



Christian Women Religious (CWRs) Saving Lives in Conflict Settings:

A Case Study of CWRs in West Cameroon

Kenneth NMuko(PhD), Kristen Lilley (MPH)

Background: Medicines For Humanity (MFH)

Supporting health partners providing healthcare in developing countries since 1997.

Mission: To save the lives of vulnerable children and their mothers.

Our Approach:

- Build knowledge, skills, and capacity of caregivers
- Strengthen health systems
- Empower communities

Partners: Local health facilities—majority are owned or managed by Catholic Sisters.

Reach: Over 60 programs in 7 countries:

Cameroon, DRC, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Malawi, Sudan, Zambia

2024 Impact: More than 1.9 million health services provided

Overview Cameroon



- A violent conflict, which began in 2016, has engulfed the N.W./S.W. regions
- The 2nd most neglected conflict in 2023, according to IRC
- More than 1.5 million people displaced at the height of the conflict
- Over 15,000 people have been killed Churchrun health facilities remain the lifeline in rural areas

Our Initial Response



- MFH conducted needs assessments and consultations
- Created a platform of 8 CWR groups in affected areas
- Identified and prioritized capacity building
- Trained Sisters in computer skills for remote data collection
- Enrolled Sisters in MFH's Learning for Humanity online training program



Interventions Continued

- Trained health staff in trauma care and psychosocial support
- CHWs trained to deliver babies in remote areas
- Support for IDPs through trained CHWs
- Built and distributed motorcycle ambulances
- Established 4 outreach mobile clinic sites
- Mobile clinics reached those unable to travel due to insecurity
- Improved access to essential health services for vulnerable groups

Strengthening CHWs

- Economic Strengthening Activities (ESAs) training for CHWs
- Provided seed funding for ESA projects
- Strengthened CHW motivation and retention
- Facilitated regular partner meetings and exchange visits



Key Results

- 276,800 people reached
- 17 project sites covered
- 31,280 DPs supported
- 58 babies delivered by CHWs
- 348 CHWs trained with 92% retention rate
- 126 CWRs and managers trained on computer use

Child mortality 21% lower than in facilities in neighboring districts



Lessons Learned

- Innovation and adaptive changes are critical for effective response in conflict settings
- Even small support can lead to significant outcomes
- Remote training is an effective strategy
- Regular communication improves collaboration and creativity



Conclusion & Recommendations

Increases **support** for CWRs are critical in delivering healthcare in crises

Invest in psychosocial support for caregivers

Address mental health and burnout among Sisters and CHWs

Continue to **strengthen** community-based solutions in humanitarian contexts

