Power Dynamics and Human Security in the Anglophone Crisis: Implications for Women and Children in Southwest Cameroon

Dr. Udo Kingsley Asukwo Ifiok*

University of Calabar

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ABSTRACT

The protracted Anglophone Crisis in Cameroon has profoundly altered social, political and economic power relations, disproportionately affecting women and children through displacement, livelihood disruption, educational interruption and deteriorating health conditions. Despite increasing humanitarian interventions, there remains limited community-level empirical evidence on how these evolving power dynamics shape the lived experiences of vulnerable populations in conflict-affected settings. This study examined the impact of power dynamics during the Anglophone Crisis on women and children in selected communities of South West Cameroon, with particular attention to livelihoods, children's education, and health and mental well-being. A descriptive survey design supported by qualitative key informant interviews was adopted. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to women, children and humanitarian actors and analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. The findings indicate that conflict-related power dynamics have undermined women's livelihoods through displacement, income loss and reduced access to economic opportunities. Children's education has been severely disrupted by school closures, insecurity, displacement and attacks on educational infrastructure, while women and children have experienced restricted access to healthcare, heightened psychosocial distress and increased exposure to violence and exploitation. The study concludes that addressing the humanitarian consequences of the Anglophone Crisis requires integrated interventions that strengthen protection, restore livelihoods, improve access to quality education and expand health and psychosocial support services. By providing community-level evidence from conflict-affected communities in South West Cameroon, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on gender, conflict and humanitarian response, while offering practical insights for governments, humanitarian organisations and development partners working in fragile contexts.

Keywords: Anglophone Crisis; Power Dynamics; Human Security; Women and Children; South West Cameroon

INTRODUCTION

Armed conflicts continue to reshape societies by altering political authority, social relationships and access to essential resources, often generating profound humanitarian consequences for civilian populations. Beyond the immediate destruction of lives and infrastructure, conflicts transform existing power relations, weaken governance institutions and reduce communities' capacity to protect vulnerable groups. Women and children are particularly affected because they frequently experience displacement, loss of livelihoods, interrupted education, restricted access to healthcare and heightened exposure to violence and exploitation. Consequently, contemporary humanitarian scholarship increasingly recognises that understanding armed conflict requires examining not only its political and military dimensions but also the changing power dynamics that influence everyday survival, resilience and human well-being.

Across Africa, protracted armed conflicts have created complex humanitarian emergencies characterised by forced displacement, food insecurity, educational disruption and deteriorating health systems. These humanitarian consequences disproportionately affect women and children, whose vulnerabilities are often intensified by pre-existing gender inequalities, poverty and limited social protection mechanisms. Although governments, humanitarian organisations and development partners have implemented numerous

interventions to mitigate these effects, sustainable recovery remains challenging in many conflict-affected communities. Increasingly, scholars argue that humanitarian responses should move beyond emergency assistance towards integrated approaches that strengthen human security by protecting livelihoods, restoring education and improving health outcomes among vulnerable populations.

Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis, which escalated in 2016, represents one of the country's most significant humanitarian emergencies in recent history (Gbemudia & Derrick, 2024). Originating from longstanding political and socio-cultural grievances between the Anglophone and Francophone regions, the conflict has evolved into a prolonged armed confrontation characterised by widespread violence, displacement and destruction of social infrastructure. Communities within the South West Region, particularly those in Fako Division, have experienced repeated attacks, population displacement, disruption of economic activities and prolonged interruption of essential public services (Flavienne & Reine, 2025). These conditions have significantly altered local power structures while increasing humanitarian vulnerabilities among women and children.

The humanitarian consequences of the Anglophone Crisis extend beyond physical insecurity. Women have experienced declining livelihood opportunities resulting from displacement, market disruption and reduced access to productive resources, while children have endured prolonged school closures, interrupted learning and heightened protection risks (Blomquist, 2024). Simultaneously, continuing insecurity has weakened access to healthcare services and contributed to increasing psychosocial distress among conflict-affected populations. Although government agencies and humanitarian organisations have implemented relief programmes, educational support initiatives and health interventions, persistent insecurity and institutional weaknesses continue to limit the effectiveness and sustainability of these responses.

Existing scholarship has made important contributions to understanding the political origins, security implications and humanitarian consequences of the Anglophone Crisis. However, much of the available literature has concentrated on macro-level political developments, displacement trends or isolated humanitarian concerns such as education, health or livelihoods. Comparatively limited empirical evidence examines how conflict-related power dynamics simultaneously shape women's economic security, children's educational security and the health and psychosocial well-being of vulnerable populations at the community level. This limitation constrains the development of integrated humanitarian policies capable of addressing the interconnected nature of human insecurity within conflict-affected communities.

This study therefore examines the impact of conflict-related power dynamics on women and children in selected communities within Fako Division, South West Cameroon. Guided by the Human Security Framework, the study investigates how the Anglophone Crisis influences women's livelihoods, children's education, and the health and psychosocial well-being of affected populations. By integrating these dimensions within a single analytical framework, the study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on conflict, gender and humanitarian response while providing community-level evidence capable of informing policy interventions, humanitarian programming and sustainable recovery initiatives in conflict-affected settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Conflict, Power Dynamics and Human Security

Contemporary armed conflicts extend far beyond military confrontations to reshape political authority, economic systems and social relationships within affected societies. In many conflict settings, violence transforms existing power structures by altering access to resources, humanitarian assistance, public institutions and decision-making processes (Vesco & Hegre, 2025). These evolving power dynamics frequently determine which individuals and communities are able to secure protection, maintain livelihoods and access essential social services during periods of instability. Consequently, conflict is increasingly understood not merely as a contest over political control but as a process that fundamentally reconfigures the conditions under which people live, work and survive. This broader understanding has encouraged scholars

to move beyond traditional state-centred explanations of conflict towards people-centred approaches that emphasise the everyday experiences of affected populations.

The Human Security Framework (UNDP, 1994) situates economic security, education and health within an integrated understanding of people-centred security. Its detailed application to the present study is developed in the theoretical framework section below.

Within conflict-affected environments, human security extends across several mutually reinforcing dimensions, including economic security, health security, personal security, community security and access to essential services such as education. These dimensions are closely interrelated. The loss of livelihoods reduces household capacity to finance children's education and healthcare; educational disruption limits future employment opportunities and social mobility; while deteriorating health conditions reduce individuals' ability to participate in productive economic activities. Consequently, humanitarian crises rarely affect a single aspect of human well-being in isolation. Instead, they generate interconnected forms of vulnerability that reinforce one another and collectively weaken community resilience and long-term recovery.

Although previous studies have documented various humanitarian impacts of the Anglophone Crisis, much of the existing literature has examined livelihoods, education, health and displacement as separate issues. Comparatively limited attention has been paid to the manner in which conflict-related power dynamics simultaneously influence these dimensions as interconnected manifestations of human insecurity at the community level. This limitation restricts a comprehensive understanding of how vulnerable populations experience and respond to conflict within their everyday environments. Accordingly, this study adopts the Human Security Framework to examine how conflict-related power dynamics shape women's economic security, children's educational security, and the health and psychosocial well-being of women and children in selected communities of South West Cameroon. By integrating these dimensions within a single analytical perspective, the study seeks to contribute to a more holistic understanding of humanitarian vulnerability, resilience and recovery in conflict-affected settings.

Economic security constitutes one of the fundamental dimensions of human security because it determines individuals' capacity to secure sustainable livelihoods, meet basic needs and recover from crises. It encompasses access to productive resources, employment opportunities, stable income and the institutional support necessary for maintaining acceptable living standards (Anand, 2023). Within conflict settings, however, economic security is frequently undermined as violence disrupts markets, destroys productive assets, limits labour participation and weakens public institutions responsible for supporting economic activities. Consequently, humanitarian scholars increasingly recognise that restoring livelihoods represents a critical component of post-conflict recovery because economic resilience enables households to rebuild their lives, reduce dependency on humanitarian assistance and contribute to long-term community stability.

International evidence consistently demonstrates that armed conflicts produce long-lasting economic consequences for women through forced displacement, destruction of livelihoods, restricted mobility and reduced access to productive resources. Studies conducted in conflict-affected countries such as South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria and Afghanistan have shown that women frequently experience declining household income, increased food insecurity and greater dependence on humanitarian support following prolonged violence (Njuki & Kraft, 2024). At the same time, these studies demonstrate that women often become central actors in household survival by establishing informal businesses, participating in community-based savings groups and engaging in alternative livelihood strategies despite operating under extremely challenging conditions (UN Women, 2026). These findings illustrate both the vulnerability and resilience of women within humanitarian emergencies.

Across Africa, the relationship between armed conflict and women’s economic security has received increasing scholarly attention. Research from Nigeria's North-East, the Central African Republic and parts of the Horn of Africa demonstrates that conflict disrupts agricultural production, local markets and small-scale enterprises that traditionally sustain household economies (Olanrewaju & Balana, 2023). These

disruptions disproportionately affect women because they are frequently concentrated within informal sectors characterised by limited social protection and restricted access to credit, land ownership and financial services. African scholars have therefore argued that livelihood recovery programmes should move beyond short-term humanitarian assistance to include vocational training, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship support and institutional reforms capable of strengthening women's long-term economic resilience.

Within Cameroon, studies examining the humanitarian consequences of the Anglophone Crisis have documented widespread displacement, loss of employment, business closures and declining household incomes across affected communities (Monju & Fomunjong, 2020). Existing evidence indicates that women have experienced substantial economic hardship resulting from disrupted agricultural activities, reduced commercial transactions and prolonged insecurity (Bang, 2026). Humanitarian organisations have implemented various livelihood support initiatives, including cash assistance, vocational skills programmes and community-based income-generating activities. Nevertheless, the sustainability and effectiveness of these interventions remain constrained by continuing violence, weak institutional capacity and limited access to financial resources. Much of the available literature has therefore concentrated on describing economic hardship rather than analysing the broader power relations that shape women's economic security within conflict-affected communities.

A critical review of the existing literature reveals several important limitations. First, many studies examine women’s economic vulnerability primarily through indicators such as income loss, unemployment or displacement without adequately exploring how conflict-related power dynamics influence access to economic opportunities and productive resources. Second, existing research frequently analyses livelihoods independently from other dimensions of human security, thereby overlooking the interconnected relationships between economic security, education and health. Third, much of the scholarship on the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis focuses on regional humanitarian conditions, with comparatively limited community-level evidence explaining how women experience and respond to changing power structures within specific local contexts. These limitations restrict the development of integrated humanitarian policies capable of addressing the multidimensional nature of women's vulnerability during conflict.

Accordingly, this study addresses these gaps by examining women's livelihoods through the Human Security Framework, which conceptualises economic security as an essential foundation for individual well-being, household resilience and sustainable community recovery. Rather than viewing livelihood disruption solely as an economic consequence of conflict, the study analyses how conflict-related power dynamics reshape women's access to resources, opportunities and social protection within selected communities in South West Cameroon. This perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of the interaction between conflict, gender and human security while generating community-level evidence capable of informing humanitarian programming and post-conflict recovery strategies.

Educational Security and Children's Education

Education represents one of the most important dimensions of human security because it equips individuals with the knowledge, skills and capabilities necessary for personal development, social participation and economic productivity (UNESCO, n.d.). Beyond its instructional function, education provides children with protection, psychosocial stability and opportunities to develop resilience during periods of crisis. Consequently, access to quality education has increasingly been recognised as both a fundamental human right and a critical humanitarian intervention in conflict-affected settings. Within the Human Security Framework, educational security extends beyond school enrolment to encompass uninterrupted learning, safe educational environments, qualified teachers and equitable access to opportunities that enable children to realise their full potential despite the challenges posed by armed conflict.

Armed conflicts consistently undermine educational security by disrupting formal learning systems and weakening the institutions responsible for protecting children's educational rights (Belay & Zubairul, 2023). Schools are frequently destroyed, occupied or abandoned, teachers are displaced or killed, and families are

forced to flee their homes, interrupting children's educational trajectories. Prolonged insecurity often discourages school attendance even where educational facilities remain operational, while displacement separates children from established learning environments and support networks. The cumulative effect of these disruptions extends beyond temporary learning loss, increasing the risks of child labour, early marriage, recruitment into armed groups and long-term socioeconomic exclusion. Consequently, educational disruption has become one of the most significant indicators of humanitarian vulnerability in contemporary conflict settings.

International scholarship consistently demonstrates that educational disruption during armed conflict produces long-term consequences extending far beyond academic performance. Research conducted in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Ukraine indicates that prolonged school closures reduce literacy and numeracy outcomes, weaken psychosocial development and diminish future employment prospects among conflict-affected children (Campaign for Education, 2026; UNESCO, 2025). Studies further show that education provides an important protective environment that promotes emotional stability, social cohesion and hope during humanitarian emergencies. Accordingly, international humanitarian agencies increasingly advocate for the rapid restoration of safe and inclusive learning systems as a central component of emergency response and post-conflict recovery rather than treating education as a secondary development priority.

Across Africa, armed conflicts have severely affected children's educational security through attacks on schools, forced displacement, destruction of educational infrastructure and chronic insecurity. Research from Nigeria's North-East, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and the Central African Republic demonstrates that conflict-related educational disruption disproportionately affects girls, internally displaced children and those living within rural communities where educational resources are already limited (Valenti, 2022). African scholars therefore emphasise that restoring educational security requires integrated interventions involving school rehabilitation, teacher development, community participation, psychosocial support and policies that encourage children's safe return to school. These studies collectively reinforce the understanding that educational recovery depends not only upon rebuilding infrastructure but also upon rebuilding trust, protection and resilience within affected communities.

Within Cameroon, the Anglophone Crisis has generated one of the most severe educational disruptions in the country's history. Prolonged school closures, attacks on educational institutions, displacement of teachers and learners, and persistent insecurity have significantly reduced children's access to formal education across the North West and South West Regions. Existing studies have documented declining school enrolment, interrupted learning and increased educational inequalities resulting from the conflict. Humanitarian organisations have responded through temporary learning centres, accelerated education programmes and community-based educational initiatives aimed at reducing learning losses. Nevertheless, continuing insecurity and institutional constraints continue to undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of these interventions, leaving many children without consistent access to safe and quality education.

Despite these important contributions, the existing literature reveals several significant limitations. First, many studies conceptualise educational disruption primarily as reduced school attendance or declining enrolment without adequately examining education as a broader dimension of human security. Second, previous research often analyses educational outcomes independently from other humanitarian consequences such as livelihood insecurity and deteriorating health, thereby overlooking the interconnected nature of children's vulnerabilities within conflict settings. Third, relatively few community-level studies have examined how conflict-related power dynamics influence children's educational security within specific local contexts affected by the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis. Consequently, important knowledge gaps remain regarding the interaction between changing power structures, educational opportunities and children's long-term well-being.

Accordingly, this study examines children's education through the Human Security Framework by conceptualising educational security as an essential component of protection, resilience and sustainable community recovery. Rather than limiting analysis to school attendance or infrastructure, the study

investigates how conflict-related power dynamics influence children's access to learning opportunities, educational continuity and long-term developmental prospects within selected communities in South West Cameroon. By integrating educational security within a broader human security perspective, the study provides community-level empirical evidence capable of informing humanitarian education policies, child protection strategies and post-conflict recovery programmes.

Health Security and Psychosocial Well-being of Women and Children

Health security represents a fundamental dimension of human security because it encompasses individuals' ability to access essential healthcare services, maintain physical well-being and preserve psychological resilience in the face of adversity (Alnefaie, 2025). Within conflict settings, health extends beyond the treatment of injuries and diseases to include the broader capacity of individuals and communities to cope with trauma, displacement, uncertainty and the collapse of social support systems. Consequently, contemporary humanitarian scholarship increasingly recognises that sustainable recovery requires protecting both physical and mental health, particularly among vulnerable populations whose exposure to violence and prolonged insecurity places them at heightened risk of long-term health challenges.

Armed conflicts significantly undermine health security by disrupting healthcare infrastructure, displacing medical personnel and restricting access to essential health services. Hospitals and clinics may be destroyed, medical supply chains interrupted and healthcare workers displaced or prevented from delivering services because of insecurity. These disruptions often reduce access to maternal healthcare, child immunisation, reproductive health services and emergency medical treatment, thereby increasing preventable illnesses and mortality among vulnerable populations. Women and children are particularly affected because they depend heavily on continuous access to healthcare throughout periods of conflict and displacement.

Beyond physical health, conflict produces profound psychosocial consequences that frequently persist long after violence has subsided. Exposure to armed attacks, forced displacement, loss of family members, destruction of property and prolonged uncertainty contributes to psychological distress, anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress symptoms among affected populations. Children are especially vulnerable because traumatic experiences during critical developmental stages may adversely affect emotional regulation, cognitive development, learning outcomes and social relationships. Women similarly experience elevated psychosocial burdens arising from caregiving responsibilities, economic insecurity, displacement and increased exposure to gender-based violence. Accordingly, humanitarian organisations increasingly regard psychosocial support as an essential component of comprehensive humanitarian response rather than a supplementary intervention.

International evidence consistently demonstrates that conflict-related health challenges are multidimensional. Studies conducted in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan and Ethiopia reveal that armed conflicts simultaneously weaken healthcare systems, reduce access to essential medical services and increase the prevalence of mental health disorders among displaced populations (Ayele, 2025). Research further indicates that humanitarian responses integrating healthcare, psychosocial support and community-based resilience programmes produce more sustainable recovery outcomes than interventions focusing solely on emergency medical assistance. These findings have strengthened international advocacy for holistic humanitarian programming that recognises the close relationship between physical health, mental well-being and long-term community resilience.

Across Africa, conflicts have generated substantial health and psychosocial burdens among women and children. Research undertaken in Nigeria's North-East, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and the Central African Republic demonstrates that conflict contributes to malnutrition, infectious disease outbreaks, maternal health complications and widespread psychological trauma within displaced populations (Adeyanju & Schaub, 2026). African scholars further observe that limited healthcare infrastructure, inadequate mental health services and persistent insecurity frequently constrain humanitarian responses, thereby prolonging recovery among affected communities. Consequently, strengthening health security increasingly requires coordinated investments in healthcare delivery, psychosocial services, community health education and

institutional capacity capable of supporting both emergency response and long-term rehabilitation.

Within Cameroon, the Anglophone Crisis has significantly affected the health security of women and children. Existing studies report declining access to healthcare resulting from attacks on health facilities, displacement of medical personnel, insecurity along transportation routes and reduced availability of essential medicines (OCHA, n.d.). Simultaneously, women and children have experienced increasing psychosocial distress associated with repeated exposure to violence, family separation, economic hardship and prolonged displacement. Humanitarian agencies have implemented various interventions including mobile healthcare services, psychosocial counselling, maternal health programmes and child protection initiatives. Nevertheless, continuing insecurity and resource constraints continue to limit the coverage, accessibility and sustainability of these services across many conflict-affected communities.

Despite these important contributions, several limitations remain within the existing literature. First, many studies examine physical health and mental health independently without recognising their interconnected contribution to overall health security. Second, research frequently documents humanitarian needs without sufficiently analysing how conflict-related power dynamics influence access to healthcare, psychosocial support and community protection mechanisms. Third, relatively few empirical studies have explored these relationships at the community level within the South West Region of Cameroon, where local experiences of conflict may differ considerably from broader regional trends. Consequently, important knowledge gaps remain concerning the interaction between power dynamics, health security and psychosocial resilience among women and children living in conflict-affected communities.

Accordingly, this study adopts a Human Security perspective to examine health security as an integrated concept encompassing physical health, mental well-being and psychosocial resilience. Rather than viewing health solely in terms of healthcare utilisation or disease prevalence, the study investigates how conflict-related power dynamics influence access to healthcare services, psychological well-being and community resilience among women and children in selected communities of South West Cameroon. Through this integrated perspective, the study contributes community-level empirical evidence capable of informing humanitarian health policies, psychosocial support programmes and broader recovery strategies designed to strengthen human security in conflict-affected settings.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Global Empirical Evidence

Empirical research across conflict-affected regions consistently demonstrates that armed conflict generates multidimensional humanitarian consequences extending beyond physical violence to include economic deprivation, educational disruption and deteriorating health outcomes among vulnerable populations. Studies conducted in Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq and South Sudan have established that women and children bear a disproportionate share of these humanitarian burdens because of their heightened exposure to displacement, poverty, insecurity and social exclusion (Bendavid & Bhutta, 2021). Across these settings, prolonged conflicts have weakened local economies, disrupted educational systems and undermined healthcare delivery, thereby reducing the resilience of affected households and communities.

Several international studies further demonstrate that conflict-related changes in local power structures significantly influence humanitarian outcomes. As governance institutions weaken and armed actors assume greater influence over civilian populations, access to humanitarian assistance, education, healthcare and livelihood opportunities often becomes increasingly unequal (Gabbay, 2026). Women frequently experience declining economic participation due to restricted mobility and loss of productive assets, while children encounter prolonged educational interruptions and increased exposure to exploitation, recruitment into armed groups and psychosocial trauma. These findings collectively reinforce the argument that conflict-related power dynamics represent an important determinant of human security.

Despite these important contributions, much of the international literature remains broadly focused on national or regional humanitarian trends, with comparatively limited community-level analysis explaining

how changing power relations influence the everyday experiences of women and children within specific conflict-affected communities. This limitation highlights the need for context-specific empirical research capable of examining local manifestations of human insecurity.

Empirical Evidence from Africa

Across Africa, empirical studies consistently demonstrate that armed conflicts undermine human security by weakening livelihoods, disrupting education and reducing access to healthcare among vulnerable populations. Research undertaken in Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Somalia, the Central African Republic and Ethiopia reveals similar patterns of displacement, food insecurity, educational disruption and psychosocial distress affecting women and children (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2025). These studies further indicate that prolonged conflicts intensify existing gender inequalities while limiting governments' capacity to provide essential public services.

African scholarship has increasingly recognised that humanitarian recovery depends upon integrated interventions addressing multiple dimensions of vulnerability simultaneously. Rather than focusing exclusively on emergency relief, recent studies advocate comprehensive programmes that combine livelihood restoration, educational recovery, healthcare delivery and psychosocial support within broader peacebuilding and development strategies. This emerging body of evidence aligns closely with the Human Security Framework by emphasising the interdependence of economic, educational and health outcomes in conflict-affected settings. Nevertheless, empirical evidence across Africa remains uneven. Many studies concentrate on large-scale humanitarian indicators such as displacement, food security or conflict intensity without sufficiently examining how changing local power dynamics shape the distribution of humanitarian opportunities and vulnerabilities within individual communities. Consequently, important questions remain regarding the interaction between conflict-related power structures and multidimensional human security at the grassroots level.

Empirical Evidence from Cameroon

Within Cameroon, empirical research on the Anglophone Crisis has expanded considerably since the escalation of violence in 2016. Existing studies consistently report extensive humanitarian consequences including forced displacement, destruction of educational infrastructure, declining household livelihoods, disruption of healthcare services and increasing psychosocial distress among conflict-affected populations. Women and children have emerged as particularly vulnerable groups because of their dependence on community support systems that have been significantly weakened by prolonged insecurity.

Research examining women's experiences has documented declining agricultural production, reduced business activities, increased household poverty and heightened caregiving responsibilities resulting from displacement and economic disruption (Fonjong & Gyapong, 2021). Similarly, studies focusing on children have reported prolonged school closures, reduced educational attainment, increased protection risks and growing psychosocial challenges associated with exposure to violence and instability. Other investigations have highlighted deteriorating healthcare access arising from attacks on health facilities, shortages of medical personnel and restricted humanitarian access across affected communities. Although these studies provide valuable insights into the humanitarian consequences of the Anglophone Crisis, they generally examine livelihoods, education and health as separate themes. Comparatively fewer empirical investigations have integrated these dimensions within a single analytical framework capable of explaining how conflict-related power dynamics simultaneously influence women's economic security, children's educational security and the health security of vulnerable populations at the community level. This limitation reduces opportunities for developing coordinated humanitarian interventions capable of addressing interconnected humanitarian needs.

Critical Synthesis and Knowledge Gap

A critical synthesis of the empirical literature reveals three major observations. First, existing studies consistently demonstrate that armed conflicts disproportionately affect women and children by disrupting

livelihoods, limiting educational opportunities and weakening access to healthcare. There is therefore substantial consensus regarding the humanitarian consequences of prolonged conflict across both international and African contexts.

Second, despite this growing body of scholarship, much of the available empirical evidence remains sector-specific. Researchers frequently examine economic hardship, educational disruption or health outcomes independently, thereby providing only a partial understanding of the multidimensional nature of human insecurity experienced by conflict-affected populations. This fragmented approach limits appreciation of how these dimensions interact to reinforce vulnerability and constrain humanitarian recovery.

Third, empirical research on the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis has focused predominantly on describing humanitarian conditions rather than analysing the underlying conflict-related power dynamics that shape access to livelihoods, education and healthcare. Furthermore, relatively few community-level studies have simultaneously examined women's livelihoods, children's education and health security within an integrated Human Security Framework. Consequently, important knowledge gaps remain concerning the interaction between changing power structures and multidimensional human security among women and children living in conflict-affected communities.

This study addresses these gaps by adopting the Human Security Framework to examine how conflict-related power dynamics influence women's economic security, children's educational security and the health and psychosocial well-being of women and children in selected communities of South West Cameroon. Through its integrated community-level analysis, the study contributes new empirical evidence capable of informing humanitarian policy, conflict recovery programmes and future scholarship on human security in protracted conflict settings. The foregoing review demonstrates that the humanitarian consequences of armed conflict have been extensively examined across different geographical contexts and disciplinary perspectives. Existing scholarship consistently shows that protracted conflicts undermine livelihoods, disrupt educational systems, weaken healthcare delivery and increase the vulnerability of women and children through displacement, poverty and social exclusion. Collectively, these studies have significantly advanced understanding of the multidimensional humanitarian challenges associated with armed conflict while providing valuable evidence to guide humanitarian policy and programming.

A second limitation concerns the treatment of power dynamics within conflict research. Although numerous studies acknowledge that armed conflicts alter governance structures and social relations, relatively few investigate how changing power relationships influence access to livelihoods, education, healthcare and humanitarian assistance at the community level. In many instances, power dynamics are presented primarily as political or military phenomena without adequately exploring their implications for the everyday experiences of women and children. This analytical gap limits understanding of the mechanisms through which conflict generates multidimensional forms of human insecurity.

Methodologically, much of the existing research relies on descriptive analyses that document humanitarian conditions without sufficiently exploring the interconnected relationships among the principal dimensions of human security. Although these studies provide valuable baseline evidence, they often stop short of developing integrated explanations capable of informing comprehensive humanitarian interventions. Increasingly, contemporary humanitarian scholarship recognises that sustainable recovery requires coordinated approaches that simultaneously strengthen economic resilience, educational continuity and health security rather than addressing each dimension independently. This shift towards integrated humanitarian programming reinforces the relevance of adopting analytical frameworks capable of explaining the multidimensional nature of conflict-related vulnerability.

Human Security Framework and Conceptual Framework

The Human Security Framework provides the principal theoretical foundation for this study because it offers a comprehensive perspective for understanding the multidimensional humanitarian consequences of armed conflict. The concept gained international prominence following the publication of the UNDP Human Development Report in 1994, which challenged conventional security paradigms by shifting attention from

the protection of states to the protection of individuals (UNDP, 1994). Unlike traditional security approaches that primarily emphasise territorial integrity, military capability and political sovereignty, the Human Security Framework argues that genuine security exists only when individuals are protected from threats that undermine their survival, dignity, livelihoods and opportunities for human development.

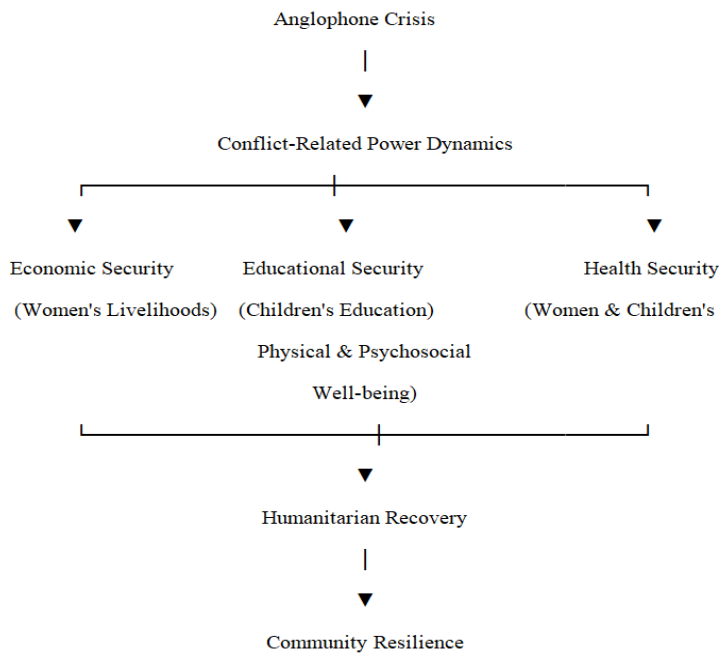
Within contemporary conflict research, the Human Security Framework has become increasingly influential because it recognises that the humanitarian consequences of armed conflict extend beyond direct physical violence (Bellamy, n.d.). Protracted conflicts frequently weaken public institutions, disrupt markets, interrupt educational systems, reduce healthcare access and undermine social cohesion, thereby creating interconnected forms of insecurity that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. Women and children often experience these consequences more severely because existing inequalities relating to gender, age and socioeconomic status limit their capacity to cope with prolonged humanitarian crises. Accordingly, the framework provides a particularly relevant analytical lens for examining how conflict-related power dynamics influence everyday human well-being within conflict-affected communities.

The selection of the Human Security Framework is further justified by its close alignment with the objectives of the present study. The first objective, which examines women's livelihoods, corresponds directly to the framework's economic security dimension. The second objective, focusing on children's education, aligns with educational security as a critical determinant of long-term human development and resilience. The third objective, addressing health and psychosocial well-being, reflects the framework's health security dimension. By integrating these objectives within a single theoretical perspective, the framework provides conceptual coherence throughout the study and facilitates a comprehensive interpretation of the findings.

Accordingly, this study adopts the Human Security Framework as its principal analytical lens because it enables an integrated examination of how conflict-related power dynamics simultaneously influence women's economic security, children's educational security and the health and psychosocial well-being of women and children in selected communities of South West Cameroon. The framework also provides an appropriate basis for developing policy recommendations that promote sustainable humanitarian recovery, strengthen community resilience and improve the protection of vulnerable populations within conflict-affected settings.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1: Human Security Dimensions of Conflict-Related Power Dynamics



The conceptual framework illustrates the analytical relationships examined in this study. It proposes that the Anglophone Crisis represents the primary contextual factor responsible for generating conflict-related power dynamics within affected communities. These changing power relations influence access to resources, institutions and essential public services, thereby shaping the humanitarian experiences of women and children.

The framework further proposes that the humanitarian consequences of conflict-related power dynamics are manifested through three interrelated dimensions of human security. The first dimension is economic security, which examines the impact of conflict on women's livelihoods, income-generating opportunities and household resilience. The second dimension is educational security, which focuses on children's access to safe, continuous and quality education despite prolonged insecurity. The third dimension is health security, which encompasses access to healthcare services together with the physical and psychosocial well-being of women and children.

The framework assumes that these three dimensions are mutually reinforcing rather than independent. Declining economic security limits households' capacity to support children's education and healthcare; educational disruption reduces future livelihood opportunities and social mobility; while deteriorating health conditions further weaken economic productivity and community resilience. Consequently, sustainable humanitarian recovery depends upon coordinated interventions that address these interconnected dimensions simultaneously rather than through isolated sectoral programmes.

Accordingly, the study applies this conceptual framework to examine how conflict-related power dynamics influence women's livelihoods, children's education and health security within selected communities of South West Cameroon. The framework therefore provides the conceptual bridge between the literature reviewed, the study objectives, the research methodology and the interpretation of the empirical findings.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Study Area

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the impact of conflict-related power dynamics on women and children in selected communities of Fako Division, Southwest Region of Cameroon. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate because it enabled the systematic collection of quantitative data regarding respondents' experiences, perceptions and humanitarian conditions associated with the Anglophone Crisis without manipulating the study environment. The design further allowed the examination of patterns of economic insecurity, educational disruption and health-related challenges among women and children while generating empirical evidence relevant to humanitarian policy and post-conflict recovery.

The study was conducted in Missellele (Tiko), Mile 14 (Buea) and Balong (Muyuka), communities located within Fako Division of the Southwest Region of Cameroon. These communities have experienced significant humanitarian consequences arising from the Anglophone Crisis, including displacement, disruption of livelihoods, interruption of educational activities and reduced access to healthcare services. Their selection was therefore appropriate because they provided a relevant context for examining the interaction between conflict-related power dynamics and human security among women and children.

Population of the Study

The study population comprised women, children and relevant stakeholders residing or working within the selected conflict-affected communities of Missellele (Tiko), Mile 14 (Buea) and Balong (Muyuka). These respondent groups were selected because they possessed direct experience of the humanitarian consequences associated with the Anglophone Crisis and were therefore capable of providing reliable information relating to women's livelihoods, children's education and health security.

The estimated population of the three study communities was 16,133 inhabitants, comprising 8,000 in Missellele (Tiko Sub-Division), 2,400 in Mile 14 (Buea Sub-Division), and 5,733 in Balong (Muyuka Sub-Division). These figures represent the wider community populations. The distribution of questionnaire respondents is presented in Table 1.

Participants were recruited through non-probability methods. Consequently, the resulting sample cannot be assumed to be statistically representative of all residents of Fako Division.

Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was used to identify participants with direct experience of conflict-related effects on livelihoods, education or health. Snowball sampling enabled the recruitment of additional eligible participants through referrals from initial contacts and community support networks.

Participant availability and prevailing security conditions also influenced access. These non-probability procedures may have introduced selection bias and limit population-level generalisation.

Sample Size

A total of 377 completed questionnaires were obtained from the three study locations: 187 (49.6%) in Mile 14 (Buea), 57 (15.1%) in Balong (Muyuka), and 133 (35.3%) in Missellele (Tiko) (Table 1). Percentages were calculated from these counts and rounded to one decimal place.

Research Instrument and Data Collection

Before data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts to assess its content validity and the relevance of its items to the study objectives. Revisions were made following their recommendations. Trained research assistants familiar with the local context supported questionnaire administration and communication with respondents.

The internal consistency of the Likert-scale questionnaire items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The coefficient of 0.83 indicated good internal consistency for these items. Content validity was assessed separately through expert review.

Table 1. Distribution of questionnaire respondents by study location (n = 377)

Subdivision	Study community	Respondents (n)	Share of 377 (%)
Buea	Mile 14	187	49.6
Muyuka	Balong	57	15.1
Tiko	Missellele	133	35.3
Total	—	377	100.0

The study included 377 questionnaire respondents from the three communities and 40 humanitarian aid workers who participated in separate interviews. The interview participants were not included in the questionnaire total. As participants were recruited through non-probability sampling, the achieved community sample was not proportionately allocated.

Questionnaire responses were coded and analysed using SPSS. Livelihood findings were summarised using descriptive percentages, while findings on education and health were presented as descriptive thematic summaries. Inferential statistical tests were not used in the reported analysis.

The findings were subsequently interpreted through the Human Security Framework, thereby facilitating an integrated analysis of how conflict-related power dynamics influenced women's economic security, children's educational security, and the health and psychosocial well-being of women and children within the selected communities. This analytical approach ensured conceptual consistency between the study objectives, theoretical framework, methodology and interpretation of findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

The demographic profile indicates that most respondents (70.0%) were between 18 and 59 years, reflecting the economically active segment of the population that has been directly affected by the conflict. Nearly one-quarter (24.2%) were aged 60 years and above, while children under 18 years accounted for 5.8% of respondents. In terms of educational attainment, most respondents possessed Ordinary or Advanced Level qualifications, although 13.5% reported not attending school, reflecting the educational disruption associated with the Anglophone Crisis. Employment data further reveal that over half of the respondents (54.9%) were self-employed, highlighting the importance of informal livelihoods within the affected communities. Significantly, more than four-fifths (81.9%) identified themselves as internally displaced persons (IDPs), illustrating the extensive displacement generated by the conflict.

The humanitarian aid workers who participated in the study possessed diverse professional backgrounds spanning child protection, education, health, gender-based violence, livelihoods and mental health and psychosocial support. Most had between one and ten years of humanitarian experience, suggesting that the qualitative evidence was drawn from practitioners with substantial operational exposure to the humanitarian consequences of the conflict. The respondent profile demonstrates that the study successfully captured perspectives from those most directly affected by the Anglophone Crisis. The predominance of economically active adults and internally displaced persons provides a robust basis for examining how conflict-related power dynamics influence livelihoods, education and health security. Furthermore, the inclusion of experienced humanitarian practitioners strengthens the credibility of the qualitative findings by complementing community experiences with operational insights derived from humanitarian response activities.

Human Security Interpretation

From a Human Security perspective, the high proportion of internally displaced respondents is particularly significant. Displacement represents more than physical relocation; it disrupts access to livelihoods, education, healthcare, social networks and community support systems. Consequently, the demographic profile itself reflects the multidimensional vulnerabilities that underpin the subsequent empirical findings.

Economic Security of Women

Results (Impact of Conflict-Related Power Dynamics on Women's Livelihoods)

The quantitative findings reveal that the Anglophone Crisis has had profound consequences for women's economic security. Nearly all respondents (97.3%) identified displacement as the most significant impact of the crisis on women's livelihoods. This was followed by loss of income (79.8%), increased vulnerability among internally displaced women (76.7%), and restricted access to markets (46.7%). These findings indicate that conflict-related power dynamics have substantially weakened women's capacity to sustain livelihoods and maintain household economic stability.

In response to these challenges, women adopted several coping strategies. The majority (88.6%) diversified their livelihood activities by engaging in multiple income-generating opportunities, while half of the respondents reported participation in self-help groups and cooperatives. Smaller proportions relied on informal community support networks (23.1%), whereas 14.9% indicated that some women resorted to prostitution as a survival strategy.

Respondents further identified priority interventions for improving women's livelihoods. Almost all participants emphasised the need to promote peace and security programmes (98.9%) and economic empowerment initiatives (98.4%). Other frequently identified priorities included strengthening social protection programmes (89.4%), providing cash-based assistance (80.1%) and promoting women's participation in decision-making processes (73.2%). Similarly, respondents highlighted education and vocational training (84.1%), affordable healthcare (73.7%) and improved access to credit and financial resources (53.8%) as essential measures for reducing the economic hardship experienced by women during the conflict.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that conflict-related power dynamics extend far beyond physical insecurity to fundamentally undermine women's economic resilience. Displacement emerged as the dominant driver of livelihood disruption, suggesting that forced movement from homes and productive assets has severely constrained women's ability to generate income and sustain household welfare. The simultaneous loss of income, increased vulnerability and restricted market access reflects the interconnected nature of economic insecurity within conflict settings.

The coping strategies adopted by women illustrate both resilience and vulnerability. While livelihood diversification and participation in self-help groups represent adaptive responses that strengthen household survival, the emergence of negative coping mechanisms such as transactional sex highlights the severe socioeconomic pressures imposed by prolonged conflict. These findings underscore the need to distinguish between adaptive resilience strategies and survival mechanisms that expose women to further exploitation. The questionnaire responses indicate substantial livelihood insecurity. Displacement was identified by 97.3% of respondents, loss of income by 79.8%, increased vulnerability among internally displaced women by 76.7%, and restricted market access by 46.7% (Table 2).

Reported livelihood impact	**Reported response (%)**
Displacement	97.3
Loss of income	79.8
Vulnerability among displaced women	76.7
Restricted market access	46.7

Reported coping strategies included livelihood diversification (88.6%), participation in self-help groups and cooperatives (approximately 50%), informal community support (23.1%), and transactional sex as a survival strategy (14.9%) (Table 3). These figures describe reported perceptions and should not be interpreted as verified prevalence estimates for all women in the study communities.

Reported coping strategy	**Reported response (%)**
Livelihood diversification	88.6
Self-help groups/cooperatives	Approximately 50
Informal community support	23.1
Transactional sex as survival strategy	14.9

Respondents identified peace and security programmes (98.9%), economic empowerment (98.4%), social protection (89.4%), cash-based assistance (80.1%), women’s participation in decision-making (73.2%),

education and vocational training (84.1%), affordable healthcare (73.7%), and access to credit (53.8%) as priority interventions (Table 4).

Reported priority intervention	**Reported response (%)**
Peace and security programmes	98.9
Economic empowerment	98.4
Social protection	89.4
Cash-based assistance	80.1
Participation in decision-making	73.2
Education/vocational training	84.1
Affordable healthcare	73.7
Access to credit	53.8

The qualitative evidence also highlights organisational responses centred on economic empowerment, community sensitisation, partnerships with local communities, trauma-informed support, protection services and capacity building. These interventions demonstrate that humanitarian actors increasingly recognise that strengthening women's livelihoods requires integrated responses combining protection, economic recovery and community engagement rather than isolated relief measures.

Human Security Interpretation

Viewed through the Human Security Framework, these findings demonstrate a substantial deterioration in economic security, one of the framework's core dimensions. The evidence suggests that conflict-related power dynamics undermine women's security not only by reducing income but also by restricting access to productive resources, weakening social support systems and increasing dependence on humanitarian assistance. Economic insecurity therefore emerges as both a direct consequence of conflict and a catalyst for wider humanitarian vulnerabilities affecting families and communities.

Policy Implications

The findings suggest that humanitarian interventions should move beyond short-term relief towards sustainable livelihood recovery. Priority should be given to expanding vocational training, supporting women's entrepreneurship, improving access to financial services, strengthening community-based savings groups and integrating psychosocial support with economic empowerment initiatives. Equally important is the promotion of inclusive peacebuilding processes that increase women's participation in local decision-making and strengthen protection mechanisms for internally displaced women.

Key Insight

The evidence indicates that the greatest threat to women's livelihoods during the Anglophone Crisis is not merely the loss of income but the disruption of the economic systems that enable resilience and recovery. Conflict-related power dynamics have displaced women from productive resources, weakened their economic independence and increased their vulnerability to exploitation. Consequently, restoring economic security must be regarded as a central pillar of humanitarian recovery rather than simply an economic objective.

Educational Security of Children

Results (Impact of Conflict-Related Power Dynamics on Children's Educational Security)

The findings reveal that the Anglophone Crisis has profoundly disrupted children's educational security across the study communities. Respondents overwhelmingly identified school closures, forced displacement, destruction of educational infrastructure and interrupted learning as the most significant educational consequences of the conflict. Many respondents further indicated that prolonged insecurity has increased school absenteeism, reduced learning continuity and exposed children to heightened protection risks, thereby limiting their educational opportunities and future development.

The survey also demonstrates that respondents perceive educational recovery as requiring interventions that extend beyond the reopening of schools. Priority measures identified include improving school safety, strengthening community protection mechanisms, rehabilitating damaged educational facilities, supporting displaced learners, providing learning materials and expanding psychosocial support services for conflict-affected children. Collectively, these responses indicate that educational recovery is viewed as a multidimensional process involving protection, inclusion and sustained access to quality learning opportunities rather than infrastructure rehabilitation alone.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that conflict-related power dynamics have weakened children's educational security by disrupting the institutions, environments and support systems necessary for sustained learning. School closures represent only one aspect of this disruption. Forced displacement, insecurity and the destruction of educational facilities have simultaneously reduced children's access to teachers, learning resources and stable educational environments, thereby increasing the risk of long-term educational exclusion.

These findings are consistent with broader humanitarian evidence indicating that protracted armed conflicts generate cumulative educational disadvantages that extend well beyond temporary learning interruptions. Children who experience repeated displacement and prolonged school disruption frequently encounter declining academic achievement, reduced social development and diminished opportunities for future employment. Consequently, the educational effects of conflict should be understood as long-term developmental challenges rather than short-term humanitarian concerns.

The strong support expressed by respondents for school rehabilitation, child protection and psychosocial support further suggests that communities recognise education as both a developmental necessity and a protective mechanism. This reinforces the argument that educational recovery must integrate physical reconstruction with measures that rebuild children's confidence, emotional well-being and sense of safety.

Integration with Qualitative Findings

School closures, displacement, damage to educational infrastructure, interrupted learning, absenteeism and protection risks emerged as recurring educational concerns. Table 5 summarises these findings thematically.

Education Theme	**Indications**
Access and continuity	School closures, displacement and interrupted learning reported
Learning environment	Damage to facilities and insecurity reported
Protection	Absenteeism and exposure to exploitation reported
Recovery priorities	School safety, facilities, materials and psychosocial support reported

Human Security Interpretation

Viewed through the Human Security Framework, the findings reveal a substantial deterioration in educational security. Educational security extends beyond school enrolment to encompass children's ability to access safe, continuous and meaningful learning opportunities that promote personal development, resilience and future livelihoods. The disruption of education observed in this study therefore represents not only a loss of schooling but also a broader erosion of children's human security by limiting their capabilities, increasing protection risks and weakening their long-term prospects for social and economic participation.

The findings further illustrate the close relationship between educational security and the other dimensions of human security examined in this study. Household economic hardship constrains parents' capacity to support children's schooling, while deteriorating health and psychosocial well-being reduce children's ability to participate effectively in learning. Educational insecurity should therefore be understood as part of a wider system of interconnected vulnerabilities generated by conflict-related power dynamics.

Policy Implications

The findings suggest that humanitarian and government interventions should prioritise comprehensive educational recovery strategies that integrate school rehabilitation, child protection, teacher retention, psychosocial support and community participation. Particular attention should be given to ensuring safe learning environments for displaced children, expanding accelerated learning opportunities for those who have missed extended periods of schooling and strengthening collaboration between education authorities, humanitarian organisations and local communities. Sustainable educational recovery will depend not only on rebuilding infrastructure but also on restoring confidence in education as a pathway to resilience and long-term development.

Key Insight

The evidence demonstrates that the most significant educational consequence of the Anglophone Crisis is not merely the interruption of schooling but the erosion of children's educational security as a foundation for future resilience, capability development and social inclusion. Conflict-related power dynamics have transformed education from a routine public service into a humanitarian priority, underscoring the need for integrated recovery strategies that protect learning while strengthening broader human security.

Health Security and Psychosocial Well-being of Women and Children

Results (Impact of Conflict-Related Power Dynamics on Health Security)

The findings indicate that conflict-related power dynamics have undermined the health security of women and children within the study communities. Respondents reported substantial disruption in access to healthcare services arising from insecurity, displacement, destruction of health facilities and shortages of medical personnel. These conditions have reduced the availability and accessibility of essential health services, particularly for vulnerable groups requiring continuous maternal, child and primary healthcare.

Beyond physical health, respondents consistently identified widespread psychosocial challenges associated with prolonged exposure to conflict. Fear, anxiety, emotional distress, trauma and persistent uncertainty emerged as dominant experiences among women and children. Many respondents further indicated that repeated displacement, family separation and loss of livelihoods had intensified psychological vulnerability while reducing communities' capacity to recover from the humanitarian consequences of the conflict.

Respondents also highlighted priority interventions necessary for improving health security. These included strengthening healthcare delivery systems, expanding psychosocial support services, increasing access to maternal and child healthcare, improving community health education and enhancing collaboration between humanitarian organisations and public health institutions. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that

respondents view health recovery as requiring integrated physical and psychological support rather than emergency medical assistance alone.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the humanitarian consequences of the Anglophone Crisis extend well beyond physical injury to encompass broader deterioration in health security. Displacement, insecurity and weakened health systems have simultaneously reduced access to healthcare while increasing exposure to psychological distress, thereby creating multiple and mutually reinforcing health challenges for women and children.

The prominence of trauma, fear and emotional distress among respondents suggests that psychosocial consequences have become an enduring feature of everyday life within conflict-affected communities. Such conditions not only affect individual well-being but also weaken family relationships, reduce participation in economic activities and constrain children's educational engagement. Consequently, psychological recovery should be regarded as an essential component of humanitarian response rather than a secondary or optional intervention.

The findings further indicate that respondents recognise the importance of integrated health interventions combining healthcare delivery, mental health services and community-based support mechanisms. This aligns with growing international recognition that sustainable humanitarian recovery depends upon restoring both physical health and psychosocial resilience among conflict-affected populations.

Healthcare access was disrupted by insecurity, displacement, damaged facilities and shortages of medical personnel. Table 6 summarises the principal health and psychosocial concerns identified in the study.

Health and Psychosocial Theme	**Indications**
Access to care	Insecurity, displacement and damaged facilities reported
Service capacity	Shortages of personnel and essential services reported
Psychosocial well-being	Fear, anxiety, trauma and emotional distress reported
Recovery priorities	Healthcare, maternal and child services, psychosocial support

Fear, anxiety, emotional distress, trauma, uncertainty, family separation and livelihood loss emerged as psychosocial concerns. Humanitarian aid workers also identified organisational responses involving mobile health services, trauma counselling, psychosocial support, maternal healthcare, child protection and community outreach. These interventions highlight the importance of coordinated health and psychosocial responses to the interconnected consequences of conflict.

Human Security Interpretation

From the perspective of the Human Security Framework, these findings demonstrate substantial deterioration in health security, one of the framework's core dimensions. Health security encompasses far more than access to medical treatment; it includes individuals' capacity to maintain physical well-being, psychological resilience and dignity during periods of crisis. The findings therefore indicate that conflict-related power dynamics undermine health security by simultaneously disrupting healthcare systems, increasing psychosocial vulnerability and weakening communities' ability to recover from prolonged humanitarian emergencies.

The findings also reinforce the interdependence of the three human security dimensions examined in this study. Poor health limits women's economic participation, while psychological distress reduces children's educational engagement and family resilience. Consequently, health insecurity should not be viewed in

isolation but as part of a broader system of interconnected vulnerabilities generated by conflict-related power dynamics.

Policy Implications

The findings highlight the need for humanitarian and government agencies to adopt integrated health recovery strategies combining primary healthcare, maternal and child health services, mental health care and psychosocial support. Expanding community-based counselling services, strengthening mobile healthcare delivery, improving referral systems and training frontline health workers in trauma-informed care will enhance the resilience of conflict-affected communities. Particular attention should be given to women and children, whose long-term recovery depends upon sustained access to both physical and psychological support services.

Key Insight

The evidence demonstrates that the greatest health consequence of the Anglophone Crisis is not simply reduced access to healthcare but the erosion of health security through the combined effects of physical illness, psychological trauma and weakened community resilience. Sustainable humanitarian recovery therefore requires integrated interventions that protect both physical and mental well-being while strengthening the capacity of communities to recover from prolonged conflict.

Integrated Human Security Interpretation

The findings of this study collectively demonstrate that conflict-related power dynamics generate interconnected forms of human insecurity that extend beyond isolated humanitarian challenges. Rather than affecting women's livelihoods, children's education and health independently, the evidence indicates that these dimensions reinforce one another to create a cycle of vulnerability that limits household resilience and community recovery. Economic insecurity reduces families' ability to support children's education and access healthcare, while educational disruption limits future livelihood opportunities and weakens social mobility. Simultaneously, deteriorating health and psychosocial well-being reduce productivity, increase dependency and constrain both educational participation and economic recovery.

Viewed through the Human Security Framework, these findings suggest that the Anglophone Crisis should be understood as a multidimensional humanitarian emergency rather than solely a political or military conflict. The study demonstrates that changing power relations influence access to productive resources, education, healthcare and protection, thereby shaping the everyday experiences of women and children within conflict-affected communities. Sustainable recovery therefore depends upon integrated humanitarian responses capable of simultaneously strengthening economic security, educational security and health security.

The findings further contribute to Human Security scholarship by providing community-level empirical evidence from South West Cameroon that demonstrates the interconnected nature of humanitarian vulnerability. While previous studies have frequently examined livelihoods, education or health separately, this study illustrates how these dimensions operate collectively as mutually reinforcing components of human security. Consequently, the study provides a stronger analytical basis for designing humanitarian programmes that move beyond sector-specific interventions towards coordinated approaches promoting resilience, protection and sustainable post-conflict recovery.

CONCLUSION, POLICY IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of conflict-related power dynamics on women and children in selected communities of Fako Division, South West Cameroon, through the analytical lens of the Human Security

Framework. The findings demonstrate that the humanitarian consequences of the Anglophone Crisis extend well beyond direct physical violence to generate interconnected forms of economic, educational and health insecurity that disproportionately affect women and children. Conflict-related power dynamics have disrupted livelihoods, weakened household resilience, interrupted children's educational opportunities, reduced access to healthcare services and intensified psychosocial distress, thereby limiting the capacity of affected communities to achieve sustainable recovery.

The study further demonstrates that these humanitarian consequences should not be understood as isolated sectoral challenges. Rather, declining economic security constrains household capacity to support children's education and healthcare, while educational disruption weakens future livelihood opportunities and deteriorating health further reduces individual productivity and community resilience. These interconnected relationships reinforce the argument that humanitarian vulnerability within conflict-affected communities is multidimensional and therefore requires integrated analytical approaches capable of capturing the interaction among different dimensions of human security.

Viewed through the Human Security Framework, the findings suggest that conflict-related power dynamics reshape access to resources, opportunities and essential services in ways that significantly influence the everyday experiences of women and children. Consequently, sustainable humanitarian recovery requires more than emergency assistance or political settlements alone. It depends upon coordinated interventions that simultaneously strengthen economic resilience, educational continuity and health security while promoting inclusive governance, community participation and long-term social protection.

Beyond documenting the humanitarian consequences of the Anglophone Crisis, this study contributes to Human Security scholarship by providing community-level empirical evidence explaining how conflict-related power dynamics simultaneously influence women's economic security, children's educational security and the health and psychosocial well-being of vulnerable populations. The study therefore extends existing scholarship by demonstrating that integrated human security approaches provide a more comprehensive understanding of humanitarian vulnerability than conventional sector-specific analyses.

Policy and Practice Implications

Strengthening Women's Economic Security. The findings indicate that restoring women's livelihoods should become a central component of humanitarian recovery strategies. Government institutions, humanitarian organisations and development partners should prioritise sustainable livelihood programmes incorporating vocational training, entrepreneurship development, financial inclusion, agricultural recovery and access to microcredit. Such interventions should move beyond emergency relief towards strengthening long-term economic resilience and reducing dependence on humanitarian assistance.

Restoring Children's Educational Security. Educational recovery should focus on ensuring safe, inclusive and uninterrupted access to learning for conflict-affected children. This requires the rehabilitation of damaged educational infrastructure, retention and support of qualified teachers, expansion of accelerated learning programmes and strengthening of community-based child protection mechanisms. Educational interventions should also integrate psychosocial support services to address trauma and improve learning outcomes among affected children.

Improving Health Security and Psychosocial Support. The findings underscore the need for integrated health interventions combining primary healthcare, maternal and child health services, mental health care and psychosocial support. Humanitarian organisations should strengthen community-based health systems, expand mobile healthcare delivery and improve access to trauma-informed counselling services. Investments in local healthcare infrastructure and workforce capacity are equally important for promoting sustainable recovery.

Integrated Human Security Governance. Government agencies, humanitarian actors, civil society organisations and community leaders should adopt integrated Human Security approaches that recognise the close relationship between economic, educational and health security. Coordinated planning, resource

allocation and programme implementation will improve the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions while strengthening community resilience and reducing long-term vulnerability among women and children.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study provides valuable empirical evidence regarding the humanitarian consequences of the Anglophone Crisis, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The research was conducted within selected communities in Fako Division and therefore reflects the experiences of respondents within these conflict-affected settings. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted with appropriate consideration of contextual differences that may exist across other regions affected by the conflict.

The cross-sectional nature of the research captured respondents' experiences at a particular point in time and may not fully reflect the evolving dynamics of conflict and humanitarian recovery. In addition, the study relied primarily on self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by individual experiences and recall bias despite the measures adopted to enhance data reliability and validity.

Nevertheless, these limitations do not diminish the significance of the study. Rather, they highlight opportunities for future investigations employing broader geographical coverage, longitudinal research designs and additional methodological approaches capable of further strengthening understanding of conflict-related human security challenges.

Directions for Future Research

Future research could adopt longitudinal approaches to examine how conflict-related power dynamics influence human security over time as humanitarian recovery programmes evolve. Comparative studies involving multiple conflict-affected regions within Cameroon would provide valuable insights into geographical variations in humanitarian outcomes and community resilience.

Further research should also investigate the effectiveness of integrated humanitarian interventions designed to strengthen economic security, educational security and health security simultaneously. Mixed-methods studies incorporating more extensive qualitative evidence would enhance understanding of the lived experiences of women and children while providing richer explanations of the mechanisms through which conflict-related power dynamics influence human security. Additionally, future studies could examine the role of local governance institutions, community leadership structures and peacebuilding initiatives in promoting sustainable humanitarian recovery and strengthening resilience within conflict-affected communities.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing scholarship in four principal ways.

First, it advances understanding of the humanitarian consequences of the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis by demonstrating that conflict-related power dynamics influence multiple dimensions of human security simultaneously rather than independently.

Second, it integrates women's economic security, children's educational security and the health and psychosocial well-being of women and children within a single analytical framework, thereby providing a more comprehensive explanation of humanitarian vulnerability than previous sector-specific studies.

Third, the study contributes valuable community-level empirical evidence from selected communities in South West Cameroon, an area where integrated Human Security research remains relatively limited.

Finally, the study demonstrates the practical value of the Human Security Framework as an analytical tool for informing humanitarian policy, peacebuilding strategies and sustainable post-conflict recovery programmes within conflict-affected societies.

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