

Cameroon | Far North Region | Return Intentions Survey
Round 18 | 28 March – 08 April 2019



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International Organization for Migration (IOM)

The UN Migration Agency

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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 their areas of origin or settle elsewhere. Sixty-eight per cent of return movements were recorded between 2014 and 2017, 31 per cent in 2018, and 1 per cent between January and March 2019. 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

For this round, this survey was conducted through a household questionnaire from 28 March 2019 to 08 April 2019 in the six departments of the Far North region of Cameroon.

A total of 2,933 heads of IDP households and out-of-camp refugees responded to the questionnaire in 536 host locations; each representing one displaced household reflecting a total of 22,325 displaced persons represented in this survey. Respondents were randomly selected from the displaced population living in the locations surveyed, with 35 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 333,600 individuals, with a data margin of error of 5 per cent.

The survey of displaced households was conducted in collaboration with the administrative authorities of the Far North Region. The supervision of the survey, as requested by the new methodology implemented, was ensured by DTM enumerators in collaboration with the focal points designated by the administrative authorities in the districts.

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.

3. LIMITATIONS

The difficulties that affected the survey were as follows:

- Five localities hosting the target populations have been forbidden by the army and eight others are not secure. As a result, enumerator visits to these locations have been impossible. Household data collection was conducted in 75 per cent of the IDP and out-of-camp refugee villages.
- Some heads of household were unavailable due to work in the fields.

To cope with these difficulties, the following strategies were adopted to implement the survey:

- In the case of villages where access was prohibited, data was collected by phone and household surveys were conducted in other localities within the same department to maintain an identical level of representativeness of the target.
- In the case of villages where security was precarious, information related to security in these areas, received from local guides and village chiefs, allowed the enumerators to continue the assessment. In addition, security instructions were issued by the law enforcement authorities at each checkpoint.
- The enumerators went to the localities as early as possible to talk with the households before they left for their field work.
- The enumerators sometimes had to go to the fields to discuss with key informants or had to return to their homes after field work.

4. KEY INFORMATION

DISPLACEMENT



The eighteenth round of the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM – April 2019) identified 262,831 IDPs, 50,981 out-of-camp refugees and 110,023 returnees.



94 per cent of the surveyed population stated that they had been displaced by the conflict, 5.9% stated they were displaced by floods and other climatic factors, and 0.1% by intercommunal violence.



Among displaced populations currently in the region, three per cent have been displaced between January and March 2019, and nine per cent have been displaced in 2018. The rest of the targeted population was displaced during the following periods: 4 per cent before 2014, 22 per cent in 2014, 27 per cent in 2015, 24 per cent in 2016, and 9 per cent in 2017.



About 39 per cent of IDP households live in host communities, 24 per cent live in spontaneous settlements, 19 per cent live in their original dwellings, 10 per cent live on rent, 7 per cent live in newly acquired private homes. And 1 per cent live in collective centres or in open areas.³

RETURN INTENTIONS

21 per cent of the IDP and out-of-camp IDP households surveyed indicated their intention to leave their current area of displacement, including 18 per cent to return to their area of origin and 3 per cent to move to a third location. 79 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 (43%), the lack of financial means for the return (43%), and the destruction of their homes in the areas of origin (37%).¹



The four main conditions required for return are: to ensure the presence of security forces in the area of origin (72%), the rehabilitation of damaged homes (33%), to benefit from international assistance in the location of origin (31%) and an improved access to basic services (28%).²



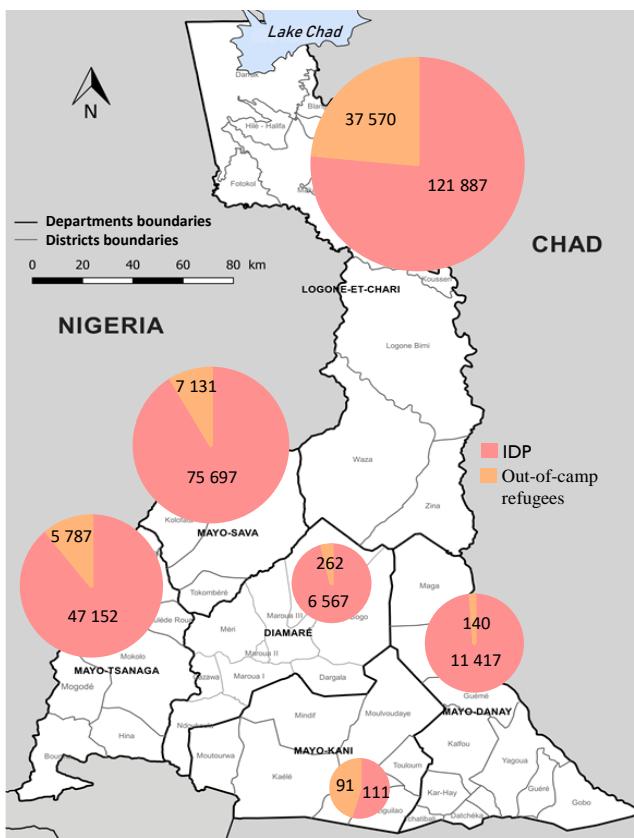
The main reasons for return of returnee households are: an improved security in the area of origin (46%), the access to arable lands (32%), and the lack of livelihoods in the displacement area (14%).

¹ Answers were not exclusive.

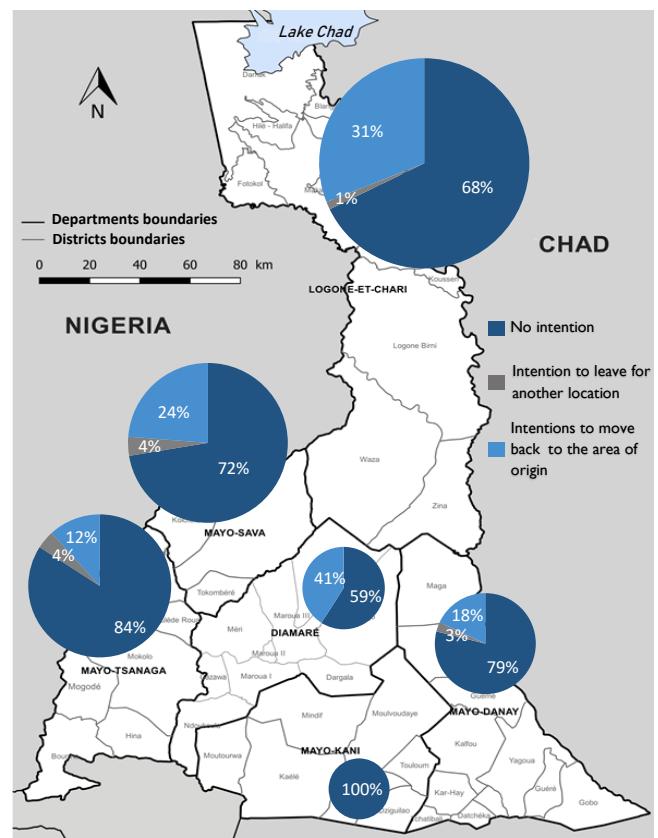
² Questions related to reasons justifying return intentions were multiple choices, with non-exclusive answers.

³ This percentage is related to the whole targeted population.

Division of displaced populations

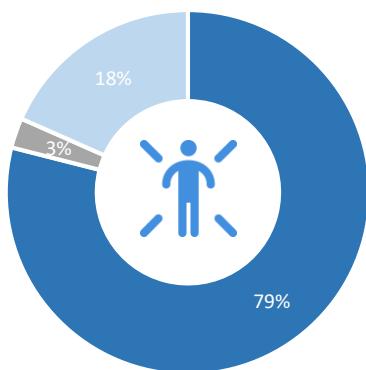


Return Intentions by department

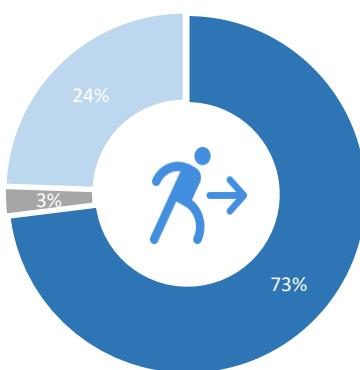


5. RETURN INTENTIONS

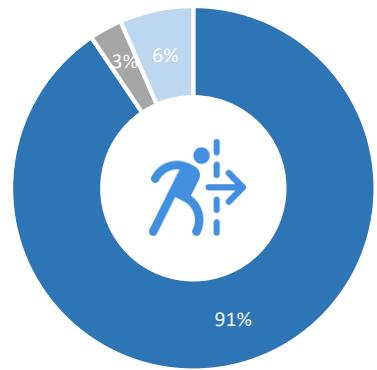
Return Intentions of IDPs and out-of-camp refugees



Return Intentions of IDPs



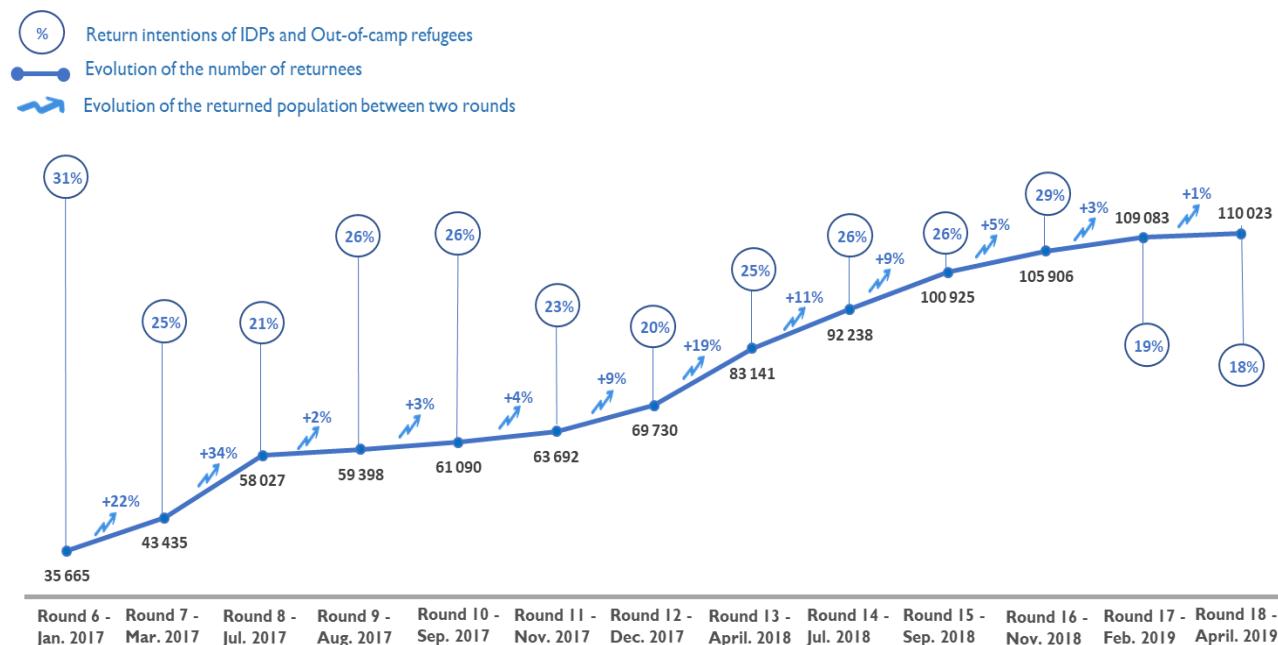
Return Intentions of out-of-camp refugees



■ No intention to return
■ Intention to leave for another location
■ Intention to move back to the area of origin

According to the survey of households still displaced, the majority (79%) say they do not want to return to their places of origin. Some because of the insecurity that persists in the localities of return, and others because they are well settled in their places of displacement where they have access to several resources. Regarding the category of IDPs who intend to return (18%), IDPs are much more motivated than out-of-camp refugees. In addition, 3 per cent of the displaced population are planning to relocate to another location in search of better living conditions.

Evolution of return intentions of Round 6 (January 2017) to Round 18 (April 2019)

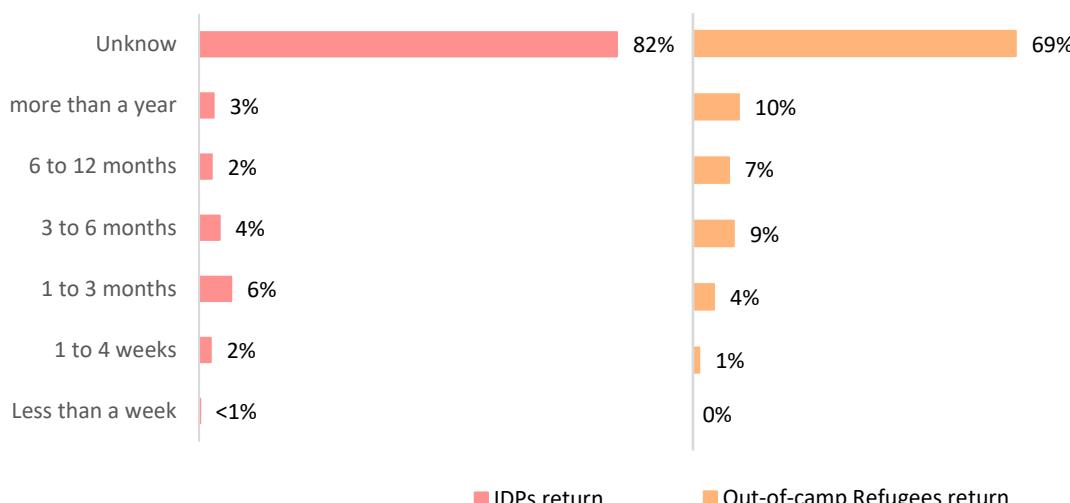


Since January 2017, the number of returnees has been increasing steadily, and the results of the evaluation show that the return intentions of the displaced populations change from one period to another and evolve according to the different events that occurred between these periods. The return to calm in some localities, considered as the main reason for return, made it possible to record returns in each round.

Return intentions have decreased since the beginning of 2019 (ranging from 29% to 18%), as several incursions of armed groups have been observed in some departments and localities of origin questioning the decision of many displaced persons to return to their place of origin. In addition, throughout the Far North region, 49 localities, where attacks have pushed people to move, are still empty, reflecting the importance of security for the return of displaced populations to their place of origin.

Despite this, 4,117 returnees have been identified since January 2019, in secured areas. Security is ensured by the presence of military bases in certain areas of return (Mokolo, Mora, Kolofata, Amchide, Kerawa, Waza, Makary, Fotokol, and Maltam), which results in the fall of the incursions of the armed groups. The increased presence and assistance of humanitarian actors in some areas of return also facilitates the return of displaced populations.

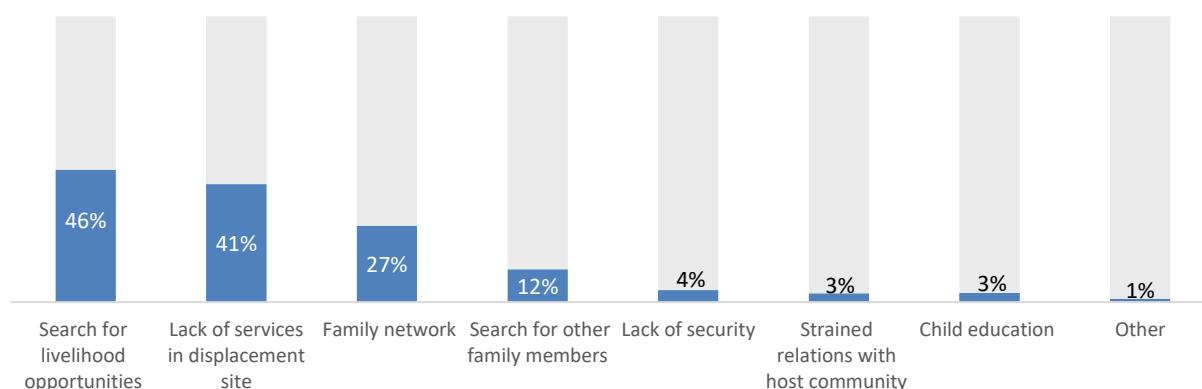
I- FORESEEN PERIOD FOR LEAVING THE DISPLACEMENT LOCATION



The majority of households planning to return had the plan to leave their current area of displacement in an indeterminate future (80%). This percentage reflects the fact that a large number of displaced households lack means for displacement and hope for a positive change in their current situation. The remaining households indicated an intention to return in 1 to 4 weeks (2%), in 1 to 3 months (6%), in 3 to 6 months (5%), in 6 to 12 months (3%), and in more than one year (4%).

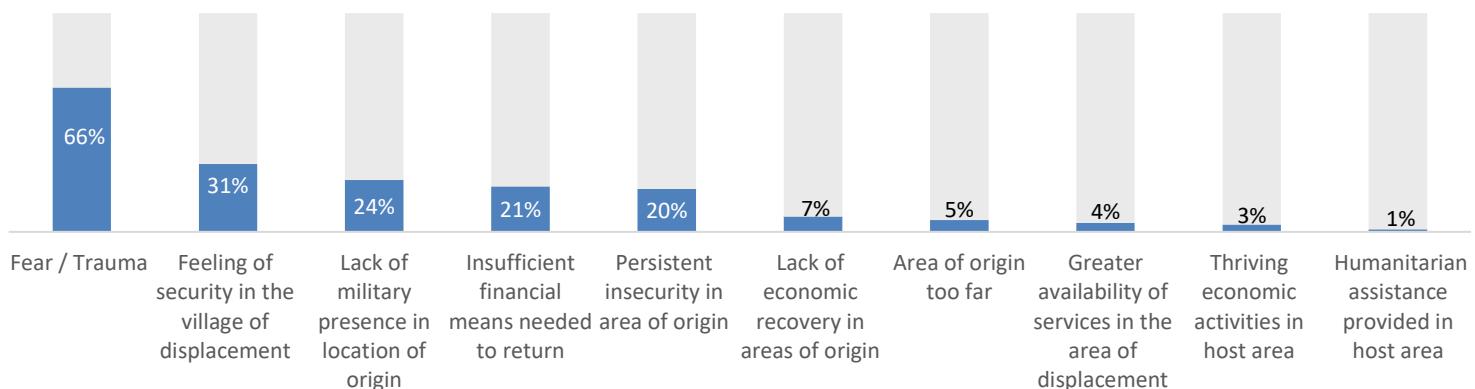
The number of returned households identified by the DTM since the last Return Intentions Survey increased by 5 per cent (from 15,763 to 16,478 households). The increase in returnees is in line with the results of the November 2018 evaluation in which IDPs were considering travelling no later than six months after this survey (7%).

II- REASONS FOR INTENDING TO LEAVE IN THE AREA OF DISPLACEMENT



At each evaluation, some displaced populations express their intention to leave their host area. According to the results obtained, the factors that influence their decision are: the search for livelihoods (46%), the absence of basic services in places of displacement, and family reunion (27%). On the other hand, some leave, looking for other family members who have disappeared during their journey (12%), and others do not feel safe (4%), or have problems of cohabitation with the hosts communities (3%), or wish to go to localities where children can go to school (3%).

III- REASONS FOR INTENDING TO REMAIN IN THE AREA OF DISPLACEMENT

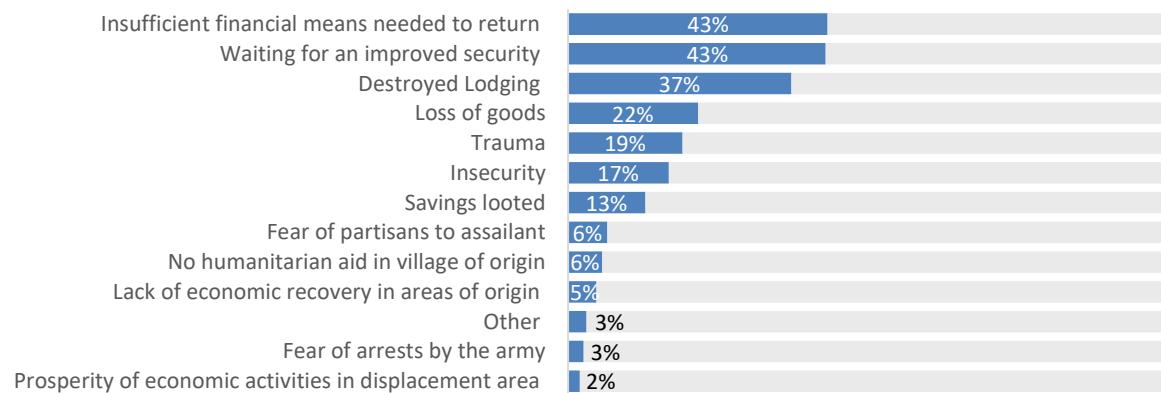


According to interviews with displaced households during this period of April 2019, events experienced in the locations of origin traumatized and frightened the displaced populations. So far, this factor remains the main reason justifying the preference to stay in the current area of displacement. This category represents 66 per cent of the households surveyed and demonstrates the need for psychological assistance.

In addition, 31 per cent give the sense of security in their current area of displacement as the reason they wish to remain at the place of displacement, 24 per cent point to the absence of military presence in their places of origin, and 20 per cent highlight the feeling of insecurity in the localities of origin. These factors demonstrate the importance of the security dimension in the decision to return to the place of origin.

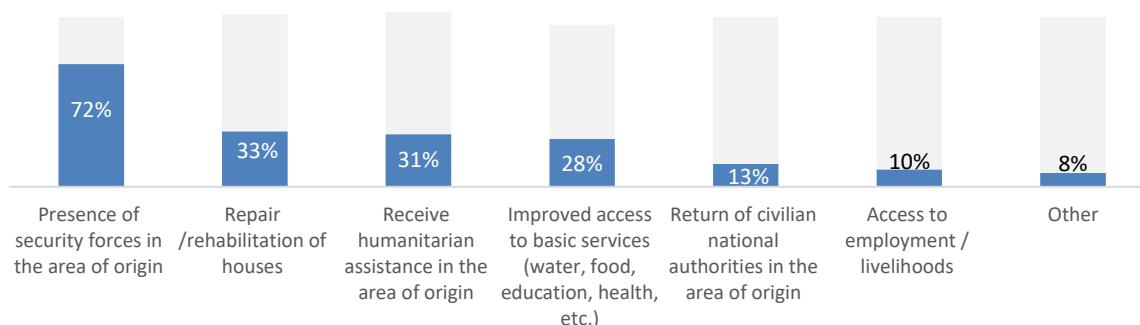
It should also be noted that some (21%) do not exclude returning as long as they receive financial support to facilitate their return. A small minority (1%) present the presence of humanitarian assistance in the reception area as an important factor in their decision to stay.

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



Households intending to leave the area of displacement are waiting for an improvement in the security situation in their locations of origin (43%) as well as improved financial situation (43%) before being able to return home. These reasons remain the most frequently mentioned as an obstacle to immediate return. Also, the graph shows that 37 per cent of households stated that their homes were destroyed in their areas of origin, 22 per cent lost all their belongings when they fled and 19 per cent are not returning home because of trauma and other psychological reasons.

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



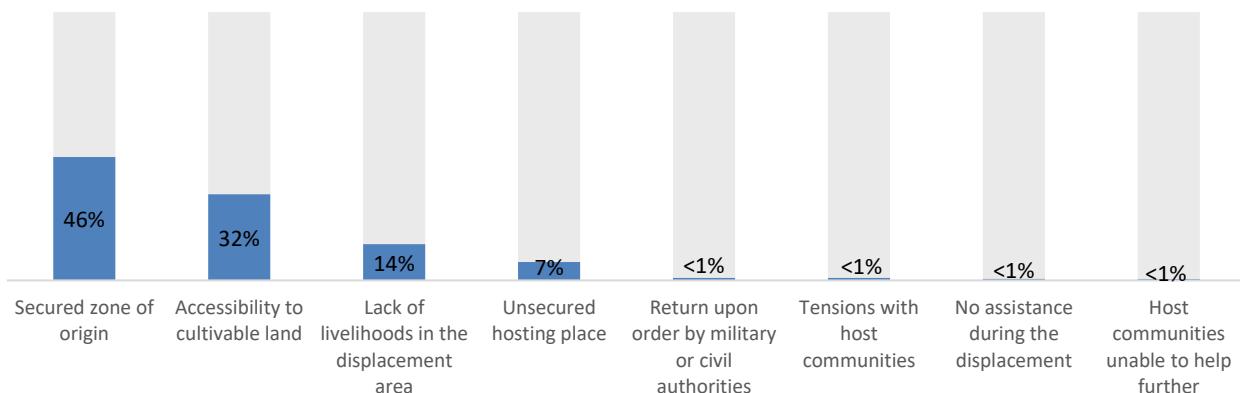
Security remains a major concern and the perception of lack of security in the areas of origin hinders the return movements. 72 per cent of households, a 1 per cent increase compared to the last survey in November 2018, are intending to stay in the current location of displacement, stating that the presence of security forces in the areas of origin is a necessary factor for a possible return.

Other important factors needed for the return are also worthy of note: 33 per cent of households request housing repairs, 31 per cent want humanitarian assistance, 28 per cent ask for improved access to basic services.

6. REASONS FOR RETURN OF DISPLACED POPULATIONS

Returned populations have been recorded since 2014 (16,478 households for 110,023 individuals). A survey of a sample of 1,743 households recorded several reasons for return. Among these, the security of the localities of origin (46%), the access to arable land (32%), and the lack of livelihoods in the displacement location (14%) are the main reasons of returns. Other reasons were mentioned such as insecurity in the displacement area (7%), lack of humanitarian assistance during displacement (less than 1%), the fact that the host communities no longer have the capacity to accommodate them (less than 1%) and returns by order of the military and / or civil authorities (less than 1%).

Populations returned to their places of origin still need assistance for a sustainable reintegration. During interviews with heads of returnee households, they expressed the need for assistance in repairing their destroyed homes and in reviving their agricultural activities.



7. CONCLUSION

This report presents the results of the survey of a sample of IDP households identified in round 18 of the DTM in the Far North region. This survey was conducted between 28 March and 08 April 2019.

The return of 4,117 people in the localities of origin has been recorded since the last survey in November 2018. The results show a gradual return of the still displaced populations in their localities of origin. The presence of military bases and humanitarian actors in certain localities are the main factors of return expressed by the households surveyed.

The humanitarian community, in a joint effort with the State, implements programs in certain areas, including support for the rehabilitation of infrastructure and personal housing, as well as economic revitalization and access to basic services. These activities could ensure the sustainability of returns and encourage others.

Return to the areas of origin remains a durable solution for displaced populations: to ensure their return, the Government and the wider humanitarian community must continue to strengthen early recovery mechanisms for returnees, in areas where this is possible in terms of security in particular. Finally, the survey shows that the factors that would encourage the return of displaced populations to their area of origin are: increased security presence in return areas, improvement of basic social infrastructure (water, health and education), economic recovery, and psychosocial support to populations still traumatized by what they experienced. These elements could enhance motivation and return capacity.