

PROLIFERATION OF ARMED MILITIAS AND  
COMPLICITY OF EUROPEAN STATES IN THE  
MIGRATION CRISIS IN LIBYA, 2011-2017

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# **REFUGEES: BENEDICTION OR CURSE TO CAMEROON'S ECONOMY, 1982-2017**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

The present study focuses on the contribution of refugees to the growth of Cameroon's economy. Its focus spanned from 1982 when the UNHCR country office was officially established to 2017 with the collapse of Boko Haram's pressure on Cameroon. It assesses the benefits and liabilities of refugees to Cameroon's economy within the time frame. This is experimented through the size of the refugee population, capital transfer, employment opportunities, commerce, and the agriculture industry. These themes were arrived at with the help of primary, secondary, and tertiary data; and construed with mixed methodologies. The work reveals that on a comparative score, refugees are largely a blessing than a curse to the economy of Cameroon. In spite of their constructive role, they also constitute, to a negligible extent, liabilities to the development of Cameroon. The paper therefore argue that refugees should seize to be seen as burdens, but rather as powerful economic actors if properly exploited by recipient countries. Although they may constitute major security and social problems like theft, robbery, population explosion and health challenges, they are manageable. Besides, even without refugees, no country is devoid of security and social challenges.

**Keywords:** Refugees, Benediction, Curse, Cameroon, Economy

## Introduction

The phenomenon of displacement of persons in the world is as old as the hills although it became as a global concern only recently with the creation of international organisations like the League of Nations in 1919 and most particularly the United Nations Organisation (UN) formed in 1945. This global displacement of persons could be voluntary or involuntary, and generated by natural and manmade causes. Either of the causes has often generated displaced persons such as: refugees, environmental migrants, stateless persons, illegal migrants, economic migrants, exceptional leave to remain, and asylum seekers.<sup>1</sup> In the midst of all these, it became difficult to define a refugee and determine who should benefit from international protection. It was in the light of this confusion that the world governing body (UN) decided to come up with a legal framework defining and determining the particular displaced persons to benefit from the status of refugees. This decision led to the creation of the UN organ known as United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1951 and its subsequent Protocol in 1967.<sup>2</sup> This was however followed by other national (Cameroon's Refugee Status Eligibility Commission and Refugee Appeals Board)<sup>3</sup>, continental [Organisation of Africa Unity (OAU) later African Union (AU)]<sup>4</sup> and inter-continental organisations. With the existence of these organisations, one would imagine that the plight of refugees was over, but it became more complex with divided perceptions of people even within academia as to the advantages and disadvantages offered by refugees to recipient countries.

Our experiences in Cameroon has proven that refugees constitute a far powerful economic resource than a liability to economic development if well handled. Demographers have concluded that a large, youthful, and productive population is an unbeatable developmental force; and this is vividly a true depiction of refugees. Based on this premise, China is predicted to top the world economy (35.2% by 2019<sup>5</sup>) today, and Nigeria the richest African country (\$406.0 billions)<sup>6</sup> due to their large

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<sup>1</sup>D.N. Keming, "The United Nations High Commission For Refugees In Cameroon: A Historical Investigation From 1982 To 2011", Ph.D Thesis, Department of History, University of Yaounde I, July 2016, pp.20-40., D. N. Keming, "Differentiating Refugees from other Displaced Persons: Cameroon Experience", *Revue scientifique pluridisciplinaire du département d'Histoire de la Faculté des Arts et Sciences humaines de l'Université de Yaoundé I, (HABARU)*, Vol. I N<sup>o</sup> 2, Juin 2014, pp.356-362 (22pages)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Archives of National Assembly (ANA), Bill 777/PJL/AN, N<sup>o</sup>79/R/AN, Relating to the Status of Refugees in Cameroon., Presented on behalf of the Foreign Affairs Commission, June 2005, pp.2-3. ANA, Law N<sup>o</sup> 2005/006 of 27<sup>th</sup> July 2005 Relating to the Status of Refugee in Cameroon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2005, p.6. Archives of National Assembly (ANA), Bill 777/PJL/AN, N<sup>o</sup>79/R/AN, Relating to the Status of Refugees in Cameroon: Presented on behalf of the Foreign Affairs Commission, June 2005, pp.2-3.

<sup>4</sup>HCR, *Module de formation: introduction à la protection Internationale des Réfugiés*, Genève, HCR, 1992, pp.33-34.

<sup>5</sup>International Monetary Fund, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/04/the-worlds-biggest-economies-in-2018/>, retrieved Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2018, at 11:51am.

<sup>6</sup>[https://www.google.cm/search?q=largest+african+economy+2018&rlz=1C1AVFB\\_enCM772CM774&oq=Largest+African+economy&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0l5.10796j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.cm/search?q=largest+african+economy+2018&rlz=1C1AVFB_enCM772CM774&oq=Largest+African+economy&aqs=chrome.2.69i57j0l5.10796j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8), Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2018, at 12:01pm.

population. In all, articulating the definition a refugee is a subject of serious concern developed subsequently.

### **Definitions of a Refugee**

Etymologically, the word refugee comes from the verb to refuge, which means (sanctuary, shelter, protection, asylum, and to harbor). According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a refugee is defined as a person who has escaped from their own country for political, religious or economic reasons or because of a war.<sup>7</sup> This definition has a lot of lapses and thus controverts that of many scholars and the UNHCR. Against this meaning, many scholars have given varying definitions to the term refugee. According to O.C. Eze, a refugee is defined as a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling, to avail himself of the protection of that country.<sup>8</sup>

This definition ties with that of the convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees drafted in 1967. It should be noted that such a definition has shortcomings, as it does not consider all refugees emanating from similar violence; thus, it remains incomplete. In relation to these lacunae, African scholars under the OAU in 1969 added something new to the previous definition that made it more complete and accepted by the UNHCR and the international community. Article 1 of the OAU convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa stipulates that the term refugee shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place or outside the country of his nationality.<sup>9</sup>

The most important parts of a refugee definition are that refugees should be outside their country of origin, the purpose of their flight has to be fear of persecution, the fear of persecution has to be well-founded (they have to have experienced persecution or be likely to experience it if they return). The persecution has to result from one of the five grounds listed in the above definition, and they have to be unwilling or unable to seek the protection of their country. Added to the five grounds, are external aggressions, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of the refugee country of origin or nationality.

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<sup>7</sup> New Cambridge, *Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Cambridge, University Press, 2003, p.1048.

<sup>8</sup> O. C. Eze, *Human Rights in Africa*, Lagos, Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd, 1984, pp.170-172.

<sup>9</sup> UNHCR, "Statut de l'office du Haut-commissaire des nations unies pour les réfugiés", Genève, *UNHCR*, Octobre 2006, p.3, HCR, *Module de formation...*, 1992, p.33.

According to D.P.O. Connell, states are not obliged to admit aliens. To him, article 14 of the universal declaration of human rights (UDHR), which stipulates that everyone has the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution in another country, is only extraordinary.<sup>10</sup> The enlarged definition of a refugee by the OAU is justified by the fact that Africa seemingly produced a colossal number of displaced persons and refugees compared to other continents of our planet. For example, in 1995, Africa had a total of 11.81 million displaced persons, the greatest in the entire universe.<sup>11</sup> This resulted from the multiplicity of wars, political crisis, socio-economic dominations, and natural deserts.<sup>12</sup>

### **Weaknesses in the Definitions**

It has to be underscored here that the UNHCR and AU definitions of a refugee are highly problematic as they disagree in so many respects. For instance, according to the UNHCR, displaced persons still within their national territory are not treated as refugees, meanwhile according to the AU definition, they are all considered refugees. To the AU, they are refugees because they are victims of perhaps external aggression and domination, and have a founded fear(s) of persecution though they may not have been targeted for reasons underscored in the UNHCR Convention of 1951 and the 1967 Protocol. It would appear the AU's definition was influenced by Africa's history of slave trade, colonialism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism. Although accepted to be the best refugee definition so far, it is handicapped by the absence of funds and a continental refugee governing body to handle the African displaced classified as refugees. These lacunae give more weight to the UNHCR which offers a governing body and resources to humanise refugees in the human planet. However, these resources are generated by member countries including Africans. The necessity for an African refugee body, just like in many country levels, could provide substantial meaning to the AU's definition of a refugee. The absence of such a continental body provides primacy to the UNHCR universally accepted definition, which classified refugees into two distinct groups.

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<sup>10</sup> D. P. Connell, et al, *International Law*, V.2, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London, Stevens and Sons, 1970, p. 740.

<sup>11</sup> HCR, "Aider les réfugiés : L'UNHCR en bref", Genève, HCR, septembre 2006, p. 8.

<sup>12</sup> D. Mayer, *Afrique Terre des Réfugiés: que faire?* Paris, L'Harmattan, 1984, p.19.

## Types of Refugees

There are chiefly two major types of refugees, namely: rural and urban.<sup>13</sup> In relation to David's point of view, rural refugees are again sub structured into refugees in camp and those in settlements. The word rural as defined by Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary, Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus, and Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, refers to the countryside.<sup>14</sup> The UNHCR usually calls on all states to promote durable solutions in order to assist refugees in a spirit of international solidarity and burden sharing.<sup>15</sup> Rural refugees who live in camps are well secured and served with social amenities as observed in Cameroon. Such amenities may be lacking but they are generally available compared to those who live in spread abodes like the CAR refugees in the Eastern Region of Cameroon.<sup>16</sup> Those rural refugees who live in camps are always on defined spots and can be reached at any time when the need arises.<sup>17</sup> Rural refugees that live in settlements are not often organised and grouped as they are usually scattered in various locations and across a number of villages<sup>18</sup> alongside with the local population. Examples were Nigerian refugees in Bamenda/Adamaoua and over 100,000 CAR refugee herdsmen in Bertoua/Adamaoua regions of Cameroon.<sup>19</sup>

The word urban, according to Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary, Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus, and Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, means city or town. Therefore, urban refugees are those who live in towns and cities of host countries. Urban refugees are largely individuals who actually device plans to escape their home country to another for fear of persecution in order to enjoy certain freedoms.<sup>20</sup> Their exile is usually politicised, well thought of, well organised, and highly ambitious than rural refugees. This is justified by the fact that they do not often settle at the frontiers alongside the rural population as the rural refugees, but prefer mostly the major towns of their host countries. Also, urban refugees could descend from both neighbouring countries and

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<sup>13</sup> Mayer, *Afrique Terre des...*, 1984, pp.113-119.

<sup>14</sup> (Paperback (ed.), *Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus*, Third edition, Westerhill Road, Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 2006,666; J. Crowther, (ed.), *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, Fifth edition, Oxford University Press, 1995, p.1032; New Cambridge, *Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, Cambridge; University Press, 2003,p.1097.

<sup>15</sup> UNO, *Yearbook of the United Nations*, Vol. 38<sup>th</sup>, New York, Nijhoff Publishers, 1984, p.937.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Nouhou Zedou (Male) aged 28, trader, Bertoua 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012, Interview with Achirimbi Peter Ngwa, aged 50, Driver, Kouba, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Ahmadou (male), aged 75, farmer, Langui, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

<sup>18</sup>S. Mone, "The benefit of hosting refugees", *New Vision*, available at [https://www.newvision.co.ug/new\\_vision/news/1452952/-and\\_company LTD](https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1452952/-and_company_LTD), added 10<sup>th</sup> May 2017 09:43 AM 5<sup>th</sup> May 2018 at 09 :28 am.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/46fbc924.html>, Downloaded on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2010 at 2:30pm.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Monni Cathie Danielle, aged 47, assistant director, UNHCR sub office (Bertoua), 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2012.

continents. For example, by December 2008, Cameroon hosted 5 Yugoslavian refugees, 1 Iraqi, 1 Iranian, 62,919 Chadians, and 86 Liberians.<sup>21</sup>

Far-fetched, it will be wrong to conclude here that urban refugees always plan for their exile, are organised professionals, job seekers, and students. This is so because in Douala and in Yaounde, there was a composition of old and unproductive refugees (including unskilled young men/women and unaccompanied children) who only depend on the UNHCR for survival. This kind of composition is an indication that they come from neighbouring countries but are not always willing to settle with the rural population or the nearest villages of Cameroon frontiers for various reasons. In an interview with a mixture of CAR and Chadian female refugees in Nlongkak, they explained that their attraction to Yaounde was the job avenues and better security.<sup>22</sup> Their stay in Cameroon is largely dependent on the country's policy towards foreigners in general and particularly on refugees.<sup>23</sup> To this extent, how far are refugees considered as an economic catalysts or liabilities to Cameroon is a subject of great concern.

### **The Refugee Population and Capital Transfer**

The strength of every economy is largely determined by the size, human resources, and age composition of its population.<sup>24</sup> In this direction, the skilful, the larger and the more youthful the population, the stronger and the more productive the economy. The refugee population in Cameroon reflected this description and positively helped to expand the economy of the country. This is so because many business operators benefitted from the needs and demands generated by the refugee communities in the country. For instance, in 1978, Cameroon received approximately 40,000 Equatorial Guinean refugees in Olamze and Ambam, and 100,000 Chadian refugees in Kousserie in 1979. The presence of the large refugee population increased the size of the market as well as the amount of liquid cash in circulation brought into the country by the refugees. Note has to be made that, the refugee population increased the demand for goods and services, and provided a large and cheap labour force to the benefit of Cameroon employers. For example, following the influx of

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<sup>21</sup> UNHCR, "Refugee Population and Changes: Annual Statistical Report, Chapter 4 ", Yaounde, UNHCR Manual, December 2008.

<sup>22</sup>This was a collective interview with a group of eight refugee women of Central African Republic and Chadian origin selling groundnuts at Nlongkak road junction. It has to be recalled that there were so many of them but only eight opened up for conversation.

<sup>23</sup> Keming, "Differentiating Refugees from... ", 2014, pp.362-3.

<sup>24</sup><http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/459601468337158089/Theimpacts-of-refugees-on-neighboring-countries-a-development-challenge.>, [http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DEV/DOC\(2017\)1&docLanguage=En](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DEV/DOC(2017)1&docLanguage=En), [https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/LOSCHMANN%20et%20al\\_paper.pdf](https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/LOSCHMANN%20et%20al_paper.pdf) , 5<sup>th</sup> May 2018, 2:00pm.



Chadian refugees to Kousserie in 1979, the price of sugar doubled there, oil prices and all other items of basic necessities increased to the benefit of Cameroonian business persons.<sup>25</sup>

The contribution of refugee population to Cameroon's economy from 1982 to 2017 can therefore be analysed or streamlined basically into tangible and intangible wealth. From an intangible flank, the size of the refugee population, the inestimable injection of external funds, their human resource capital, services, and tangible goods brought in to Cameroon, constitute an immeasurable wealth. Accordingly, UNHCR statistics from 1982 to 2010, Cameroon received 1,374,880 refugees<sup>26</sup> as illustrated below. In a similar vein, Cameroon hosted another 350,000 duly registered refugees by 2017<sup>27</sup> mostly from Nigeria, Chad, and Central African Republic that added to the country's population; and this was significantly a blessing than a curse to the country.

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<sup>25</sup> S. B. Kabawwu, "The Refugee Problem in Africa: The Case of Cameroon," Maitrise Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 1998, pp.22-23.

<sup>26</sup> Keming, "The United Nations...", p. 88, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> UNHCR "Fact Sheet-Cameroon", *UNHCR*, May 2017, pp.1-3

Table 1: Statistics of Refugees in Cameroon from 1982 to 2010

Year/Country	Eq.G	Chad	NBA	BDI	RWA	DRC	COB	LIB	GHA	NIG	RSA	CAR	Others	Total
1982														36,800
1983														4,200
1984														13,700
1985			100											35,200
1986		53,354	96										50	53,600
1987		53,200	67										400	53,600
1988		50,784	41										335	51,160
1989		48,524	39										340	48,630
1990		49,476	30										370	49,876
1991		44,843	17										377	45,237
1992		41,749	7										477	42,233
1993		43,200												44,000
1994		41,000												44,000
1995		44,400		200	500									45,945
1996		44,556		237	650			187	115		255	168		46,407
1997	100	44,100		200	700	100		200			300			47,100
1998		3,053		332	1,227	182	230	167					916	47,057
1999		44,600			100									49,200
2000		42,300		1,40	1,754									43,680
2001		39,300		287	802	232	68	17		14,988	348		143	41,186
2002		39,294		289	890	236	71	18		14,998		342	144	56,286
2003		39,293		289	888	236	71	18		1,700			143	58,288
2004		39,303			1,037	592	183	75		7,453		712	7	51366
2005		39,303		232	1,037	592	183	75		9,711		712	163	54013
2006	44	7,095		269	1,303	661	159	85		2,953		22,342	13	36930
2007	36	5,974		266	1,362	691	149	85		2,872		48,498	23	61963
2008	37	4,427		260	1,369	684	146	86	4	2,861		3,683		15565
2009	36	4,716		256	1,438	714	160	88	4	2,861		80,880		93162
2010	34	8,475		260	1,505	696	162	66	5	2,873		88,410		104,496
TOTAL	287	876319	397	3377	16562	5616	1582	1167	128	63270	903	245747	3901	1,374,880

Source: Adapted by author from www.unhcr.ch, retrieved on the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010.

The above statistics refer only to the refugees duly registered and assisted by the UNHCR in the corresponding years. From the table, read the total number of refugees from different countries is as follows: (Eq.G) Equatorial Guinea - 287, Chad - 876.319, (NMB) Namibia - 397, (BDI) Burundi - 3.377, (RWD) Rwandi - 16.562, (DRC) Democratic Republic de Congo - 5.616, (COB) Congo Brazzaville - 1.582, (LIB) Liberia1 - 167, (GHA) Ghana - 128, (NIG) Nigeria - 63.270, (RSA) Republic of South Africa - 903, (CAR) Central African Republic - 245.747, and others - 3.901refugees.

The above statistics shows that there were a total of 1.724.880 refugees added to an estimated 21.000.000 million Cameroonians. Note has to be made here that the statistics are only about refugees actually registered by the UNHCR and it is possible that the undocumented refugee population that infiltrated and integrated with the locals could even double this number; thus; making it difficult to determine their actual value to Cameroon’s economy.<sup>28</sup> However, if we rely on the UNHCR figures,

<sup>28</sup> Group discussion with seven relief workers, in Langui, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

it implies that 1.724.880 extra mouths needed to be fed although by the UNHCR, the refugees were never satisfied and supplemented their daily meals by purchasing food and other items from Cameroonian traders. This is justified by the fact that in areas heavily invaded by refugees, the prices of food and other items skyrocketed. As stated above, even the food stuffs distributed to the refugees by the UNHCR was purchased from Cameroonian traders.<sup>29</sup>

Far more, the human resources and age composition of the refugees was of great significance to the growth of Cameroon's economy. This is so because they were largely composed of youth most of whom: lawyers, teachers, medical doctors, mechanics, construction/wood workers, plumbers, electricians, designers, journalist, and architects<sup>30</sup>, who are the locomotives of every vibrant economy. This wonderful blend of human resource capital remains the dream of every country that seeks development, especially Cameroon, designed to attain its vision 2035<sup>31</sup> as an emerging country in the human planet. To this end, if all refugees were a melange of the above professionals, every country seeking development will like to admit refugees unconditionally because: they will provide cheap labour required for economic growth; experts; and available funds; and they will speed up economic development. Thus; the refugee population was largely a blessing to Cameroon than a curse. However, the wonderful advantages offered by the transfer of capital and the available huge refugee population in Cameroon, the disadvantages of the presence of refugees in the country are worthy of examination.

The presence of refugees on Cameroon soil did not only influence the economy positively but also negatively. The era from 1979 to 1982 witnessed a large flow of Chadian refugees into Cameroon at the time the government was seriously affected by an economic depression. The influx of these refugees came with emergency requirements for security, shelter, and accommodation. Though, it may be argued that these emergencies were not solely the burden of Cameroon government but also of the UNHCR and other partners. It should however be clarified here that

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with Melingui Justine, aged 33, chief of health department, Langui, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2011., Interview with Ndoman Alexis Avom, aged 42, relief personnel, Langui, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

<sup>30</sup>R.Zetter, "Are refugees an economic burden or benefit?" <http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/preventing/zetter.pdf>, accessed on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2018 at 1:00pm.

<sup>31</sup> Cameroon Vision 2035 outlines the goals and priorities for the country in becoming an emerging economy by 2035. The Vision highlights Cameroon's desire to develop its industries, substantially increase exports, provide import substitution, and open local markets to foreign investments. The document recognises Cameroon's need to increase agricultural productivity through sustainable intensification, improve infrastructure and narrow the gap between the rich and poor. The challenges recognised include rapid urbanization, an ageing and increasing population and poor governance. Lack of capital for investment also makes it difficult to invest in adding value to products and agricultural goods. The vision includes language regarding climate change and environmental protection, but the concrete ways to integrate environmental sustainability objectives is lacking. See also, The REDD Desk, "A Collaborative Resource for REDD Readiness", available at <https://theredddesk.org/countries/plans/cameroon-vision-2035>, accessed the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2018 at 06:54 am.

Cameroon as a major partner had its own share of responsibility in terms of materials, financial and human resources, to complement the task of the UNHCR. This share of responsibility was never previewed in the national budget and consequently created leakages in the resources of the country at a time Cameroon was undergoing economic crisis. The observation on the negative implication of the refugees on the economy of Cameroon was presented by Issa Saibou. He asserted that in 1992, it was decided that the Poli Faro camp facilities were to be transferred to the authorities of Cameroon but this was postponed as a result of the economic depression in the country and the continuous influx of refugees.<sup>32</sup>

The heavy requirements to better the lives of the refugees such as the construction of their camps, weighed heavily on Cameroon. This so because the government of Cameroon had the responsibility to provide land to host the many refugees in the different parts of the country. To do this, the local population lost their farmlands, firstly for the construction of the refugee camps, and secondly for the refugees to use for the cultivation of crops for consumption and for sale. For example, in Langui, reasonable hectares of arable land were lost by the local population for the construction of the 706 lodgings to host approximately 4000 Chadian refugees.<sup>33</sup> According to Adamou, he lost his farmland of over 2 acres to the Chadian refugee community in the area, partly for the construction of the camp and partly for the cultivation of food crops to feed the traumatised refugee families in the locality.<sup>34</sup> The loss of the land to refugees affected the quantity of food production and cash crops for sale by the locals but greatly increased the national average since a huge number of refugees engaged in the agriculture sector. This decrease in the local's production negatively affected the domestic output to the advantage of the refugees.

Equally, the presence of a large number of refugees in the country created a very serious imbalance in the supply of goods and services. For example, in a place like Kousserie, the drastic increase in population led to a high demand for goods and services. This increase in the demand for goods and services were not covered by supply and this immediately resulted in the shortage of goods of basic necessities.<sup>35</sup> The immediate consequence of this shortage was black-marketing or the introduction of artificial scarcity that became rife in the region. Another implication of this shortage was the increase in the prices of goods. For example, between the months of March and September 1980, a packet of sugar initially sold in the area for 270 FCFA suddenly rose to 400 FCFA. In the

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<sup>32</sup>Saibou, I., "L'impact socio-économique du séjour des réfugiés Tchadiens à Kousseri (1979 à 1982)", *Ngaoundéré Anthopose*, Vol. 2, 1999, p.129.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Ahmadou Daihrou, aged 55, farmer, Langui, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2011, Interview with Malolo Priso, aged 38, chief of logistics and distribution, Garoua, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011, Interview with Younoussa Bouba, aged 30, head of department, Langui, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2011, Interview with Monni Cathie Danielle, aged 47, assistant director, HCR sub office (Bertoua), 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2012, Interview with Nouhou Zedou (Male) aged 28, trader, Bertoua 6 November 2012.

<sup>34</sup>Interview with Adamou Ibrahim, aged 47, farmer, Langui, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

<sup>35</sup> CRC, Secteur Logistique/Distribution: Objectifs du 1<sup>er</sup> Semestre, Garoua, Jan.-Juin 2010, p.6.

same light, the price of a kilogram (Kg) of meat formerly sold at 500 FCFA increased to 700 FCFA; and 100kgs of rice initially sold at 12.000 FCFA increased to 17.000 FCFA. Issa Saibou added that, the town of Kousserie became a centre for the commercialisation of stolen and trafficked objects from the Chadian capital (N'Djamena).<sup>36</sup>

According to Saibou, an air conditioner could be cheaply afforded for 10.000 FCFA, a car for 30.000 FCFA, and a good quality radio that was formerly sold for 50.000 FCFA was then sold for 10.000 FCFA.<sup>37</sup> Note has to be made here that even without refugees, Cameroon will never be free from the sale of stolen and trafficked property. Making a similar point, Erin maintains that: “[...] Americans are more likely to drown in a bathtub than be killed by a terrorist, and crime rates in cities that protect refugees are lower than in ones that don't.”<sup>38</sup> Despite the American case, refugees to an extent negatively affected business activities and the mentality of the youth, as they [the youth] were badly oriented to illegal businesses. The sudden increase in the prices of goods of basic needs like soap in the region was a blessing to the economic operators as they made heavy benefits from their sales and high turn-over was realised by traders in a short while. This should not in any sense be interpreted of any economic benefit as the economy suddenly became inflationary<sup>39</sup> and the purchasing power of Cameroonians in the region was negatively affected. However, in the minds of economic operators, such an inflationary economy was the best moment for them especially to those who had sizeable stock of goods to generate quick and hot cash from their buyers.

With the presence of huge refugee population in Cameroon, and in order to make them self-reliant and economically productive, it inadvertently imposed economic developmental projects on the refugee organs of the government. The economic implications of the presence of refugees on the economy of Cameroon were not only focused on rural areas as the urban sector was not left out. In terms of projects, urban refugees in Douala and Yaounde were covered by UNHCR/CRC Projects which funded social and economic demands of refugees. Although these projects were fully sponsored by the UNHCR, they still negatively affected the economy of Cameroon. For instance, the

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<sup>36</sup> Saibou, “L'impact Socio-économique...”, 1999, p.129.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.131.

<sup>38</sup> E. Rubin, “Statistics Show Syrian Refugees Help Host Country Economies”, available at <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/2017/05/12/statistics-show-syrian-refugees-help-host-country-economies/> 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017, reached 5<sup>th</sup> May 2018 at 4:15pm., [https://search1.cnet.com/int/content/tech+industry/syrian-refugee-sues-facebook-to-stop-fake-news@DJQdl88bR1qpHNNp?gclid=Cj0KCQjwrLXXBRCXARIsAIttmRP7jaVtJcHw11TsAm5MrhBZkkrYQcUbX7jjcWYRopYZEa-3aiWkrYaAskIEALw\\_wcB&ach=AdNet\\_A\\_CNET\\_38&ssibid=ah7860038&q=refugee%20benefits&pid=839438341269157912&ssq=1](https://search1.cnet.com/int/content/tech+industry/syrian-refugee-sues-facebook-to-stop-fake-news@DJQdl88bR1qpHNNp?gclid=Cj0KCQjwrLXXBRCXARIsAIttmRP7jaVtJcHw11TsAm5MrhBZkkrYQcUbX7jjcWYRopYZEa-3aiWkrYaAskIEALw_wcB&ach=AdNet_A_CNET_38&ssibid=ah7860038&q=refugee%20benefits&pid=839438341269157912&ssq=1), reached on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2018 at 10 :49 Am.

<sup>39</sup> UNHCR Standing Committee, “Social and Economic Impact of Large Refugee Populations on Host Developing Countries”, 6<sup>th</sup> January 1997, p.3.available at <http://www.unhcr.org/excom/standcom/3ae68d0e10/social-economic-impact-large-refugee-populations-host-developing-countries.html> , accessed on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2018 at 1:00pm.

projects sponsored refugees interested in self-reliant activities, and professional trainings like: tailoring, mechanics, carpentry, driving, and computing. It is worthy of note that the refugees flooded these training sectors leading to increase in the cost of training since the burden of training was covered by the UNHCR and not by the refugees themselves.

Such an increase in the cost of training made it very difficult for an average Cameroonian to obtain similar training since the professionals preferred refugees whose cost of training was rapidly covered by the UNHCR/CRC Project and at reasonable amounts. This was so because the ordinary natives could not meet the heavy charges levied by the trainers on the refugees.<sup>40</sup> This adjustment in the training centres was also visible in the commercial sector for refugees involved in trade. In an oral question and answer with Cameroonian female traders, they complained that their income from the sales of groundnuts had dropped tremendously do to the invasion of the sector by the refugee women from Chad and CAR.

In a similar vein, the UNHCR/CRC Project also offered scholarships covering transportation, housing, books, and fees to refugee students in Cameroon. It is quite true to say here that the scholarships were sponsored by the UNHCR but it has to be underscored that this negatively affected Cameroon government. This is so because up to the early 1990s, the only financial obligation to enter the state universities in Cameroon was to pay a registration levy of 3000 FCFA per student. The registration fee as it was called was subsidised by Cameroon government and students even received a monthly allowance of up to 45.000 FCFA.<sup>41</sup> All the refugee students in the University of Yaounde at the time were treated in discriminated of Cameroonians. This implies that both the refugees and Cameroonians students enjoyed equal benefits of free education, free hostel, free food, and free study allowance. Such an unequal treatment of students cannot be underestimated as it drained a reasonable amount from the state resources. The money was spent in the form of increased subventions, allowances, housing, and feeding in the University of Yaounde.

In a related manner, the UNHCR in collaboration with Cameroon government improvised a secondary and high school in the Langui neighbourhood in Garoua in order to absorb the refugee students in the area. It may be argued that the schools came in to serve Cameroonians who lacked institutions in the area and as most of them prior to the presence of refugees used to cover lengthy distances on foot before they could reach their schools. Nevertheless, with the creation of the schools, the government of Cameroon recorded some financial drawbacks because it was not programmed in the national budget. Though the UNHCR provided largely for the required funds in the construction of the schools, the project seriously affected the state resources. This is so because the state provided

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<sup>40</sup>Information gathered from tailors in the Briqueterie neighbourhood in Yaounde who sought for anonymity.

<sup>41</sup>Interview with Atangana Jean Claude, aged 55, Teacher, CRC headquarters (Yaounde), 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2009.

the land for the construction of the schools. In order to do this, Cameroonians in the area lost their farmlands which were their sources of income and were consequently motivated financially before their displacement in which the state contributed as well.<sup>42</sup>

In the Eastern Region, the natives lost their arable lands because land was used for the erection of schools and medical centres. The government in this direction also contributed financially to the projects, a contribution which was not previewed in the national budget. The implications of this contribution on the national budget could not be underestimated. Although, a wide majority of the population considered the invasion of refugees in the areas as a blessing to them<sup>43</sup>, it brought a lot of pressure on state funds. This was because the presence of refugees was accompanied by schools, health services and the provision of jobs.

All these transformed the purchasing power of the natives very positively, but its effects on the government of Cameroon were negative to some minimal extent.<sup>44</sup> Mathematically, for the period from 1982 to 2010, Cameroon received 1,374.880 refugees. Assuming that one refugees came into Cameroon with 500 FRS, that means:  $500 \times 1,374.880 = 687.440.000$ frs liquid cash was injected into Cameroon's economy. In addition, if the UNHCR spent 500 FRS per refugee a day, this implies:  $500 \text{ FRS} \times 1,374.880 = 687.440.000$ frs. Therefore, the total amount of money pumped into Cameroon's economy by the UNHCR and refugees will amount to  $687.440.000 \times 2 = 1.374.880.000$ frs. So, if UNHCR amount per day was fixed, the intangible wealth brought in by refugees was inelastic. No one can therefore state with precision the amount of money and wealth generated by refugees in Cameroon for within the period of study. Refugees were truly an overwhelming blessing to Cameroon's economy. What follows are efforts to explain this blessing considering specific sectors of Cameroon's economy.

### **The Creation of Jobs**

The presence of huge refugees in Cameroon did not only provide a larger market but readily available cheap labour force and jobs benefitting Cameroonians. This is so because some of the skilled refugees offered their human knowhow and services at giveaway compensation to Cameroonian employers just to survive. According to Michael:

In the United States, the average refugee becomes a net contributor to public coffers eight years after arrival.[...] That study found refugees actually pay back more in taxes than what they receive in benefits - about \$21,000 more in the first 20 years in the United States.[...] not only do refugees work as employees, but many open their own businesses and become employers, expanding their positive impact on the economy by creating jobs. In

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Aminah (female), aged 55, Seamstress, Langui, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Mbatoa Emmanul (Native), aged 35, Garga Sarali, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Yaouba Martins (native), aged 38, HCR/Federation of the Red Cross auxiliary, Garga Sarali, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012., Interview with Goma Samuel (native), aged 38, CRC relay personnel, Garga Sarali, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

Turkey, one recent study found Syrian refugees have invested almost \$334 million into the Turkish economy, with more than 10,000 Syrian-owned businesses employing an average of 9.4 workers.<sup>45</sup>

The above examples are typical of the Cameroon situation as other also affirm that: “in 2014, the average refugee had paid \$21,000 more in [taxes](#) than they had received in benefits from government assistance.”<sup>46</sup>. In addition, the other refugees who lacked economic potentials, especially those not covered by the UNHCR, engaged in cheap activities that earned them the cash to cater for their families. For refugees covered by the UNHCR, projects were set aside to provide better conditions for the refugees, and this benefitted Cameroonians who were contracted to execute the projects. For example, the presence of Equatorial Guinean refugees in Ambam and Olamze provided Cameroonian technicians with job opportunities as they were contracted to construct the camps in which the refugees occupied. Similarly, Chadian refugees in Maltam, Koussrie, Tapare, Poli Faro, and Langui camps also provided numerous jobs to Cameroonians even if the jobs were temporal.<sup>47</sup> With the availability of a huge skilled and unskilled refugee population, the contractors, most often Cameroonians, won contracts that were easily realised with the available cheap labour force provided by refugees. Obviously, Cameroonian contractors earned much money comparatively if they had to make use of domestic workers; this is thanks to the cheap labour force provided by refugees.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, the transfer of Chadian refugees from Kousserie to the banks of the Poli Faro River provided the refugees with enough arable land. The refugees further benefitted from farm tools and seedlings from the UNHCR and the *société de développement de coton* (SODECOTTON). This introduced the refugees to new farming techniques of growing cotton to the extent that they increased the revenue of SODECOTTON to 100.000.000 FCFA in 1986, 160.000.000 in 1987, and 1.000.000.000 in 1988.<sup>49</sup> It is very imperative to recall here that the revenue of SODECOTTON grew steadily because of the huge cheap labour force that led to a drop in the prices of cotton supplied by the locals due to a large output generated by the refugee cheap labour force.

Apart from the above advantages, the negative effects of refugees on the economy of Cameroon could also be analysed from the point of the creation and provision of job opportunities. It is of interest to recall that in any market economy where supply is more than demand; there is always a drop in the prices of goods and services. In the wake of a mass flow of refugees in the country, most Cameroonian stakeholders preferred creating and providing jobs but to the

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<sup>45</sup> C. Michael, “The Real Economic Cost of Accepting Refugees”, 14<sup>th</sup> September 2017,p.2., available at <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/real-economic-cost-accepting-refugees> accessed on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018 at 08:46 am.

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.refugee-economies.org/>, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/e/economicrefugee.asp> 5-05-18 accessed on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018 at 9:50 am.

<sup>47</sup> Group discussion with five CRC personnel (Malolo Priso, Younoussa Bouba, Mandara Adamou, Njikam Ousmanou and Melingue Justine) in Nkolere (Garoua), 7<sup>th</sup> Januay 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with DjinueMagloire, aged 68, CRC worker, Nkolere (Garoua), 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Kabawwu, “The Refugee Problem...” 1998, p. 23.



unskilled/skilled refugees than to the ordinary Cameroonians because of cheap labour. Most of the refugees needed shelter and food for their survival and thus accepted jobs for little or no pay as long as this could permit them have a place to rest and food to feed their families.<sup>50</sup> They rendered cheap services as night and day guards, housemaids, beer parlour attendants, and as cleaners. In relation to this, Elmer maintained that he paid for the services of a day and a night guard of Chadian origin in Garoua for 10.000 FCFA monthly.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Commercial Sector**

The income earned by the refugee population also trickled down to the local population thus positively transforming the economy of the localities occupied by refugees in Cameroon. For example, before the outbreak of the crisis in Chad, Kousserie was more of a rural area, but the influx of the Chadian refugee population in the area brought in wealth that developed and enlarged the town with the effect that it became more of an urban settlement. The presence of the refugees in Cameroon improved on the commercial ventures in the country. For example, in Maroua and Garoua, Chadian refugees got involved in the transportation of rice and millet, and sold perfumes and groundnuts.<sup>52</sup>

These commercial undertakings were not only limited to the rural areas. This is so because they were also observed in the urban environs like Douala and Yaounde especially as the UNHCR provided capital for the urban refugees who were interested in commercial accomplishments. With these resources, the refugees somehow boosted the commercial sector in these towns as there was an explosion of bars, shops, restaurants, cold stores, tailoring workshops, poultry farming, and road-side vendors. A DRC refugee vendor in Bali (Douala) maintained that his cosmetic business was growing daily thanks to the financial assistance he benefited from the UNHCR/CRC Project for urban refugees. He added that a very large majority of refugees from varying nationalities were involved in commercial activities in the same town.<sup>53</sup>

What was introduced as the UNHCR/CRC Project for urban refugees in Cameroon since 1998 to July 2011, greatly improved the economic welfare of the country especially in Douala and Yaounde. For example, the micro project funds disseminated by the project to the urban refugees in Yaounde and Douala stood at 4.059.390 million FCFA in 1998/1999, and 11,073.000 million FCFA in 2000/2001.<sup>54</sup> This shows that between 1998 and 2001, the UNHCR injected a sum of 15.132.390 million FCFA into refugee's business activities in Cameroon and this obviously increased the amount

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<sup>50</sup> Interview with WakaTali, aged 35, pharmacist, Langui, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Yang Elmer Baweh, aged 37, taxation agent, Yaounde, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Adamou (male) aged 40, WATSAN field supervisor, Langui, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011., Interview with Ahmadou (male), aged 75, farmer, Langui, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Makiadi, Albert Mbofor, aged 43, CAR refugee, Douala, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2012

<sup>54</sup> A. D., Etoga, "Le Cameroun et le Haut-commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés (HCR) de 1978 à Nos Jours", Mémoire de Maitrise en histoire, Université de Yaoundé I, 2003, pp.54-55.

of money in circulation to the benefit of Cameroon. Pat maintains that: “Refugees’ purchases benefit local and national economies of host country, cash aid has greater economic impact than in-kind food aid economic benefits exceed amount of donated aid”<sup>55</sup>. The positive contribution of this amount of money in the economy of the country cannot be underestimated. The economic activities created by the refugees absorbed a good number of jobless Cameroonians like in the beer brewing and beer parlours opened by refugees. Also, goods were supplied or brought closer to the door steps of Cameroonians and at cheaper and affordable prices, by the large number of refugees. Besides, the economic activities created by the refugees contributed to the revenue of the councils through taxes levied within their jurisdiction especially in Yaounde and Douala.<sup>56</sup>

Besides, individuals like Amadou (a Chadian refugee) in Langui benefited 50.000F CFA as microfinance from the UNHCR for transforming maize and after a year saved 170.000 FCFA. This made it possible for her to rear goats in addition to her maize transformation.<sup>57</sup> This assistance should be appraised from a very positive dimension because the quantity of food produced by the refugees boosted the supply of food to Cameroonian consumers at a reduced and affordable price. In spite of the numerous advantages, the presence of a huge refugee population to a certain extent equally affected the country negatively.

It should be remembered that the invasion of the market sector by the refugees was equally witnessed in Mokolo market in Yaounde. According to Patrick and Nassourou, the sale of perfumes used to fetch them a lot of money and they could make as much as 20.000 FCFA a day. They however regretted that with the invasion of this market sector mostly by CAR, Nigerian, and Chadian refugees, the prices of their products dropped drastically with the result that they hardly realised up to 5.000 FCFA daily from the business again.<sup>58</sup>

This is similar to the charcoal business in Langui where Chadian refugees were noted to have destroyed trees meant for environmental protection in order to make cash from the sales. This increased supply while demand remained constant and resulted in the drop in the price of charcoal. This means that the income of the local population in the sector was badly affected. In the Eastern Region, CAR refugees invaded with huge herds which largely increased the number of cattle in the area.<sup>59</sup> Similarly in the North West Region and Adamaoua in 2003, about 20.000 Nigerian refugees fleeing the Mambila-Taraba ethnic violence in Nigeria flooded the cattle market with approximately

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<sup>55</sup> P. Bailey, “Refugees Can Offer Economic Boost to Their Host Countries”, in *Society, Arts & Culture*, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2016, at <https://www.ucdavis.edu/news/refugees-can-offer-economic-boost-their-host-countries/> downloaded on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2018, at 3:00pm.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Mbatoa Emmanul (Native), aged 35, Garga Sarali, 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

<sup>57</sup> UNHCR, “Operation of Assistance...”, 2012, p.16.

<sup>58</sup> Patrick is involved in the sale of second-handed cloths and Nassourou in perfumes. The informants refused to completely reveal any further information about them.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Hamadou Dajo, aged 39, CAR refugee representative, Garga Sarali 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

40.000 cattle.<sup>60</sup> The implication of this was that the quantity of beef supplied for sale in the regions rose thus; lowering the prices and earnings from the trade. This had a double-edged implication as the native dealers in this trade witnessed a drop in their earnings while the local consumers were contented because of the drop in the price of beef in the regions.

Besides, refugees in Cameroon equally invaded the commercial sex industry leading to a drop in the demand and in the income of the Cameroonian sex workers. Before the coming of the refugees, Cameroonian whores were very proud and demanded high charges, but the few refugees in this domain accepted payments cheaper than what Cameroonian sluts requested. The effect was that some customers preferred refugees who were easily affordable and cheaper compared to the proud and expensive Cameroonian whores. In an open conversation with refugee girls in Yaounde and Douala, they freely confessed that the easiest way for them to make money in these two towns was to compete with the Cameroonian girls in the commercial sex industry.<sup>61</sup>

The argument advanced for joining this business was that upon their coming to Cameroon, they had to undergo a very complicated process of determination lasting sometime over a year or two. Since the process was too long, the outcome was unpredictable and because they had no source of income or people to rely on for lodging and feeding, they had no choice in offering their bodies in exchange for money just to survive. This situation was made worse by the fact that in the process of determination of the refugee status, they did not receive assistance of any form from the UNHCR. This was confirmed by Mbaitom Françoise, a CAR refugee, who alleged to have been awaiting her refugee status determination since 2010 and as such lived without assistance from the UNHCR except during an illness.<sup>62</sup> On her part, she was surviving from the sale of groundnuts.

## **Agriculture**

Cameroon's food production was equally affected positively by the presence of the refugees. The UNHCR distributed food to the 26.000 of the over 85.000 CAR refugees in Adamaoua and in the East, on a regular bases. The advantage was that some Cameroonians around the refugee communities were also offered food by the UNHCR and its partners.<sup>63</sup> Despite the UNHCR's attempt to secure food for the refugees in the rural areas, it was not still enough due to the large size of the refugee population. Most of the CAR and Nigerian refugees in the East, Adamaoua, and the North West Regions, were herdsmen and were therefore not interested in farm work or even lived in camps

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<sup>60</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/46fbc924.html>, downloaded on the 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2010 at 2:00pm.

<sup>61</sup> Group discussion With refugee girls in Yaounde, (CRC Headquarters) 12<sup>th</sup> September 2010 and Douala (UNHCR Headquarters), 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Mbaitom Françoise, aged 36, CAR refugee, HCR field office Bali (Douala), 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012., Interview with Mbaindinkang Matcheu, aged 20, CAR refugee, HCR field office Bali (Douala), 15<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Ismael (male), aged 60, notable, Langui, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

and settlements.<sup>64</sup> The UNHCR did not refuse to shelter these refugees in the camps and settlements. One of the reasons that explain why they were not living in camps and settlements was that about 95 per cent of them were herdsmen. For this reason, they were highly mobile in search of pastures. This was the case with about 20,000 Nigerians with over 40,000 cattle in the North West and Adamaoua Regions of Cameroon.<sup>65</sup>

The refugees' unwillingness to involve in agriculture largely generated food insecurity leading to malnutrition amongst them. According to UNICEF in 2010, malnutrition survey revealed 11.6 per cent prevalence in Cameroon's Eastern Region and a high mortality of children below 5 years.<sup>66</sup> To eradicate this malaise, the UNHCR encouraged agriculture and not the distribution of food to the refugees. The UNHCR distributed 80 per cent of farming seeds and tools to the refugee population and 20 per cent to the natives. Equally, Cameroon government distributed cassava tubers and provided training on the cultivation of maize, cassava, and market gardening. The reason for this method was to increase the number of refugees practicing agriculture so that they could grow adequate foodstuff in the country. Following the encouragement of the UNHCR and its partners, 6,000 refugees were involved in agriculture in 2011.<sup>67</sup> In addition, the Spanish and Cameroonian Red Crosses in collaboration with the UNHCR distributed farming inputs and technical assistance in over 12 settlements in the East and Adamaoua.<sup>68</sup> In a similar programme, International Relief and Development also distributed maize seeds, machetes, and hoes to 3,000 refugees/nationals and 49,000 cassava cuttings were planted in a 30 hectares farm in the East and Adamaoua.<sup>69</sup>

The involvement of refugees in the agricultural sector positively affected Cameroon despite the negative impacts. In a conversation with Ngum John, he regretted that the invasion of refugees in the harvesting and gathering of palmnuts largely contributed to the drop in the price of a bunch of palmtree from the former 40 FCFA each to 25 FCFA.<sup>70</sup> Though the drop in these prices benefitted the few employers as they realised more dividends, a very narrow section of Cameroonians in these areas were negatively affected as some suffered a slash in wages due to the inundation of the sector by refugees.

Far and wide, another economic consequence of the refugees on the government of Cameroon resulted from the joint management of projects. For example, project N<sup>o</sup> 78/EP/CMR/EM/1 over Equatorial Guineans in 1978 and that of 1982, which had to do with the transfer of Chadian refugees

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<sup>64</sup> Interview with Hadhijo Ibrahim, aged 45, CAR refugee, Garga Sarali (Bertoua), 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/46fbc924.html>, downloaded on the 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2010 at 2:00pm.

<sup>66</sup> UNHCR, "Operation of Assistance...", 2012, p.14.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>68</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/4b1cbba9.html>, accessed on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2011 at 3pm.

<sup>69</sup> CRC, " Annual Statistics of the HCR/CRC Project for rural refugees", Yaounde, UNHCR, January 2011, p.11.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Ngum John, aged 40, palm-nuts harvester, Disangue, 16<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

from Kousserie to the banks of the Poli Faro River, negatively weighed on the resources of the state of Cameroon. The government was involved in the transportation of the refugees and the drainage of the marshy banks of the Faro River. Again, the government provided over 2.000 acres of land for the refugees to cultivate cotton, and about 1.000 acres for the growth of food crops.<sup>71</sup> The effects of these projects resulted to the waste of resources of the government of Cameroon because many natives lost their grazing and arable lands, which were their main sources of income, to refugees. Consequently, there was a drop in the standards of living of the concerned Cameroonians, and a slowdown in the economic activities due to the limited cash to be spent or in circulation among nationals.

## Conclusion

After a critical analysis of the influence of a very huge refugee population in Cameroon, capital transfer, employment opportunities, commerce, and the agricultural industry in the country from 1982 to 2017, our results reveal that refugees positively contributed far and large to the growth of Cameroon's economy. On the other hand, although on a comparative analysis refugees were by far largely a blessing than a curse to Cameroon's economy, they also constituted to a limited extent some negative consequences such as pressure on the state to construct schools and hospitals not previewed in the national budget. By implication, the presence of refugees in some areas in Cameroon rather awakened the government to realise that such facilities were lacking or even absent. Based on this premise, Cameroonians should rather wish to have refugees all over the country so that in an attempt to fully respect and apply its commitment with the UNHCR, development will trickle to every part of the country.

Based on the above findings, this study recommend that:

- The AU should create an African refugee body.
- African countries should pull funds to cater for their refugees since some of the refugees defined by the AU are not considered by the UNHCR.
- The AU requires a common constitution and a standing army for intervention during emergencies.
- There is a need to create a forum for academics to rethink AU refugee policies and to form a true United States of Africa to mitigate the rampant violence on the continent.

In spite all that has been revealed from the results of our findings, our study by far remains subjective and open to criticisms. This stance is based on the presumption that: the case of Cameroon is not universal, the refugees may not have the same potentials, their human resources may not be adequately exploited by the recipient country and may differ depending on the composition of the

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<sup>71</sup>CRC, "Annual Statistics of...", p.132.

refugees and the recipient economy. Therefore, we hereby submit that the admission of refugees should not only be perceived as an obligation, human rights to shelter but far beyond a heavenly responsibility must of necessity by every country. If there is any county under the sun which considers refugees as a problem rather than a solution to its economy, then that country certainly is unable to tap its very own potentials and should favourably redesign its refugee policies.

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\_\_\_\_\_, Law N° 2005/006 of 27<sup>th</sup> July 2005 Relating to the Status of Refugee in Cameroon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session, 27<sup>th</sup> July 2005, p.6.

\_\_\_\_\_, Bill 777/PJL/AN, N°79/R/AN, Relating to the Status of Refugees in Cameroon: Presented on behalf of the Foreign Affairs Commission, June 2005, pp.2-3.

#### 2. Oral Sources

N°	Name & Surname	Age	Occupation	Venue	Date interviewed
1	Achirimbi Peter Ngwa	50	Driver	Kouba,	4 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
2	Adamou (male)	40	WATSAN supervisor	Langui,	10 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
3	Adamou Ibrahim	47	Farmer	Langui	11 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
4	Ahmadou (male)	75	Farmer	Langui	12 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
5	Ahmadou Daihrou	55	Farmer	Langui	11 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
6	Aminah (female)	55	Seamstress	Langui	13 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
7	Atangana Jean Claude	55	Teacher	Yaounde	23 <sup>rd</sup> August 2009
8	DjinueMagloire	68	CRC worker	Garoua	13 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
9	Goma Samuel (native)	38	CRC worker	Garga Sarali	6 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
10	Hadhijo Ibrahim	45	CAR refugee	Garga Sarali	6 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
11	Hamadou Dajo	39	CAR refugee	Garga Sarali	7 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
12	Ismael (male)	60	Notable	Langui	11 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
13	Makiadi Albert Mbofor	43	CAR refugee	Douala	14 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
14	Malolo Priso	38	Logistics staff	Garoua	10 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
15	Mbaindinkang Matcheu	20	CAR refugee	Douala	15 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
16	Mbaitom Francoise	36	CAR refugee	Douala	15 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
17	Mbatoa Emmanul	35	Notable	Garga Sarali	6 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
18	Melingui Justine	33	Health worker	Langui	11 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
19	Monni Cathie Danielle	47	HCR worker	Bertoua	3 <sup>rd</sup> November 2012
20	Ndoman Alexis Avom	42	Relief personnel	Langui	13 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
21	Ngum John	40	Palm-nuts harvester	Disangue	16 <sup>th</sup> July 2011
22	Nouhou Zedou	28	Trader	Bertoua	6 November 2012
23	Waka Tali	35	Pharmacist	Langui	12 <sup>th</sup> January 2011
24	Yang Elmer Baweh	37	Taxation agent	Yaounde	15 <sup>th</sup> September 2010
25	Yaouba Martins	38	CRC worker	Garga Sarali	6 <sup>th</sup> November 2012
26	Younoussa Bouba	30	Relief worker	Langui	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2011

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