

Akwaya

Akwaya town is reportedly home to between 20,000 to 39,000 residents according to estimates from satellite imagery, while the last census conducted in 2005 recorded there were only 3500 people living in the town. The Subdivision is home to approximately 87,252 residents.¹

According to the OCHA Multisector Needs Assessment conducted in August 2022, there are 400 IDPs living in Akwaya Town. 25% of the IDPs arrived in Akwaya Town between January-February 2022, while the remaining 75% arrived between March to August 2022. All IDPs are from other localities in Akwaya Subdivision.² IDPs that were living in Akwaya prior to the 2022 rounds of the OCHA MSNA, mostly stated that they had the intention of returning to their area of origin due to shelter conditions being better in their area of origin.³ A number of armed clashes and attacks on civilians have been recorded between April and October 2022⁴, while IOM has reported continued unstable population movement between November to January in the Subdivision.⁵ 63% of these IDPs have self-settled into either squatting or owning their own shelter throughout the town. All these self-settled IDPs are living in mudbrick houses that vary in conditions from being in good condition, damaged, or unfinished. 25% of the IDPs are renting one-room accommodations in either cement or damaged mudbrick buildings. On average, they pay 2000 XAF per month⁶, but a survey of 29 households in December 2021 found that rental prices could be much higher with the highest price reported to be around 30,000 XAF and the lowest being 5000 XAF per month with an average of 12,000 XAF.⁷ 12% of the IDPs are hosted living with another local family in good condition mudbrick houses. 12 people from 3 households recently returned to Akwaya town due to the inability to find livelihoods in their location of displacement elsewhere in Akwaya subdivision. All returnees live in good condition mudbrick houses.⁸ For the Humanitarian Needs Overview, the shelter conditions were said to be in Severity Level 3, having moderate inadequacies.⁹

Akwaya Subdivision's land is grassland in the north and dense forest in the south. The Subdivision hosts the Takamanda National Park, which is home to many diverse wildlife including elephants, buffalos, and gorilla. The Subdivision hosts two other wildlife areas including the Mone Forest Reserve and the Kagwene Gorilla Sanctuary, which borders Momo Division in the Northwest Region. The northern grasslands are able to provide fertile land for both peasant farming and grazing lands for cattle.¹⁰

The topography varies between 1000 m to 1700 m of elevation with many steep slopes, with some portions of land that are flat on the grassland plains. Soil types in Akwaya are brown sandy soils with patches of darker soil, which make the land good for agriculture.¹¹ Some variability between the rainy season and the dry season has been noted in recent years. Usually, the dry season lasts from November to June, with intermittent showers beginning in April. The heaviest rainfall is usually in July and August, with the rivers in the subdivision becoming flooding between the periods of July to October. Between December to February, Akwaya is impacted by the Harmattan¹², and heavy winds can cause dust, damage to homes, and other human illnesses such as migraines, respiratory

¹ Landsat 2021 Oakridge National Laboratory

² OCHA Multisector Needs Assessment

³ <https://sheltercluster.org/north-west-south-west/pages/shelter-cluster-household-assessment-northwest-and-southwest-regions>

⁴ ACLED Data

⁵ IOM Rapid Response Mechanism

⁶ OCHA Multisector Needs Assessment

⁷ <https://sheltercluster.org/north-west-south-west/pages/shelter-cluster-household-assessment-northwest-and-southwest-regions>

⁸ OCHA Multisector Needs Assessment/Shelter Cluster

⁹ Shelter Cluster

¹⁰ https://www.pndp.org/documents/01_CDP_Akwaya.pdf

¹¹ https://www.pndp.org/documents/01_CDP_Akwaya.pdf

¹² https://www.pndp.org/documents/01_CDP_Akwaya.pdf

difficulties, hypertension, and psychological impacts.¹³ The town has a public hospital and a health center which is said to be found at 31-60 minutes distance from where internally displaced people are staying and the majority of IDPs have access to these locations.¹⁴

In 2008, Akwaya council reported that the Subdivision was home to many rivers and streams which enabled the population to have abundant sources of water for cooking, bathing, and drinking. Most of the crisis affected population gets access to drinking water at tap stands that are 16-30 minutes distance to where they are living. Though the water is not treated in any form. In terms of sanitation, the crisis affected population has complained that there are not enough latrines and for the latrines that they have they do not have enough privacy, while not reporting any existence of open defecation.¹⁵ 80% households have latrines outside the shelter in a communal or shared space, while 14% of households reported not having access to latrine and having to use the open air. 6% stated they have a latrine in their house.¹⁶ The Akwaya Council has complained that the Subdivision lacks a proper waste management, a situation that has only been exacerbated by the crisis.¹⁷

In an assessment conducted by Plan International in December 2021, the majority of households reported having rarely to never sufficient access to lighting at night, with light sources primarily including solar lights, candles, and flashlights. The majority of households use wood for cooking in three stone fireplaces, with a few households using charcoal and kerosene as the source of fuel.¹⁸

The Subdivisions rivers are also a source of livelihoods for the population used for fishing and trade channels with Nigeria. Much of the farming done in the area is subsistent farming, and prior to the crisis, there was much economic activity with residents of neighbouring Nigeria especially for rice, groundnuts, cocoa, bush mango, and honey. In terms of demographic profile of the population, most agriculturalists are older, while young people have gone to larger cities to pursue economic activity. Akwaya even prior to the crisis was considered a difficult to access area given that it is more remote approachable by foot through Mamfe and the road from Nigeria, impassable during the rainy season.¹⁹ The humanitarian situation is said to have only aggravated the situation as Non-State Armed Groups are blocking the Bamenda/Bafut/Menchum axis, with the road from Nigeria being the only option.²⁰

IDPs have turned to both farming and to petty trading in order to earn more money,²¹ with unskilled labour also being reported by many households²². IDPs feed themselves through a combination of gathering, purchasing with cash, and also receiving food from host family, friends, or neighbours. Some negative coping mechanisms of the population has been noted to be relying on cheaper food, borrowing from a friend, buying food on credit, reducing one's own consumption to feed a child, and spending one's savings.²³ Markets are accessible, but IDPs have reported struggling with the affordability of prices or finding the right items that they need in the market.²⁴ For those found in rural areas of Akwaya, the markets are at a greater distance or even inaccessible.²⁵

¹³ <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harmattan>

¹⁴ OCHA MSNA

¹⁵ OCHA Multisector Needs Assessment

¹⁶ <https://sheltercluster.org/north-west-south-west/pages/shelter-cluster-household-assessment-northwest-and-southwest-regions>

¹⁷ https://www.pndp.org/documents/01_CDP_Akwaya.pdf

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ https://www.pndp.org/documents/01_CDP_Akwaya.pdf

²⁰ Report of Akwaya Protection Needs Assessment UNHCR, Rhema Care, and IRC

²¹ OCHA MSNA

²² <https://sheltercluster.org/north-west-south-west/pages/shelter-cluster-household-assessment-northwest-and-southwest-regions>

²³ OCHA Multisector Needs Assessment

²⁴ OCHA MSNA

²⁵ <https://sheltercluster.org/north-west-south-west/pages/shelter-cluster-household-assessment-northwest-and-southwest-regions>

According to the OCHA Multisector Needs Assessment, there was no humanitarian assistance provided in Akwaya.