

Cameroon | Far North Region | Return Intentions Survey
Round 16 | 12 – 23 November 2018



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I. INTRODUCTION

Displacement in the Far North region of Cameroon, mainly due to the conflict with Boko Haram, remains complex. The crisis began in 2014 and the region still hosts many IDPs, refugees, and returnees. Displaced populations are increasingly leaving their locations of displacement to return to areas of origin or settle elsewhere. Sixty-four per cent of return movements were recorded between 2017 and 2018, compared to 4 per cent before 2014, 5 per cent in 2014, 7 per cent in 2015 and 21 per cent in 2016. Taking into account this growing number of return movements, it is important to assess the return intentions of individuals who are still displaced in order to provide the necessary assistance for the reintegration of those who have already returned to their area of origin, as well as to those who intend to return in the near future.

With the *Displacement Tracking Matrix* (DTM), IOM continues to provide critical information on displaced populations allowing the prioritization of humanitarian assistance. The DTM is implemented at several geographical and administrative levels in order to obtain the most accurate information possible. This includes evaluations at the level of departments, districts and villages. As part of its DTM, IOM has incorporated a household questionnaire including a Return Intentions Survey (RIS).

This report aims to provide information on the return intentions of IDPs and out-of-camp refugees. By collecting information on future intentions, often influenced by the search for livelihoods and the lack of basic services in locations of displacement, the report provides a better understanding of the decision-making process of displaced households in terms of a future return, as well as the conditions necessary for a sustainable return.

2. METHODOLOGY



3 038 ²

Displaced households
interviewed



20 880

Displaced individuals
interviewed



558

Locations visited

For this round, this survey was conducted through a household questionnaire from the 12 to the 23rd of November 2018 in the six (6) departments of the Far North region of Cameroon.

A total of 3,038 heads of IDP households and out-of-camp refugees responded to the questionnaire in 558 host locations; each representing one displaced household reflecting a total of 20,880 displaced persons represented in this survey. Respondents were randomly selected from the displaced population living in the locations surveyed, with 34 per cent of female heads of households. Before their participation, the objectives of the survey were explained to the respondents as well as the fact that their participation was voluntary. The sample was defined using a 95 per cent confidence interval on a total population of 286,121 individuals, with a data margin of error of 5 per cent.

In addition, it should be noted that from one round to the next, new displacements are observed, during which the displaced people flee their area of origin to settle in locations not covered by the DTM. Subsequently, these new locations of displacement are integrated into the DTM assessments, resulting in increased coverage of villages affected by displacement. This makes it possible to ensure a complete follow-up of the displacement affected populations, evaluate their needs and vulnerabilities, and better direct the humanitarian actions targeting these populations.

² 1 907 IDP households (13 592 Displaced individuals) et 1 131 out-of-camp refugees households (7 288 Displaced individuals).

3. HIGHLIGHTS

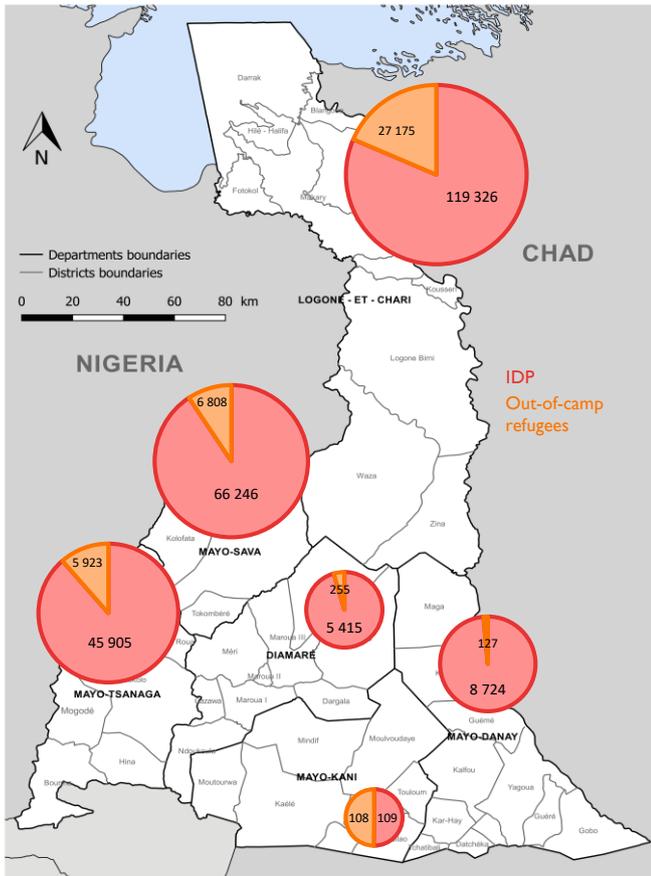
DISPLACEMENT

- The sixteenth round of the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM - November 2018) identified 245,725 IDPs, 40,396 out-of-camp refugees and 105,906 returnees.
- 94 percent of the surveyed population stated that they had been displaced by the conflict, 6% stated they were displaced by floods and other climatic factors.
- About 31 per cent of the surveyed population claims to have been displaced in 2018 (January-November). The rest of the targeted population was displaced during the following periods: 4 per cent before 2014, 5 per cent in 2014, 7 per cent in 2015, 21 per cent in 2016, and 33 per cent in 2017.
- About 40 per cent of IDP households live in host communities, 23 per cent live in spontaneous settlements, 19 per cent live in their original dwellings, 12 percent live on rent, 5 percent live in newly acquired private homes. And 1 per cent live in collective centres or in open areas.

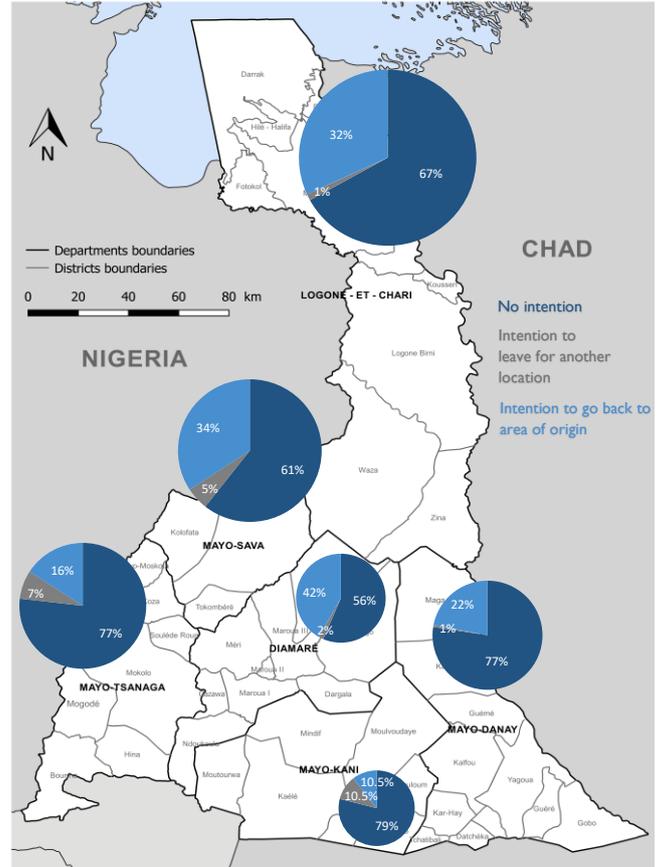
RETURN INTENTIONS

- 26 per cent of the IDP and out-of-camp IDP households surveyed indicated their intention to leave their current area of displacement, including 23 per cent to return to their area of origin and 3 per cent to move to a third location. 74 per cent have indicated their intention to stay in the location of displacement.
- According to the people surveyed, the three main reasons preventing their return to their areas of origin are: the security situation in the localities of origin (46%), the lack of financial means for the return (46%), and the destruction of their homes in the areas of origin (40%).
- The four main conditions required for return are: to ensure the presence of security forces in the area of origin (71%), to benefit from international assistance in the location of origin (30%), improved access to basic services (31%), and the rehabilitation of damaged homes (27%).

Division of displaced populations

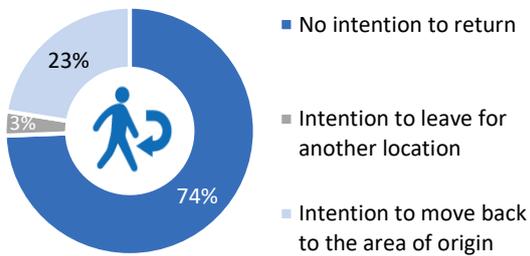


Return Intentions per department

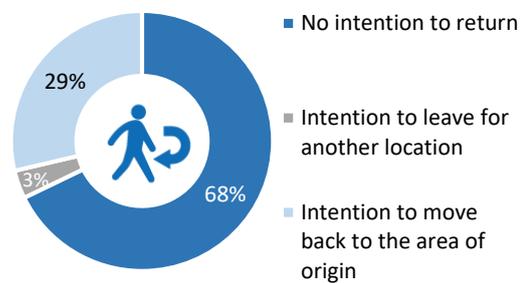


4. RETURN INTENTIONS

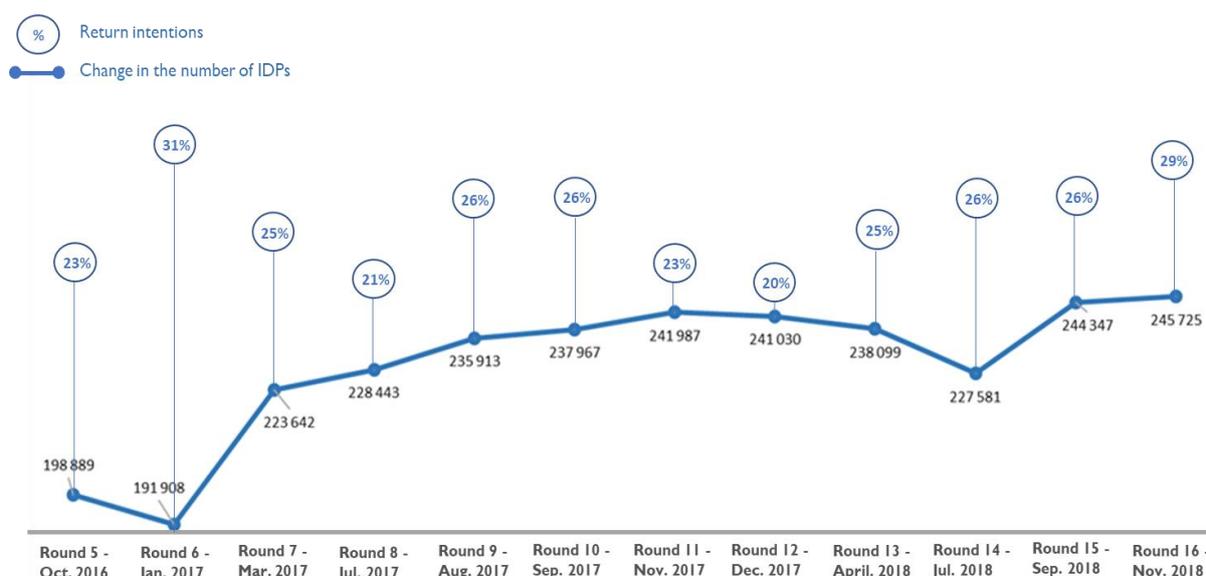
Return Intentions of internally displaced people and out-of-camp refugees



Return Intentions of internally displaced people



Evolution of return intentions of Round 5 (October 2016) to Round 16 (November 2018)



Looking at the evolution of returns since Round 5 shows that the return intentions of the displaced populations change from one period to another and evolve according to the different events that occurred between these periods. In Round 6, at the beginning of 2017, the main intention was to return to the area of origin. This was explained by increased security in areas of origin and consequently, massive returns were recorded in Round 7 (7,770) and Round 8 (14,592).

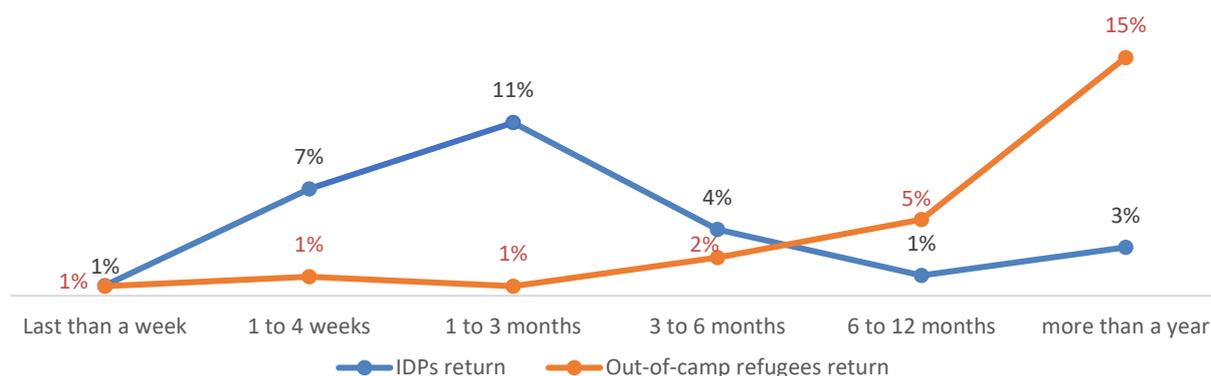
The period when the least people intended to return home since 2016 (20%) was at the end of 2017 (Round 12). The low return intentions are explained by several incursions of armed groups and suicide bombings that were reported in some departments and locations leading to many displaced people to doubt to return to their homes.

Subsequently, since the beginning of 2018, returns have steadily increased. 36,176 returnees were identified between January and November 2018.

The observed increase is greatly influenced by the following factors:

- Increased presence of military bases in locations of return, which led to less attacks by armed groups.
- The presence of humanitarian assistance in the locations of return.

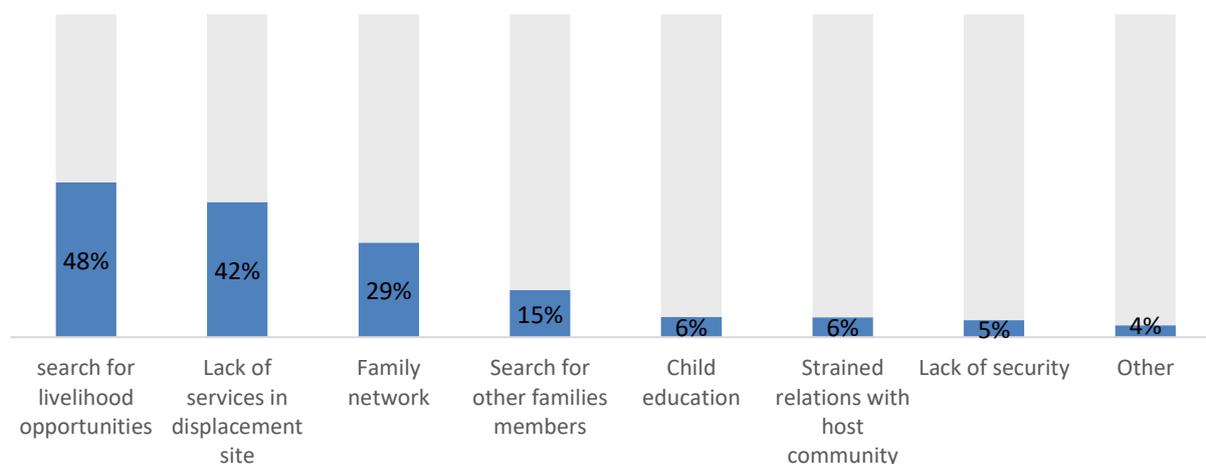
FORESEEN PERIOD OF RETURN



The number of returned households identified by the DTM since the last Return Intentions Survey increased by 14 percent (from 13,839 to 15,763 households). The increase in returnees is in line with the results of the July 2018 evaluation in which IDPs were considering travelling no later than six months after this survey (20%).

The majority of households surveyed in November 2018, had the plan to leave their current area of displacement in an indeterminate future (71%). The remaining households indicated an intention to return in less than a week (1%), in 1 to 4 weeks (6%), in 1 to 3 months (9%), in 3 to 6 months (4%), in 6 to 12 months (2%), and in more than one year (6%).

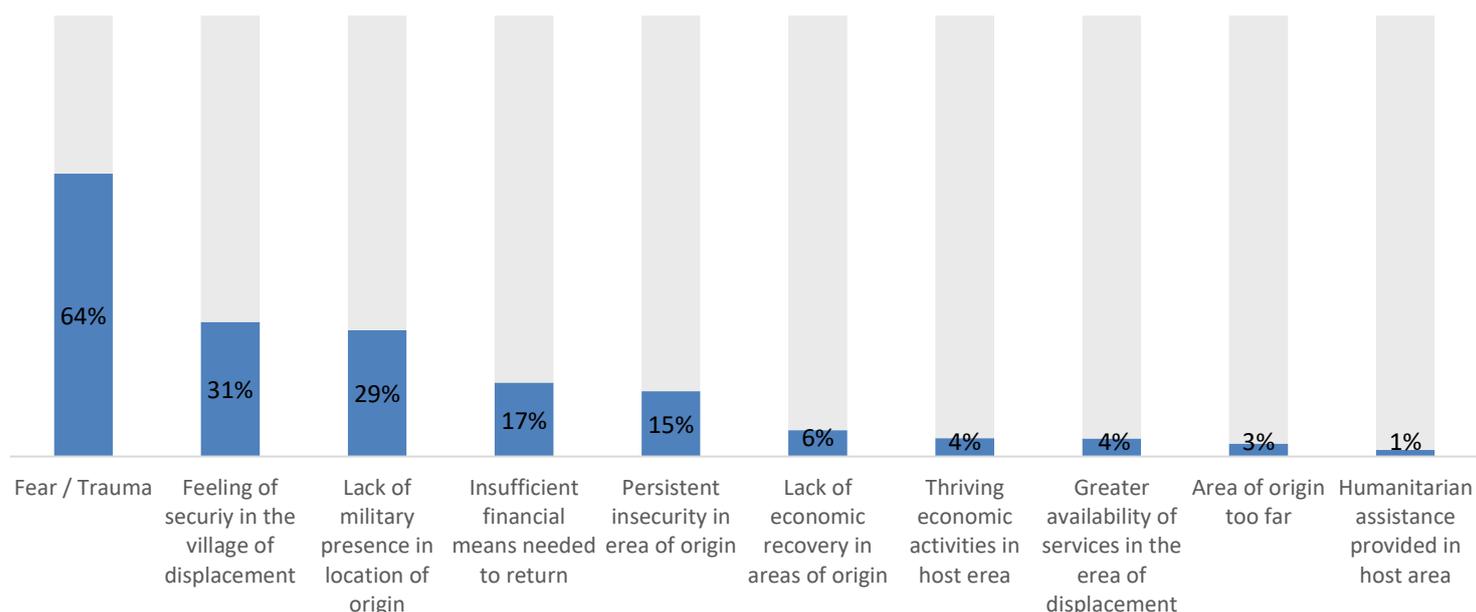
REASONS FOR INTENDING TO LEAVE IN THE AREA OF DISPLACEMENT



Among the households who are intending to leave the area of displacement, important evolutions have been observed since the last survey conducted in the Far-North region. Compared to the results of the survey conducted in July 2018, there is a decrease in the percentage of IDP households intending to search for livelihoods (48% or 7% less than the previous round).

In addition, an increasing number of displaced persons indicated that they would like to leave the area of displacement because of the unavailability of basic services in the location of displacement (42%, or a 10% increase) or to join other family (29%, or a 5% increase). This latter reason comes from the fact that 90 percent of the households surveyed state that they have fled their area of origin without the help of any organization.

REASONS FOR INTENDING TO REMAIN IN THE AREA OF DISPLACEMENT

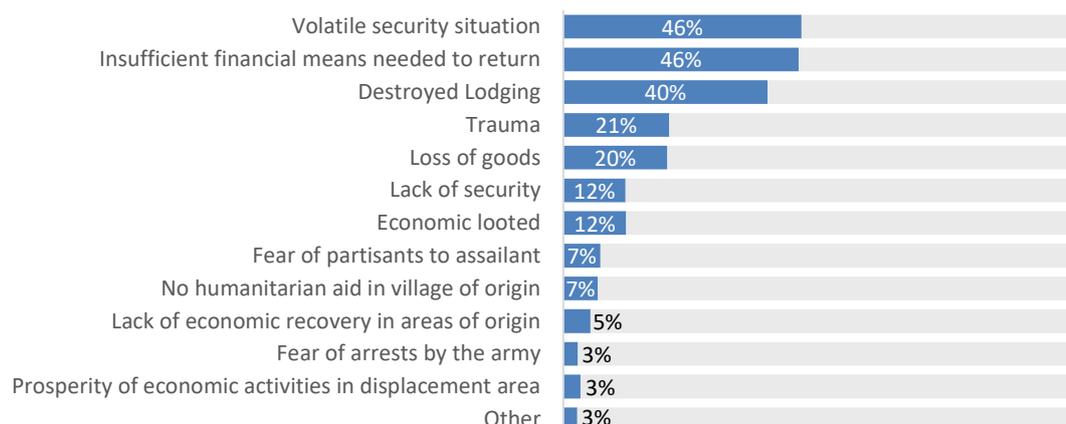


Events experienced in the locations of origin traumatized and frightened the displaced populations. So far, this factor remains the main reason justifying the preference to stay in the current area of displacement. This category represents 64 percent of the households surveyed and demonstrates the need for psychological assistance.

In addition, 31 per cent feel secure in their current area of displacement and 29 per cent consider the lack of military presence in their areas of origin a reason for not leaving the place of displacement. This demonstrates the importance of the security dimension in the decision making to return home. It should also be noted that some (17%) do not exclude returning home as long as they receive financial support to facilitate their return. A small minority (1%) value the presence of humanitarian aid in the locations of origin as an important factor in their decision to stay.

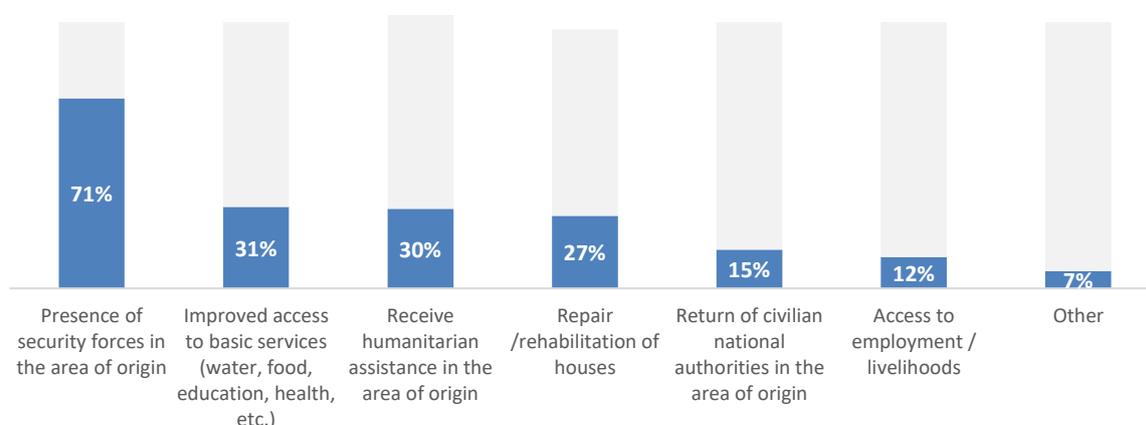
In addition, the fact that 69 per cent of the households surveyed own the homes they occupy in their location of displacement may express an intention to settle on a long term.

HOUSEHOLDS INTENDING TO LEAVE THEIR AREA OF DISPLACEMENT: REASONS PREVENTING THEIR IMMEDIATE DEPARTURE



Households intending to leave the area of displacement are awaiting for an improvement in the security situation in their locations of origin (46%) as well as improved financial situation (46%) before being able to return home. These reasons remain the most frequently mentioned as an obstacle to immediate return. Also, the graph shows that 40 per cent of households stated that their homes were destroyed in their areas of origin, and 21 per cent are not returning home because of trauma and other psychological reasons.

HOUSEHOLDS INTENDING TO REMAIN IN THEIR AREA OF DISPLACEMENT: FACTORS REQUIRED TO FACILITATE THEIR RETURN



Security remains a major concern and the perception of lack of security in the areas of origin hinders the return movements. 71 per cent of households, a 6 per cent increase compared to the last survey in July 2018, are intending to stay in the current location of displacement. Stating that the presence of security forces in the areas of origin is a necessary factor for a possible return.

This can be explained by the fact that Logone-And-Chari and Mayo-Sava are the departments most affected by the consequences of the conflict, as well as the departments of origin of a large number of internally displaced persons.

In addition, 31 per cent of households demand improved access to basic services, 30 per cent want humanitarian assistance, and 27 per cent cite housing repair.

5. CONCLUSION

The intention the return home is increasing in the Far North region of Cameroon since the last survey in July 2018. These trends show a gradual desire to return the communities affected by the crisis, when conditions allow it.

The humanitarian community, together with the national government, continues to reinforce its presence in hard-to-reach areas, including return areas. The presence of military bases in some locations of return made it possible for a few displaced individuals to return towards these areas. The increase in returns is explained in some areas by reintegration programs, including support for the rehabilitation of infrastructure and personal housing, as well as economic revitalization and access to basic services. These are factors that can guarantee sustainable returns.

Another major aspect influencing return intentions is the security situation. Security is an external factor, and humanitarian actors should continue to provide assistance to IDPs in order to prevent returns caused by lack of livelihood opportunities in areas of displacement.

In the last Return Intentions Survey conducted in July 2018, 26 percent of IDP households expressed their intentions to return, compared to 29 percent in the current Return Intention Survey. This increase can be explained by the decline in humanitarian assistance and protection issues in locations of displacement. Displaced populations are encouraged to leave locations of displacement in search of livelihood opportunities or improved security conditions. While maintaining its humanitarian assistance activities to internally displaced persons, the humanitarian community increasingly supports return movements, which could allow a revitalization of return movements for vulnerable populations wishing to return and requiring support and assistance.

It is important that the Government and the wider humanitarian community strengthen early recovery mechanisms for returnees, as voluntary return to areas of origin is one of the durable solutions for displaced populations. The strengthening of state authority, increased presence of military forces in areas where returns are likely to occur, improvement of basic social infrastructure (water, health and education) and economic recovery are all crucial factors that could ensure sustainable returns of displaced populations to their areas of origin.