a person who is the victim of a malaise, an illness or an accident should be taken care of by health professionals, possibly within a hospital. But when the incident occurs, the professional is not always in the vicinity, thus the necessity for the neighbours or passers-by can intervene immediately in order to mitigate body injuries.

The high awareness of the emergency nature of first aid also structures the answers to the question on the action to carry out first and foremost in case of an accident. However, it can be observed that most of the answers given by those interviewed fall within one of the following: 'Secure the place of the accident and the people involved' (23.5%) and 'Carry out first-aid actions (47.4%).

By cross-examining the answers of the people interviewed, we note a certain degree of heterogeneity of behaviour when faced with an accident situation depending on the level of education. Amongst the uneducated, the answers given to the question: 'on the whole, faced with an emergency situation, what should be done first and foremost?', 16% of people think that it is necessary to secure the place of the accident and the people involved' and 45.9% rather prefer to carry out first-aid actions. For those people with primary school education, the tendency is almost the same: 17.5% opt for the securing of the site of the accident and the people involved whereas 51.2% choose to carry out first-aid action. For people with secondary or high school education, a relative change of disposition is observed: more of them opt for the first-aid actions but the interviewees think that intervention in case of an accident should be done in a calculated manner. For this reason, one notes that the option of the securing of the site of the accident and the people involved is dominant. For instance, for people with a secondary school education, 46.9% think that in case of an accident it is necessary first of all to carry out first-aid actions while 22.9% think that it is first necessary to secure the place of the accident and the people involved'. For the interviewees with a higher level of education, 44.5% think that it is proper first of all to carry out first-aid actions whereas 34.2% opt for the securing of the place of accident and people involved. The table below presents the frequency of the answers recorded on the perception of the most urgent actions to be carried out when faced with a victim of a disaster depending on the level of education: (illustrated: www.onr.cm)

Table 10: Most emergency actions when faced with a disaster victim, according to level of education (frequency)

With no schooling

Primary education

Secondary education

Higher education

Total

Secure the place of the accident and people involved 6 36 119 63 224

Appreciate the state of the victim 1 14 56 22 93

Request for help 10 48 96 16 170

Carry out first-aid actions 17 105 243 82 447

Others 1 0 1 0 2

NSP 2 2 3 1 8

Total 37 205 518 184 944

Source: REPC 2008 Data base

In a nutshell, one can say that those who were interviewed are divided between the desire to provide rapid help to people in distress situations and the need to protect their own lives and to avoid further accidents. Obviously, from this observation, it is implicitly clear that there is need to train a large fraction of the population to enable them to participate skilfully in life-saving actions while being conscious of the necessity to intervene urgently in case of a disaster.

Still with a view to measuring the awareness of the population of the place of emergency in first-aid actions, they were asked another question: 'What according to you is the most important thing that a simple citizen can do in case of an accident?' The interviewees had to choose from amongst 7 options: 'Nothing, Transport the victims to the hospital', 'Call an ambulance, Call a physician or other medical staff', 'Carry out first aid action', 'Others' and 'I don't know'. Here again the full measure of the principle of emergency and the context of the emergency situation in case of disaster was observed within the interviewees. 55.4% of respondents think that the most important civil act that should be done in the case of an accident is to 'carry out a first-aid action'. The three objectives of first aid are to save lives, prevent the deterioration of the state of the victim and to help him to recover. Still concerning emergency, 29.8% of respondents think that it is necessary 'to transport the victims to the hospital'. Certainly these people are conscious of the fact that first cares are only an emergency, while awaiting qualified help available in the hospital. The majority of people interviewed, that is 85.2%, choose what we can qualify as realistic actions within a context where the available medical professionals and material are over-solicited and are not easily mobilized in many disaster zones in Cameroon.

III. Commitments to undertake or refrain from undertaking first-aid actions

As we have said earlier, first-aid actions are made up of a set of simple actions that can be easily used to save lives. Anyone who intervenes in one way or another on an accident scene to help people in distress participates in civil protection. We were motivated by this observation to investigate the commitment of the population to perform or not to perform first-aid actions. This investigation enabled us to have a rough idea of the proportion of no specialized actors of civil protection within the Cameroonian population. In other words, it was a question of seeking to have a relevant idea of the first link of the emergency assistance chain in Cameroon.

When people were questioned on their willingness to carry out the civil acts of assistance to a person in need by administering first-aid action each time the opportunity arises, 91% of people interviewed

declared that they were ready to intervene whoever the victim is. This answer corresponds to the very principle of first aid which is humanitarian and non-selective or non-discriminatory. Only 6.4% of respondents opted for discrimination and said they were ready to intervene if and only if these critical cases involved people who were closely related to them. Generally, life appears to be precious and, therefore, worthy to be preserved for almost all the people who filled in the questionnaire. These people are therefore ready everywhere they are to perform life-saving actions on people or removing them from danger. In this context, the rate of 2.5% of people who are not ready to intervene in case of disasters is negligible. The availability to be of help to one's neighbour in danger, according to the declarations sampled is roughly represented as follows:

Table 11: Readiness to rescue a disaster victim

Frequency Percentage

Percentage validated

Yes, whoever the victim is 861 89,0 91,0

Yes, if my close relatives are involved 61 6,3 6,4 No 24 2,5 2,5

Total 946 97,8 100,0

Missing system 21 2,2

(Illustrated: www.onr.cm)

Total 967 100,0

Source: REPC 2008 Data base

Conclusion

In most cases, a person who is the victim of a malaise, an illness or an accident should be taken care of by health professionals, possibly within a hospital. The Government has set up an organization to provide care and assistance to victims. However, it is necessary that someone informs these services. This is the primordial role of the witness. Several intervening parties participate in taking care of the victim; we therefore talk of assistance chain. The answers to the social representations concerning first-aid actions reveal sufficiently that the population is conscious that the witness of the incident is the first link of the assistance chain. It is therefore necessary that this witness should inform the assistance bodies, lest the victim be neglected.

Furthermore, in the most serious cases (for example abundant bleeding, cessation of breathing, immediate danger), they are aware of the fact that even the most rapid aid very often arrives too late: the first life-saving actions must be performed in the minutes that follow the accident. All the importance of first-aid actions lies here.

The people interviewed are therefore aware of the fact that the witness, although he may be the least competent, is the master-key of the assistance providing system to victims of disasters in Cameroon.

Without the witness, there will be no first-aid action and without any first-aid actions there will be very little chances of survival.

Chapter 14

Institutionalized strategies for the dissemination of first-aid techniques in Cameroon⁶²

Introduction

Risk prevention and disaster management is among Government's declared priorities. A list of actions is highlighted for the maximum protection of persons and property. The political imperative and determination in this area reveal the gradual shift of attention from the conception of civil protection policies to their implementation. The dissemination of first-aid techniques by S institutions falls in line with this concern. Far from evading other civil protection challenges, public authorities are paying special attention to the acquisition of structures capable of providing assistance to Cameroonians in distress. Furthermore, this institutional dynamism in the field of emergency seems to take on Government's partners who are more than ever driven by a greater determination in the area of first-aid techniques.

I. State institutions involved in first-aid actions

Through a number of public institutions, the State intends to come up with an adequate solution to the ever increasing number of accidents and disasters.

1. The National Fire Brigade

This is a special corps of our defence forces whose mission centres around four main components:

- The fight against fire and other related calamities;
 - Emergency relief to endangered persons or property;
 - Participation in disaster management;
- 62 Authors: Franklin L Kamtche
- Participation in studies and preventive actions relevant to its area of competence;

From an operational point of view, the fire brigade responds to fires, road accidents, animal interference, accidents related to water, electricity and gas; they are also involved in the protection of property, the fight against pollution, educational and professional activities, tactical and operational prevention, reconnaissance and research. Formerly only present in Yaounde, Douala, Nkongsamba and Garoua, the National Fire Brigade has recently been established in Maroua and Bamenda⁶³. The fire brigade runs medical centres and a national training centre in Yaoundé. Anyway, the survey carried out for the purpose of the present report shows that 53.04% of the people have a clear perception of their presence on the field of relief. It however goes without saying that much still has to be done so that this brigade may be found all over the national territory.

2. The Department of Civil Protection in the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization

Radio reports, the regular publication of the Cameroon civil protection report, the writing and publication of leaflets, advertising streamers and exercise books carrying messages of the Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, participation in forums like Promote, are occasions through which competent services of civil protection massively sensitize and train people in first-aid actions ⁶⁴.

The Department of Civil Protection therefore appears as the mainspring of the protection of human lives and property in Cameroon.

⁶³ In Yaounde, the National Fire Brigade has 3 relief centres, while in the other cities there is only one.

⁶⁴ In 2008, a training session organized by the Department of civil protection took place in the northern region of the country. On this occasion, the administrative authorities of the area received theoretical and practical training in actions which can lead to the saving of lives in this region of Cameroon exposed to diverse natural disasters and accidents.

According to Law No. 86/016 of 6 December 1986 to reorganize civil protection in Cameroon, Decree No. 98/031 of 9 March 1998 to organize emergency relief plans in cases of disasters and major risks and Decree No. 2005/104 of 13 April 2005 to organize the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, the Department of Civil Protection is at the centre of the rationalisation of all actions related to prevention, protection and relief organization all over the national territory. It is therefore timely for this department to be involved in activities related to the dissemination of first-aid techniques in Cameroon.

3. Health services

3.1. Emergency Medical Assistance Service

In the management of medical emergencies in Cameroon, the Emergency Medical Assistance Service (SAMU) came up as a small revolution, a rescue buoy. Made possible by the collective use of the means of all the hospitals participating in the network (infrastructure, personnel, vehicles, medical equipment and financial resources), the SAMU in Cameroon functions from two operational bases in Yaounde and Douala thanks to a single call number which is toll free.

The circular letter of the Minister of Health which organizes the service recommends the obligation to attend to emergency cases and later include the invoice in the institution where the victim is taken to. SAMU is a coordination service of specialized out-of-hospital interventions, which does not depend on the emergency wards in hospitals. It is 'a form of pre-hospital treatment which consists in giving to the person in distress, the treatment he or she would have got in the hospital. It is also a way of preventing the situation from degenerating'⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ Statement made during the launching of SAMU activities by Pr Simo Moyo, SAMU Permanent Secretary.

It is also a way of preventing the situation from degenerating' From an operational perspective, SAMU follows the 'Référentiel national des compétences de protection civile', (national reference of civil protection competence), a formal statement of duties and procedures inspired by the French system.⁶⁶ The document instructs on how to behave in disaster situations and first-aid actions to perform, either as an

individual or as a team as well as various schemes of emergency actions to be followed during field operations.

3.2. *Health Institutions*

3.2.1. Health Districts

According to recent statistics, Cameroon has 144 health districts, of which 120 have a district hospital 67, that is, on average, one district hospital for 150,000 inhabitants 68. Emergency wards exist in only 10% of them 69. Among other missions, they are in charge of community health, that is, the training of local relay personnel who can be able to remedy emergency situations or, at least, know what to do in case of disasters. Among other tools used, there are the following sensitization mechanisms:

- Education sessions;
- Community or family meetings;
- Religious meetings;
- Interactive or non-interactive programmes over local radio stations.

3.2.2. Provincial and national hospitals.

Presently, there are 12 provincial hospitals and 12 national reference hospitals.

66 'See, Direction de la Défense et de la Sécurité civiles, Référentiel national de compétences de sécurité civile, Paris, Ministère de l'Intérieur et de l'Aménagement du Territoire, 2007. The document comprises two volumes: 'Premiers secours en équipe de niveau ', 'Premiers secours en équipe de niveau '.'

67 Sub divisional health centres and some confessional hospitals are known as the equivalent of district hospitals

68 Extremes, according to districts: 1/5000 and 1/ 276000

69 Edouard guevart, Fidele Binam, Jeremie Solle, Op. Cit.

During a study on these services carried out in 2002, emergency wards existed in the 12 national reference hospitals, that is, in the political and economic capitals of the country. They possess the technical platform as well as heavy equipment for the treatment of emergency cases, but not readily have available drugs and equipment. Only one emergency ward out of the 12 could ensure the reception of emergency cases 24 hours a day.

Although first-aid missions are generally recognized in all health services, the qualitative investigation carried out within the framework of this publication reveals many impediments towards the implementation of a real policy aimed at disseminating first-aid techniques. The health map, independently from zones with high rates of disasters and diseases, indicates problems of lack of infrastructure and human resources. The following example illustrates this: in a province like the Far-North, there is no resuscitator, no surgeon or psychiatrist.

4. School and University Institutions

4.1. *The Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences*

Charged with the training of future health personnel, this specialized faculty of the University of Yaoundé I has for some years now understood the necessity to integrate, within the framework of the

training of doctors, modules related to civil protection and specialized courses for medical practitioners in charge of emergency cases. As doctors, products of this institution are charged with the programming and conducting of relief operations for victims of disasters and major risks on a daily basis as they go on the field.

4.2. First-Aid Actions in Schools

Due to their exposure to risk and their educational nature, schools are places par excellence where the culture of first aid should have many followers. Studies carried out by the Department of Civil Protection show that youths are particularly vulnerable to various types of disasters⁷⁰.

⁷⁰ See DPC, *Rapport sur l'état de la protection civile au Cameroun 2006*, Yaoundé, DPC/MINATD, 2006, with special reference to the foreword of the Minister of State, Minister Territorial Administration and Decentralization

In the specific domain of civil protection, it should be mentioned that during physical education and sports practices, manual labour, inter-school competitions or examinations with the emotions and stress which often accompany them, students are more exposed to health risks. The recent upsurge in the phenomenon of trances in school campuses has attracted more attention to schools. Red Cross Clubs in schools provide training on first-aid techniques. However, much progress needs to be made in this respect because the number of trainees is still insufficient to ensure optimal management of accident or disaster victims.

II. Non-governmental stakeholders interested in first-aid actions

Besides the state structures cited above, other actors actively take part on a daily basis through associations or national enterprises. This takes into account any person or instrument that contributes to the management of emergencies, and which fills in the gap caused by the absence or insufficiency of the institutional mechanism provided to this purpose..

Our studies reveal that the remedy measures include on the one hand, first-aid personnel trained within communities and on the other hand, many informal stakeholders.

1. The IFRC and the CRC

The mission of the Red Cross is to **improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity**. Vulnerable people are those who face the greatest risk from situations that threaten their survival, or their capacity to live with an acceptable level of social and economic security and human dignity. Often, these are victims of natural disaster victims poverty brought about by socio-economic crises, refugees, and victims of health emergencies.

The Federation carries out relief operations to assist of disaster victims and combines this with development work to strengthen the capacities of its members National Societies. The Federation's work focuses on four core areas: promoting humanitarian values, disaster response, disaster preparedness, and health and community care .⁷

⁷¹ For all these comments about the vision and missions of the Red Cross, refer to [www.ifrc.org/index](http://www.ifrc.org/index.asp).asp (05 /01 /09).

At the level of Cameroon, the Red Cross is very active each time an emergency situation arises. Organized in divisional committees and present all over the national territory, it has become a privileged partner of the government in matters of emergency relief. This presence enables the organization to be informed and to intervene promptly during disasters and ensure preventive measures during risky events.

2. Other stakeholders

Beyond the diversity of institutions and actors involved in the chain of first aid actions within the Cameroonian community, it is important to note that their presence on the field is perceived in different ways. In fact, those whose presence is much felt, as our study shows, are: passers-by, neighbours, people of goodwill, people of the neighbourhood, any other appellation which refers to the population. Of all the mechanisms of intervention, this last one can be considered the most important. As a matter of fact, be it in rural, urban or semi urban areas, 72.15% of the population acknowledge its presence and action when need arises. We find here the practice of the legal obligation to assist people in danger. The following table illustrates a comparative perception by the public of one another's actions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the map of disaster hazards in Cameroon warrants the reinforcement of training at the institutional, school and local levels, since, in general, there seems to be the absence of the culture of first-aid actions. It is true that certain traditional methods are practiced to cater for wounds, bleeding, fractures, etc., but natural disasters and different kinds of accidents which often occur around them remain without adequate solutions. Some other methods are also contested by medical science.

This is why in the absence of a civic structure which could teach the population the necessary measures to take, it is important to empower them so that they can be able to intervene in case of road accidents or ethnic clashes. To achieve this, the scout and health clubs are appropriate avenues where the message of first aid can be passed. Within the framework of the celebration of the World Civil Defence Day 2006, a joint initiative of the Department of Civil Protection in the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (DPC/MINATD), the Emergency Coordination Centre of the Yaounde Central Hospital, the Cameroon Red Cross and officials of Mballa II Grammar School in Yaounde, led to the training of students, who are members of the Health, Environment and Red Cross clubs, in first-aid actions, especially on the techniques of immobilization and carrying of wounded persons on stretchers, bandaging of wounded persons, the improvised transportation of the sick, etc., at the entrance to a classroom. Results from research carried out in vulnerable areas are very inciting and should be extended to benefit educational establishments and the population around road networks where disasters have been reported over the past years on a regular basis.

Chapter 15

Knowledge of first-aid techniques⁷²

Introduction

We are confronted every day with domestic, traffic or industrial accidents which suddenly require from us or our neighbourhood first-aid and emergency actions to save the life of a wounded or injured person. In this context, getting acquainted with some priority actions is indispensable. Alerting the first-aid

workers, helping an unconscious person or someone about to choke, protecting accident victims while waiting for appropriate medical care, are indeed very simple acts, but which can save thousands of lives if they are administered rightly and in time.

Medical corporations do not make any difference between first-aid and emergency measures: *First aid is emergency and provisional treatment provided in case of an accident or sudden illness. Except severe cases, such treatments are usually provided at the accident site and, while waiting for the wounded or the sick person to go to the hospital or to be given careful consideration by a doctor who will prescribe final care*⁷³ The aim of this study is to assess, in the light of the survey conducted on the field, how much Cameroonian households are conversant with priority approach actions. There are various domains which require emergency care: tetanic crises, poisoning through drug adverse reactions, cardiac discomfort, overdoses, emotional crisis, epileptic seizure, etc. What should be done when an accident occurs? What should be done when somebody is facing a persistent danger? When someone is bleeding? Choking with a foreign object in his anatomical airway? When he doesn't react, but he is still breathing when he does neither react nor breathe when there is a case of severe skin-burns? When there is a case of contusion or corporeal trauma resulting in the possibility to move?

72 Author : FanKem

73 FN 'Hammerly (Marcel A.), *Technique moderne des premiers soins*, Editions Le Monde Français, Accra, 1971? P. 7.'

I. Social strategies to acquire first-aid techniques and emergency response

When we look how Cameroonians react when they are confronted with emergency cases in every day life, we can assess their level of acquisition of priority approach actions and emergency responses. This goes in connection with their sense of personal security, age, living environment and educational background.

1. The level of acquisition of first-aid techniques

It would first of all be mentioned that the question of first-aid techniques in Cameroon on the whole cannot be separated from the challenges of daily life which is managed in an empirical manner. This study shows that people have developed precise emergency responses when confronted with disasters, even though their efficiency and rationality can be questioned. Statistics of this study show for example that only 10 per cent of Cameroonians seem to have been trained in first-aid techniques.

But all Cameroonians believe something should be done in emergency cases. The structures known by the survey population as those providing first-aid training, in descending order are: the Red Cross, various private institutions, 'the Sisters' (Catholic religious women), the SAMU (Emergency Medical Assistance Service) and others. A few respondents claim to have been trained, but are unable to say exactly who or which structure trained them. A large percentage, however, mainly in rural and semi-urban areas, do not know of the existence of anything called first-aid training course and rely only on traditional practices.

2. Readiness to learn

Half of those who have never made any effort to be trained in Rescue and First-Aid acknowledge that training centres exist in their respective locality of residence. The issue is sensitive, which can explain why three quarters of the respondents are really looking forward to receiving training in emergency care. Of course, most of them condition their participation on whether the training is toll free or not. The current economic conditions, the culture of public assistance and some feeling of invulnerability may justify their unwillingness to spend their money for what remains the duty of the Government'.

Almost one quarter of the sample knows the significance of first aid since they are ready, if need be, to pay for the training and this is mainly related to a number of reasons: they are mostly interested in acquiring an additional know-how likely to enable them help their relatives, be useful to their communities or simply to increase their knowledge in order to have more job opportunities.

Among those who do not want any training are those who say they are too busy, followed by those who say they are too old, disabled or those who are simply not interested. This category generally comes from people with poor or no educational background, therefore unable to understand the challenges of such training in their life which is likely to end without any educational aid.

II. Mastery of first-aid techniques by the population

1. First-aid techniques well known by Cameroonians (full report in (www.onr.cm))

Types of actions

Percentage and comments

Victims exposed to inevitable hazards

73.3 per cent of respondents said they were ready to '**urgently attempt a move to extract**' somebody from a room on fire or the middle of a road in spite of potential risks the rescuer runs.

The victim doesn't react, but he is still breathing

62.9 per cent got the right answer, that of '**loosening the victim's dresses and belt and to lay him on the side**'.

Cases of accident

49.2 % know exactly what to do in the first place when faced with an accident victim : to '**ensure that there is no persisting danger**'.

This percentage, very close to the average (0%) is perhaps due to the frequency of such actions on our roads deemed to be extremely dangerous.

The victim suffers from an acute pain in the chest

35.8% know exactly that what they have to do is crucial to save his life: that is, to '**ask him to lie down and rest**'.

2. First-aid techniques unknown to Cameroon households (full report in (www.onr.cm))

Types of actions Percentage and comments

The victim is wounded and conscious but has a stiff limb

Only 16.9% respondents got the right answer: notably to **avoid manipulating the stiff limb**.

Cases of major burns

23.5% of household know that they should **wash the burnt area with cold water**.

Cases of bleeding

Only 24.6% of respondents know the right answer: **start by 'pressing or compressing the bleeding area'** to press on the bleeding spot

The victim neither reacts nor breathes

Only 28%, most of whom were city dwellers, knew they should **send an alarm call to emergency services**.

The victim's airway tracts are obstructed

28.4% are close to the right answer: to **give slaps on their backs**.

III. Common recommendations

The questionnaire submitted in November 2008 to the interviewed households and whose answers are summarized in the table above requires some comments on what we understand by 'right' or 'wrong' answers which are the terminology we borrowed from the French Red Cross experts.

1. When confronted with an accident, one should first of all **'ensure that there are no other incidental risks of danger'**. Any accident situation may generate other new hazards (electrocution, aggravation of a road accident...). The life and health of rescuers, as well as those of the victims and even passers-by are under threat. The rescuer must first of all ensure that there are no other incidental risks of danger before calling the emergency service or examining the injured person.

2. If the victim is exposed to an inevitable hazard (victim in a room in fire or in the middle of the road), **'he should be urgently moved (or extracted)'**. If he can be seen, at reach and if nothing hinders his extraction, he should be carried away from the danger zone (unless the rescuer thinks he is exposing himself to a greater danger). If this urgent and immediate extraction is not done, the victim may not still be alive at the arrival of the relief workers. In this special case, immediately removing the victim is less dangerous than leaving him where he was, even if he has broken bones. In a smoke-cloudy room, one should hold one's breathing. If the rescuer remains near the victim, he is under the same threat.

3. When confronted with bleeding, one should first of all **'press or compress the bleeding area'**. Bleeding should be immediately stopped by pressing or compressing the bleeding spot with fingers or the palm of the hand. The rescuer is recommended to protect his hand with gloves, a plastic film or a cloth tampon. He should then lay the victim on the floor to limit the bleeding impact. If he is alone, he may replace the manual compression with a pressure dressing, a clean folded wear held by a loose tie. Then he could call or ask relief workers to be called. One may resort to a tourniquet only in exceptional circumstances and only the rescue team should do so and after the doctor's advice; otherwise, it is more harmful than useful!

4. When a victim is choking due to the obstruction of his respiratory tract by a foreign object, 'he should first of all be **given a few slaps on the back'**. In this case, the victim is aware of everything, but cannot breathe. If nothing is done before the arrival of the rescue team, it will perhaps be too late. The victim may become unconscious and pass away. His respiratory tract must then be immediately unclogged. Five slaps on his back with the palm of the hand are then necessary. If it does not work, make five compressions on the upper part of the abdomen (Heimlich manoeuvre). Take the foreign body out of the mouth. If it still does not work, alternate the five slap-compression sequences with the Heimlich manoeuvre. In any case, call the emergency services. To make him sit or sit up is of no help. This is what should be done to help somebody who finds it difficult to breath because of a foreign body that does not completely obstruct his respiration.

5. When a victim does not react nor breathe **'unloose his collar and belt and lay him on the side'**. If he is laid on his back, he will choke because his tongue and mouth liquids fall back to obstruct his throat. The airways should immediately be freed. To achieve this, any cloth that surrounds the neck and stomach should be loosened or undone; the victim should be smoothly laid on his side on the stable and lateral security position. Then the rescue team should be called. Giving him slaps or making him sniff salts or ammonia is of no use and could even be dangerous.

6. If you find yourself alone with an adult who does not react nor breathe: **'Alert the rescue team'**. If first-aid workers and emergency relief service do not intervene immediately, the victim's life is threatened. The rescue team should be alerted first for the victim to be taken care rapidly. Immediately after, do sequences of 30 thorax compressions followed by two mouth- to-mouth breathings. If you have an automatic external defibrillator, use it primarily following operating instructions of the device.

7. Faced with a victim suffering from acute pains in the chest: **'Put him to rest and ask him to lie down '**. Here, the victim is in danger since the pains he feels in his chest could be a harbinger for heart attack. The victim should then be asked to lie down and rest (unless he prefers another more comfortable posture) and should be questioned on his medical history, how long has he been suffering, if this is the first time he is hit, if he is under treatment and if he has already been hospitalized. The relief team should then be alerted and a medical advice sought. It is not advisable to reassure the victim and recommend him to see his attending doctor unless a SAMU doctor has confirmed that the case is not severe. A Trinitrin or any other tablet may be given him, if already prescribed to the victim in same conditions during old crises or on request by the SAMU doctor. Giving him sugar would result in another type of medical problem, hypoglycaemia, and decrease of sugar content in his the victim's blood. Which would be of no use in this case?

8. When confronted with a severe case of skin burn, one should **'immediately wash the burnt surface with cold water'**. Chilling the burnt surface should continue until a doctor's advice is sought. Better not put anything on the wound unless you have sterile pad, but do not use any fats and oils.

9. When confronted with a victim who after falling or receiving a blow complains of severe pain in a limb that can no longer move: **'do not shake the hurt limb'**. The victim is suffering from bone or articulation trauma. Unnecessary movements could result in acute pains, complications or after-effects. The hurt limb should therefore not be shaken. A wounded person should not be given drugs or water without a physician's prescription. Chilling the painful area is relevant when it is a sprain (to avoid swelling). When the limb cannot move, a fracture is to be suspected and application of cold would worsen the situation.

Conclusion

This study has taught us at least three things: Firstly, First-aid actions, when wrongly applied, could worsen the situation of victims instead of saving their lives. Secondly, that by not giving right answers to the questionnaire administered, Cameroonian households have shown that if they were faced with situations requiring emergency interventions or priority approach actions, they would have done things which could be fatal to the victims. And thirdly, that Cameroon households are ready to help when there are emergency cases.

When we generally realize that 53.5% of the respondents are householders and 24.9 % their spouses, it becomes imperious to undertake an upstream training to teach each of them what to do and not to do, since these are the people who, more than others, are concerned with priority approach actions, beginning within their own families. Since these are the people who, more than others are concerned with priority approach actions, beginning within their own families. As a general rule, the worry that so many people are not acquainted with emergency care actions, could be balanced by the understanding that there are many rescuers that could intervene at the same time to rescue one victim. But it should permanently be kept in mind that anyone confronted with an emergency case should be able as a priority approach action to take care of the victim. The management of victims requires at least some elementary knowledge in primary approach actions. However, alerting the nearest hospital or doctor, the government authorities as well as the victim's family are also things which should not be forgotten.

Chapter 16

Case study: Reaction in case of an abrupt obstruction of the respiratory tract⁷⁴

Introduction

Assisting people in danger is perceived by most citizens as the duty of specialists reserved for the fire brigade. When an accident occurs in the home, on the road or at the workplace, the first witnesses simply call for assistance or evacuate the victims to the nearest hospital, without carrying out any elementary first aid actions.

* In some situations, if no emergency action is undertaken immediately by the witness on the spot, the accident may degenerate and may lead to the death of the victim within a few minutes. It is the case of

an adult who is eating, or of a child who is playing with small objects, and who suddenly puts his hand on his throat because he cannot breathe anymore. The purpose of this article is to show what should be done in the presence of a victim (adult, child or infant) in a respiratory distress situation following the obstruction of his/her respiratory tract.

74 Author: LCL de Chalus, Cooperation Cultural Action Service, French Embassy in Cameroon.

Source : France's Direction de la Sécurité Civile

I. Reminder of the anatomy of the respiratory system

* The respiratory system is made up of the respiratory tracts, the lungs and the pulmonary blood vessels.

* Diagram 2: the human respiratory system (*see full report in www.onr.cm*).

* The understanding of signs of brutal obstruction of the respiratory tracts is a key element to knowing what should be done because it is different if the foreign body is blocking the air passage totally (or almost totally) or partially.

II. Total obstruction by a foreign body

* The victim is eating or, if it is a child, playing with a small object.

* Suddenly, he/she places his/her hands on his/her throat. The witness who is beside should immediately ask him or her: 'Are you choking?'

The victim:

- Can neither speak nor nod the head as a sign of ' Yes';
- Cannot shout if it is an infant;
- Cannot make an audible sound;
- Keeps the mouth open;
- Cannot cough;
- Cannot breathe or make any movements with the rib cage as air can neither enter nor go out.
- * In the absence of efficient first-aid action, the victim:
 - Becomes blue (cyanosis). This phenomenon is even faster with an infant;
 - Faints.

Diagram 2: Obstruction by a foreign body

a- total obstruction; b - partial obstruction

1. What to do when faced with a victim who has a total respiratory-tract obstruction

q The victim (adult and child) is usually standing or sitting. At that moment, the witness must:

- Verify the total obstruction of the respiratory tracts;
- Leave the victim in the position in which he is found;

- Remove the obstruction from the respiratory tracts by giving a maximum of 5 vigorous slaps on the victim's back. This technique is sometimes sufficient for the removal of the obstruction;
- In case of failure of the slaps on the back to remove the obstruction, carry out a maximum of 5 abdominal compressions according to the method described below (Heimlich's method) or 5 thoracic compressions if the victim is obese or a pregnant woman;
- Verify the efficiency of the slaps on the back or the abdominal compression after each action.

2. Case of persistence of the obstruction

- Repeat 5 vigorous slaps on the back followed by 5 abdominal compressions and so on;
- Stop the process as soon as the obstruction is removed or if the victim becomes unconscious.

3. Description of first-aid techniques

Slap on the back

• The purpose of slapping the back of the victim is to provoke cough movements, to free and expel the foreign body that is obstructing the respiratory tract. They are realized immediately if the conscious victim has a serious brutal obstruction of the respiratory tract.

** In the adult and the child*

1. Stand beside and slightly to the back of the victim;
2. Support his thorax with one hand and lean the victim sufficiently forward so that the freed foreign body may come out through the mouth instead of returning into the respiratory tract;
3. Give 5 vigorous slaps on the victim's back, between the two shoulder blades with the palm of the other open hand;
4. Stop the slaps on the back as soon as the obstruction is cleared;
5. If the technique fails, apply the abdominal compression technique.

** In infants*

- . Lay down the infant, head leaned forward astride on the forearm, so that his head is lower than his thorax; this facilitates the expulsion of the foreign body;
- . Maintain the head with fingers on both sides of the angle of the mandibles while avoiding pressing on his throat;
- . Give 5 slaps on the infant's back, between the two shoulder blades, with the palm of the open hand.

Abdominal and thoracic compressions

q The purpose of this exercise is to compress the air contained in the victim's lungs and to expel the foreign body out of the respiratory tract, by the 'piston' effect. Following the size and the position of the foreign body, several successive pressures may be carried out to expel it. Abdominal (or thoracic) compressions

are carried on a conscious victim who is standing up or sitting if the obstruction persists in spite of the slaps on the back of the victim.

.Abdominal compressions in adult and child

1. Stand behind the victim, against his back, (while bending the knees to be at his height), passing one's arms under those of the victim on both sides of the upper part of his abdomen;

2. Ensure that the victim leans properly forward so that the freed obstacle comes out of the mouth rather than returning into the respiratory tract;

3. put your fist on the upper part of the abdomen, on the hollow of the stomach, above the navel and below the sternum;

4. Place the other hand on the first, the forearms not pressing on the ribs;

5. Pull forcefully while exerting pressure towards the rear and upwards. The foreign body should be released and should come out of the victim's mouth.

Thoracic compressions in a pregnant woman or in an obese person in a standing position

1. Stand behind the victim while passing your forearms under his arms so as to surround the victim's chest;

2. Place a fist in the middle of the sternum without exerting pressure on the lower end of the sternum;

3. Place the other hand on the first without pressing the forearms on the ribs;

4. Pull forcefully while exerting pressure towards the rear.

Thoracic compressions in an infant

1. After slapping the back 5 times without success, place your forearm on the back of the infant and your hand on his head. The infant is therefore between your two forearms and your two hands;

2. Turn the infant on his back while maintaining it firmly. Lay him straight, head low, on the forearm and the lap;

3. Place 2 fingers in the middle of the chest on the lower half of the sternum. The position of the fingers is identical to that of the thoracic compressions in case of the infant's cardiac arrest;

4. Carry out 5 thoracic compressions.

Risks

. The abdominal compressions may cause some traumatic complications of the internal organs of the abdomen, even when they are done correctly, or cause the traumatism of the ribs and the sternum if the position of the hands is wrong.

. When the victim has received abdominal or thoracic compressions, medical advice should be sought.

Assessment of the exercises

. The exercises to relieve the foreign body are effective when it is progressively cleared during the different clearing exercises.

. The efficiency of these exercises may be evaluated through:

- The removal of the foreign body;
- The appearance of cough or a sound;
- The resumption of breathing.

. After the expulsion of the foreign body, the witness must speak to the victim, to reassure him and to calm him.

. Medical advice is recommended, if the victim has persistent cough, difficulties in swallowing, the feeling of the presence of a foreign body in the throat, or if he has received abdominal and/or thoracic compressions. Indeed, even if the removal of the foreign body was efficient, small foreign bodies may pass into the respiratory tract and into the lungs and provoke secondary complications. On the other hand, thoracic or abdominal compression exercises, even when they are correctly done, may cause internal complications.

III. Partial obstruction by a foreign body

When the obstruction is partial, breathing is still possible.

. The victim:

- speaks or cries if it is a child and can answer 'Yes, I am choking' or 'I have swallowed wrongly';
- coughs violently;
- breathes sometimes with an added noise;
- Remains perfectly conscious.

. The partial air-tract obstruction can evolve towards total obstruction and may have the same consequences.

. When the air-tract obstruction is not complete, the witness should apply the techniques of releasing the obstacle described above, because they may, on the contrary, contribute to the displacement of the foreign body and provoke a total air-tract obstruction and the interruption of breathing.

. On the other hand, the witness should:

- Place the victim in the position where he/she feels comfortable, most often in the sitting position;
- Encourage the victim to cough so as to expel the foreign body;
- Seek medical advice.

IV. General diagram of first-aid action: full report in www.onr.cm

Postscript

The United Nations Development Programme and the coordination of the United Nations System is privileged to write the post face of the sixth edition of the Cameroon Civil Protection Report (2008-2009)

In effect, although many countries have achieved remarkable progress in terms of human development, conflicts and natural disasters can reduce to nothing several years of efforts and increase poverty and inequality. The UNDP, within the framework of its mandate, looks for and shares innovative approaches of crises prevention, early warning, prevention and resolution of conflicts and disasters. This task is carried out on the field in a cross-sector and pragmatic manner within the framework of the activities of the United Nations Systems (UNS) together with other partners involved in the management of crises and disasters. Due to its wide network, the UNDP coordinates the support to countries for the transition between emergency relief and long-term development.

In 2008, Cameroon was not spared from disasters and crises, be they natural (floods, landslides, fire disaster, drought, etc.) or man-made (road accidents, social conflicts). These disasters have once more had a toll on the life of the civil population in Cameroon and hampered the socio-economic progress achieved by the country.

Faced with conjectural and structural challenges, the United Nations Development Programme continues, on the one hand, to assist the government, by reinforcing its capacities to respond to the risks that threaten the country, and on the other hand, to grant its support to the affected populations through technical and financial support to improve on their living conditions.

In the year 2008, this support was manifested through the signature, in partnership with other development partners, of a National Programme for the Securing and Rehabilitation of Lake Nyos, worth about CFA 24 billion francs.

The objectives of this programme include the securing of the Lake through the installation of two new degasification tubes 751; the reinsertion of the displaced population and support to the production sector; sustainable management of resources; protection of the environment, and the improvement of infrastructure (electricity, water, sanitation, schools, hospitals, roads).

75 The first degasification tube was installed in 2001

In addition to this support, the United Nations Development Programme has funded the reinforcement of technical and logistic capacities of the mixed crises committee 762 of Menchum division as well as drawing up its Relief Organization Plan (ORSEC).

This important work was carried out thanks to the permanent and fruitful partnership with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization (MINATD), through the Department of Civil Protection. The dedication of the personnel of this department encouraged the United Nations Development Programme in supporting the Government in the management of crises and disasters in Cameroon.

In this perspective, the UNDP and other agencies of the UNS involved in crises management intend to support the Cameroon Government through the reinforcement of capacities on the risk reduction approach and readiness to respond to emergency situations. At the operational level, the action of the UNS should be manifested continually through support to cross-sector coordination, a permanent communication strategy, a fund for the prevention, management and relief from crises, and the putting in place of joint local development projects to ensure resilience at community level. It is only through repeated routine and standardized procedures on the field that various teams learn to know each other and can respond rapidly to emergency situations.

All these accompanying initiatives are in line with the commitments taken by the UNS and the Cameroon Government in order to promote poverty reduction at the grassroots level and thus contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Thierry Mertens
Resident Coordinator- UNS
Resident Representative-UNDP

762 It is an official committee comprising heads of various divisional services which assists the Senior Divisional Officer in organizing relief in the event of a disaster.

ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

Annexe 1

Some press releases relating to civil protection in 2007/2008

République du Cameroun
Paix - Travail - Patrie

**Ministère de l'Administration
Territoriale et de la
décentralisation**

Direction de la Protection Civile

Republic of Cameroon
Peace - Work - Fatherland

**Ministry of Territorial
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Department of Civil Protection

PRESS RELEASE No. 00001/CRP/MINATD/DPC

Following the spate of cold registered in the capital and in some regions of the country, many families have resorted to the use of portable charcoal furnaces for heating in their homes.

In this connection, the Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, hereby informs the national community that the use of this material for cooking and heating in homes is very dangerous as it can suffocate its users.

This is because charcoal, like any other combustible substance, produces carbon-monoxide (CO) due to incomplete combustion resulting from insufficient aeration. When carbon-monoxide combines with blood, it reduces the oxygenation of the vital parts of the human body as a result of low haematosiis and thus causes suffocation.

It is therefore highly advisable to avoid the use of this material either for cooking or heating in the home.

The Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization thus calls on the entire population, the media and other information channels to use these recommendations in order to contribute to the prevention of the risk of suffocation which is, after all, avoidable

09 January 2007

(sgd) MARAFA HAMIDOU YAYA

République du Cameroun
Paix - Travail - Patrie

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PRESS RELEASE No. 00383/CRP/MINATD/DPC/CEP/ONR

The Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization wishes to inform the general public that the locality of KEKEM in Upper NKAM Division, West Province, suffered a landslide at an area called PK44 on the National Highway No. 25 on Saturday, 20 October 2007. This led to a lot of material damage, notably the destruction of about ten houses, many farms and the sinking of a road branch of 200m linking the West to the Littoral Province

In order to face this emergency situation, which led to the death of a woman in her sixties, the competent administrative authorities set up a divisional joint crisis committee charged with implementing the first response measures to this disaster.

Prominent among these relief measures are the delimitation of a security perimeter round the affected area and the immediate identification of access roads likely to attenuate the consequences of this pre-occupying phenomenon.

The public will be informed of any major developments in this disaster whose management is given great attention by the Governor.

Done in Yaounde, 22 October 2007

(sgd) MARAFA HAMIDOU YAYA

République du Cameroun
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PRESS RELEASE

No. 000390 CP/MINATD/DPC

Within the framework of Government strategy in the preventive and operational management of disasters, the National Contingency Plan was drawn up in July 2002 under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNO/OCHA). This plan was revised and given prior approval in November 2006 under the distinguished patronage of the Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, with logistic and methodological support from the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund.

In the same vein, and in order to test this plan, the Government has mobilized national and international experts to carry out a simulation of the risk of flood, which is recurrent in the Nkam Valley.

This exercise, which shall involve several civil protection stakeholders of national and international institutions, will be carried out on 8 December 2007 in the Nkam Division, notably between Tonde village, Bonjo (Wouri Island) and Yabassi.

To this end, the Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization wishes to express his sincere gratitude for the active UNICEF/Cameroon partnership in particular, as well as that of the organs of the United Nations System and other development partners in general, and counts on mobilization from various sources to ensure the effective implementation of the results of this activity in order to reinforce risk management in Cameroon.

05 December 2007

(sgd) MARAFA HAMIDOU YAYA

République du Cameroun
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PRESS RELEASE No. 00012/CP/MINATD/SG/CC

The national and international community is hereby informed that following the instructions of the President of the Republic, Paul Biya, the Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization shall, from today Friday, 3 February 2008, lead an inter-ministerial mission to Kousseri, Logone-et-Chari Division, comprising notably the Secretary of State to the Minister Delegate at the Presidency in charge of the National Gendarmerie and the Delegate General for National Security.

This mission falls within the framework of the management of the humanitarian crisis caused by an influx of refugees and displaced people from the Republic of Chad in this part of the country.

It aims to convey to all these disaster victims a message of comfort from the Head of State as well as to give them the emergency assistance that he has just requested for them. The mission, together with the local joint crisis committee, will also assess all the measures already taken and make proposals on capacity building in disaster management.

Finally the Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization wishes to inform the national and international community that it shall be rapidly informed of any important development in this crisis whose management is given special attention by the Cameroon Government.

Yaounde, 8 February 2008

(sgd) **MARAFAMAMIDOU YAYA**

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PRESS RELEASE No. 00018/CP/MINATD/DPC

The Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization wishes to inform the general public that Cameroon, in concert with the international community, will, on 1 March 2008, celebrate World Civil Defence Day under the auspices of the World Civil Defence Organization (WCDO) on the theme 'Civil Defence and Safety Measures'.

To this end, emphasis will be laid notably on the drawing up and implementation of a programme of teaching safety measures likely to be understood by the greatest number of people.

This event will culminate in the official launching of the fifth edition of the Cameroon Civil Protection Report (CCPR) aimed at consolidating the action and pro-action of the State as well as that of its international partners in matters of disaster management. It will also comprise the updating of the guide for first-aid emergency relief workers coupled with the organization of simulation exercises relating to first-aid measures, carried out by bodies in charge of emergency situations in our country.

The Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization calls on all civil protection partners at both ends of the action chain to mobilize for a resounding success of the activities that will be organized for this purpose.

Yaounde, **29** February 2008

(sgd) MARAFA HAMIDOU YAYA

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PRESS RELEASE No. 000071/CP/MINATD/DPC

The Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization wishes to inform its national and international partners that a Cameroonian delegation took part in the 41st Session of the Executive Council of the World Civil Defence Organization (WCDO) in Geneva, Switzerland from 15 to 16 May 2008.

At the end of this mission aimed at reinforcing Government mechanism in risk coverage and disaster management, the Executive Council of this intergovernmental institution approved the setting up of a regional centre for civil protection in Cameroon.

It should be noted that the WCDO aims to help States develop their own systems of ensuring protection and assistance for their people as well as safeguard property and the environment during natural and technological disasters. To this end, it brings together all national civil protection bodies set up by member States in order to promote solidarity among their peoples.

The decision of the WCDO Executive Council, which is in line with government plans to make the protection of people a major aspect of its strategy, will undoubtedly raise the image of our country within Central Africa in general and the Gulf of Guinea in particular.

The Government will inform, wherever necessary, the national and international community in case of any important development relating to the realization of this plan to which it attaches great attention.

Yaounde, 26 June 2008

(sgd) MARAFA HAMIDOU YAYA

République du Cameroun
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PRESS RELEASE No. 00109/CRP/MINATD/DPC/CEP

The Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization wishes to inform the national and international community that Cameroon will on 8 October 2008 celebrate the World Disaster Prevention Day under the auspices of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank (WB)

The theme chosen by these international institutions for the 2008/2009 world campaign for disaster prevention is 'DISASTER-FREE HOSPITALS'

This initiative, which targets health facilities, services and systems, is in line with the Cameroonian context, as public authorities will seize this opportunity to launch an awareness and reflection campaign centred on the following four complementary areas.

- A. the assessment of the preparedness of hospitals and their related facilities for disasters and emergency situations;
- B. the drafting of precautionary measures necessary for the optimal securing and reinforcement of health systems to face various emergency situations;
- C. the assessment of the capacity of the hospitals and bodies in charge of providing operational response to potential disasters;
- D. the estimate of the number and type of medical personnel trained in emergency and/or disaster medicine.

Given that this is a good opportunity to promote a synergy of all the national and international stakeholders involved in the management of this vital health sector, and in order to develop a culture of disaster Risks Reduction centred on hospitals, the Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization counts on the usual mobilization of civil protection partners for resounding success of this world campaign (2008/2009) initiated by the UN.

7 October 2008

(sgd) **MARAFAMAMIDOU YAYA**

République du Cameroun
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PRESS RELEASE No. 00119/CP/MINATD/DPC/SDCI/SAI

Within the purview of Government's strategy on disaster prevention and management, two training sessions of the joint crisis committee of Menchum Division and thirty other local stakeholders identified in the resettlement camps of the Lake Nyos disaster victims will be held at Wum from 21 to 30 November 2008. This shall be under the distinguished patronage of the Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization with logistics and financial support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP/Cameroon).

This training conceived in the form of workshops, aims at the mastery of instruments for the management of disasters, crises and other emergency situations, notably relief organization plans (ORSEC) and especially mastery, by the main stakeholders of civil protection, of the National Contingency Plan drawn up in July 2002 under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

To this end, the Minister of State, Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization wishes to express his sincere gratitude for the active UNDP/ Cameroon partnership in particular, as well as that of other organs of the United Nations System and other development partners in general. He counts on the mobilization of various resources from development partners in order to ensure the effective implementation of the results of this seminar in a bid to reinforce risk management in Cameroon.

Yaounde, 21 November 2008

(sgd) EDOU EMMANUEL