



Shelter Cluster NWSW Cameroon
ShelterCluster.org
Coordinating Humanitarian Shelter



Northwest Southwest Cameroon Shelter Cluster Position Paper on Minimum Expenditure Basket



Now that we have a roof over our heads, we can move forward to think about our basic needs more easily.

-Internally Displaced Person in the Southwest region who benefited from a semi-permanent shelter project

A minimum expenditure basket (MEB) “requires the identification and quantification of basic needs items and services that can be monetized and are accessible in adequate quality through local markets and services. Items and services included in an MEB are those that **households in a given context are likely to prioritize, on a regular or seasonal basis**. An MEB is inherently multi-sectoral and based on the average cost of the items composing the basket. It can be calculated for various sizes of households.”¹ This means that the MEB is a holistic overview of what it costs a household to reach a minimum standard of living per month. The Shelter Cluster through assessments conducted during the first quarter of 2022 and through its strategy update has identified the sectoral elements of what a household may need to spend monthly **to live with dignity and meet their basic needs and human rights**.² It is important to remember that the **MEB forms only one component of the formula for coming up with the transfer value and is typically representing the existing needs in the form of a monetary monthly cost**. Not all elements of a traditional shelter response fit the classical definition of an MEB as not all costs are seasonal and reoccurring. Nevertheless, a **person who has just experienced damage to their shelters may have extraordinary costs imposed on their ability to meet their basic needs**.

As part of its strategy the Shelter Cluster should “systematically define minimum costs, thresholds and income levels for the construction or maintenance of affordable shelter, and purchasing of other shelter-related goods and services.”³ Beyond prices, the crisis has deprived affected populations of their ability to provide shelter solutions for themselves. Shelter is a process and not a product-oriented sector. Therefore Shelter Cluster partners should ensure that they consult with communities to attempt to foster beneficiaries’ ownership of their shelter solutions based on local building practices.

The **critical markets** for the shelter response in the Northwest and Southwest regions are:

- **Commodity markets** which include the essential household items including the minimum standard NFI kit and construction materials
- **Housing or rental markets**
- **Construction labour**
- **Services (utilities)**

As advised by ECHO, multi-purpose cash (MPC) could be considered to cover reoccurring costs such as rent and utilities, but are not as appropriate for one-off costs such as construction. The Shelter Cluster and ECHO strongly require technical assistance, capacity building and monitoring to accompany any activity where cash may be used to meet a shelter need⁴, and partners who do not have adequate shelter capacity on their teams should liaise with the Shelter Cluster to meet this gap. USAID’s Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) says that MPC may target shelter needs such as rent, utilities, and fuel for various purposes, but that cash for shelter repair should be considered a full intervention under the Shelter sector given its expense and the requirement for technical assistance.⁵ The following is a review of each of the scenarios of costs that should or should not be considered for the Shelter/NFI proportion of the MEB.

1 <https://www.calpnetwork.org/resources/glossary-of-terms/>

2 https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/mebcalpv4_0.pdf

3 <https://sheltercluster.org/shelter-and-cash-working-group/documents/shelter-companion-calp-glossary>

4 https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/thematic_policy_document_no_3_cash_transfers_en.pdf

5 https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USAID-BHA_EAG_Annex_A-Technical_Information_and_Sector_Requirements_February_2022.pdf

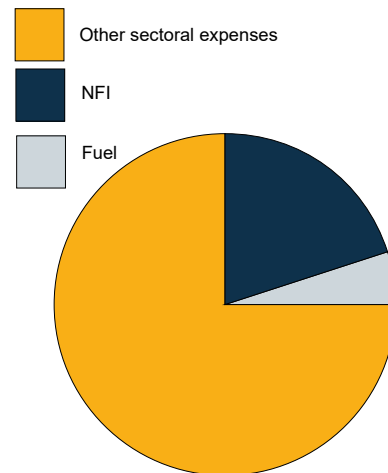
Scenario 1: IDPs in Hosting Arrangements

Recommended Shelter/NFI portion of MEB per month for this scenario: 11,142.50 XAF per month

According to the OCHA MSNA from March 2022, 52 % of IDPs in the Northwest region and 46% of IDPs in the Southwest region are estimated to be living with host families. With a roof already over their heads, the main need that this population group has are non-food items. The [Minimum NFI kit determined by the Shelter Cluster](#) is valued at **127,710 XAF**. This would come to **10,642.50 XAF per month over the course of 12 months**. Most items in the kit are non consumables, so there is not a high need for replacement unless in the instance of pendular displacement and/or loss or damage. IDPs and hosts also have cooking fuel needs in their shared accommodation. The Cluster estimates that cooking fuel costs between **5000-7000 XAF** and is encouraging partners to cover this need for extremely vulnerable population categories if resources are available. Nevertheless, this is a basic expense that the population is encountering, so it is estimated that if one considers an average of **6000 XAF** for fuel costs, that an additional **500 XAF** per month could be considered to the monthly amount.

Shelter needs by this population are created by overcrowding and non-functioning WASH facilities which have been reported to increase the risk of eviction due to frustration by landlords or hosts. These interventions **do require support of technical staff for proper installation of partitions for repairs, and for putting in place the components of an Occupancy-Free-of-Charge programme** that would reduce the risk of gender based violence. If identifying such needs during distributions, they should be referred to the Shelter Cluster.

Shelter Cluster partners report that due to cultural preferences that IDPs may provide in-kind support or work for their hosts in exchange for staying in the shelter. They typically do not provide any monetary payment to their hosts, so no reoccurring shelter costs are included in this scenario.



This does not reflect any actual proportions and is illustrative only of the portion of MEB per month.



@SHUMAS mattress distribution in March 2022



@IRC voucher distribution program February 2022

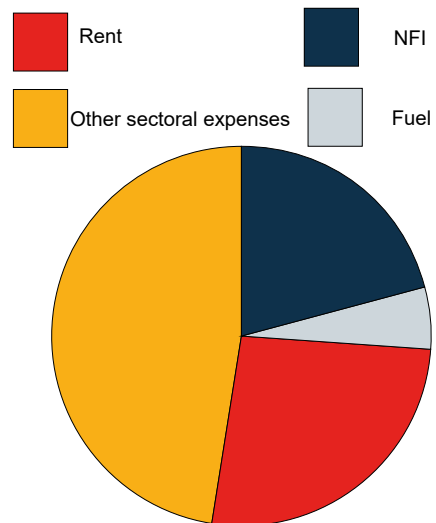
Scenario 2: IDPs in Renting Arrangements

Recommended Shelter/NFI portion of MEB per month for this scenario: 43,892.50 XAF

Those who are renting accommodation have to worry about achieving a critical aspect of adequate shelter: **affordability**. The OCHA MSNA estimates that 30% of IDPs in the Southwest and 13% of IDPs in the Northwest are renting their accommodation. Rent and utilities are therefore the most frequent reoccurring cost for this population group. The OCHA MSNA provides some estimates on rent based on one key informant per the villages covered which is illustrated on the map. If only looking at the data from the perspective of price per geography, the cost of rent per month varies between **1678.57 XAF** in Noni Subdivision to **14,000 XAF** in Limbe 1 Subdivision. However, this source of data is **missing critical indicators** necessary for mapping the rental market including type of housing and which materials were used to build the structure, size of the shelter (in m2), the housing features, whether furnished or not, the type of tenure arrangement, the location of the shelter and its proximity to recreational and other service providers, and other amenities that contribute to the expense of the shelter. Utilities are also important features that impact on a reoccurring basis the affordability of the shelters that IDPs are renting. According to Cameroon's *Institute National de la Statistique*'s last household survey conducted in 2007, the average expenditure per person amongst the poor in the Northwest was 181,509 XAF of which 13.8% was spent on housing, while in the Southwest the average expenditure was 201,907 XAF of which 13.7% was spent on housing.¹ At 2022 rates, this would mean that the average impoverished person in the Northwest would spend **29,592 XAF on housing annually** while the average impoverished person in the Southwest would spend **32,683.30 XAF on housing annually**.

A challenge identified by Shelter Cluster partners is that rent in the NWSW regions is expected to be paid for several months at the same time. A pilot program implemented by NRC paid each household a lump-sum of 90,000 XAF to cover 3 months of rent. Therefore the following package is envisioned:

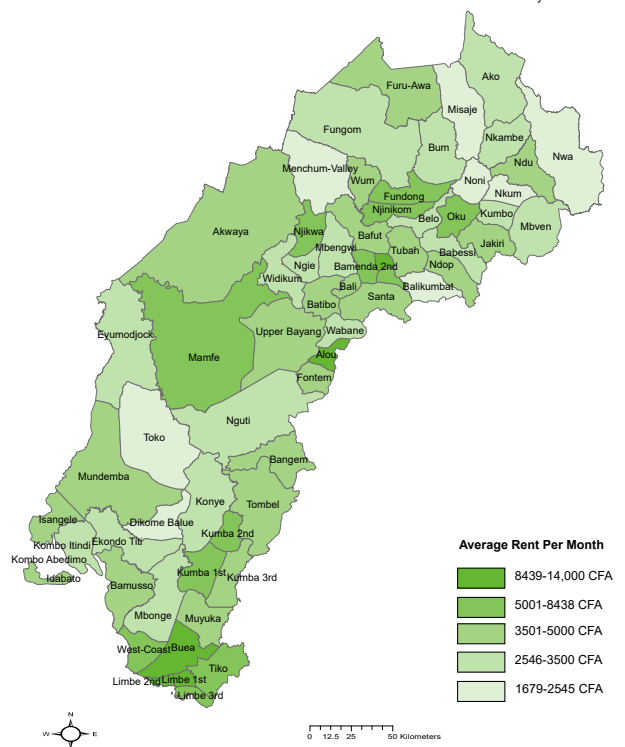
- 30,000 XAF for Rent
- 2750 XAF Utilities
- 11,142.50 NFIs



This does not reflect any actual proportions and is illustrative only of the portion of MEB per month.

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OCHA MSNA: 1st Quarter 2022
Average Cost of Rent per Month
Per Subdivision
Key Informants



¹ <https://ghdx.healthdata.org/record/cameroon-household-survey-2007>

Scenario 3: Internally Displaced in the Bush/Makeshift Shelters

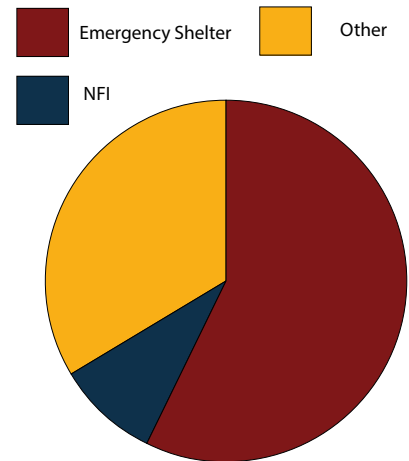
Recommended Shelter/NFI portion of MEB per month for this scenario: 125,617.64 XAF

On average, about 10% of internally displaced people are living in makeshift shelters in both regions. These makeshift shelters are typically found in informal settlements in the bush in extremely hard to access areas. The ability of internally displaced persons to spend on their basic needs depends on their ability to access markets. IDPs in these locations also have strong needs for NFIs and the same monthly expenditure for NFIs would apply to them. Nevertheless, the shelters in these locations are composed of basic materials such as thatch, tarpaulin, bamboo, and wood. The lifespan of these shelters is 6 months given the extremely harsh meteorological and mountainous conditions to which they are exposed. This population therefore is in need of emergency shelter kits, but it would be inappropriate given the lack of resources of this population to break down the expenditure over a monthly period as the shelter needs are immediate and need to meet minimum standards.

The price of **114,475.14 XAF** would enable the beneficiary to spend on all the items in the Shelter Cluster's minimum shelter kit which includes the following items (items in red are banned by authorities to be distributed in-kind):

- 2 (4x5 m) Plastic Tarpaulin sheets
- Polyester Rope 12mm x 50 m
- Hoe
- Pickaxe
- Shovel
- 1 kg 75 mm nails
- Hammer
- Handsaw

The fact that the entire kit is required to provide immediate habitable emergency shelter standards signals that emergency shelter kits require the intervention of experts in the Shelter Cluster both in terms of monitoring the intervention and also in providing technical assistance to ensure proper installation and that a shelter or repairs are conducted in such a way that the shelter protects individual from the elements. Therefore it is **recommended to exclude the cost of an Emergency Shelter Kit from the monthly MEB and to address it as a sectoral need. Guidance on the [Shelter Kit from the Shelter Cluster is found through the Cluster website.](#)**



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@Plan International Household Assessment: : Bush settlement in Bali- Mezam



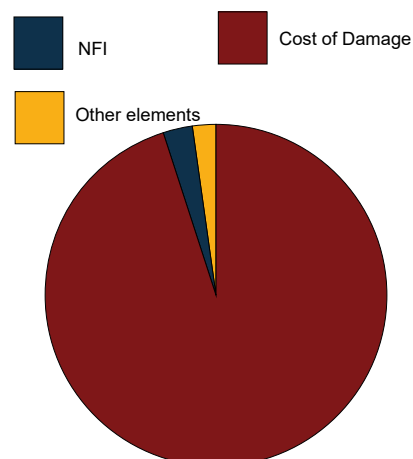
@Pan 2018 Mamfe Bush Settlement

Scenario 4: Non-Displaced or Returnees with Damaged Shelter

Not recommended for the Minimum Expenditure Basket: Severe cost setback to victims (see Scenario 1 for NFI needs)

According to a recent Shelter assessment conducted by Plan International during December 2021- January 2022, 58% of returnees and 38% of non-displaced in the Northwest region and 44% of returnees and 44% non-displaced respectively in the Southwest region reported that their shelters had been damaged. While repairs to a house are typically a one off expense, the cost that damage implies for the affected population is significant and can complicate the individual's ability to meet his or her basic needs. To estimate the costs of damages, one needs to look at Cameroon's *Décret No.2006/3023 PM du 29 Dec.2006 fixant les modalités d'évaluation administrative des immeubles en matière fiscale*. This guidance provides a monetary scale of how to quantify the **value of the property** and is used in cases of compensation, taxation, and in assessing the current value of properties. The age of the building, the previous maintenance conducted or not conducted, the home's location and accessibility, and the houses' connection to water, electrical, and telecoms connections can also impact the value of the house. In addition to these factors damage costs also include the required repairs to make the shelter habitable again. In addition to carefully accounting for these factors, labour costs for repairs also have to be taken into consideration. Monitoring of works and the assessment of damages themselves requires shelter and engineering expertise in addition to take into consideration housing, land, and property aspects, as compensation is the right of every victim of damage.

Type 1 Building: High quality	More than 145,000 XAF per m2
Type 2 Building: Average	90,001-145,000 XAF per m2
Type 3 Building: Standard	45,001-90,000 XAF per m2
Type 4 Building: Semi-permanent	20,001-45,000 XAF per m2
Type 5 Building: Temporary	7,000- 20,000 XAF per m2



This does not reflect any actual proportions and is illustrative only.

Damage to shelter should be seen as a **debt burden** and loss in terms of cost that negatively impacts a person each month, but could not be considered as part of a MEB and should not be addressed with MPC. NFIs for these victims is though a necessity.



@Plan International Household Assessment: Kara boat House- Ebonji- Koupe Manigouba



@Plan International Household Assessment: Degraded shelter