



CAMEROON HEALTH SECTOR

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1. Country Overview

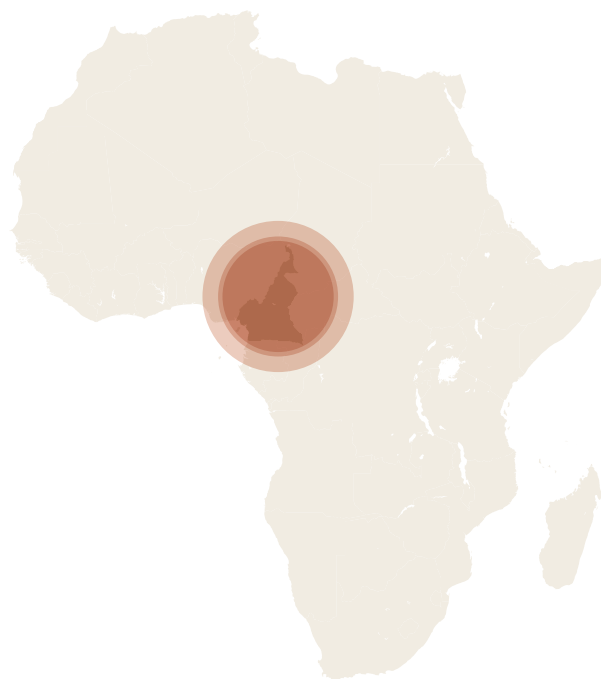
Cameroon is located at the intersection of Western and Central Africa and has the most ethnically heterogeneous population. The country is surrounded by Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean.^[1] The name Cameroon stemmed from Rio dos Camarões which means river of prawns. The name was given to the Wouri River by Portuguese explorers in the 15th century.^[1]

Cameroon was under German rule between 1884 and 1914, after which the country was annexed by France and Britain between 1916 and 1960. Although Cameroon gained independence in 1960 the colonial divide between the English and French speakers is still crystallised.^[2]

Cameroon has had internal conflicts and ethno-political frictions which escalated during the 2018 presidential elections. Additionally, the country has had prolonged disputes with Nigeria over the oil-rich Bakassi Peninsula which flows into both countries.^[2]

With more than 200 indigenous groups, the ethnic and linguistic composition of Cameroon is diverse. The Bantu-speaking people of the South, Sudanic speaking of the North and the semi-Bantu languages in the West form the three main linguistic groups. Moreover, French and English are the official languages of the country. There is a large cultural division in the settlement pattern of Cameroon. The North is occupied by Muslim pastoralists while the South is predominantly occupied by Christian and conventional African religions.^[2]

In terms of trade, Cameroon is a part of multiple trade agreements such as the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union (EU), a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) with the United States and other agreements with Canada, China, Japan, and Russia among others.^[3]



1.1 Key Country Statistics^[4-6]



3.72

GDP growth rate, 2020



59.3

Total life expectancy at birth, 2019



20.2

Exports of goods and services as a percentage of GDP, 2019



24.7

Imports of goods and services as a percentage of GDP, 2019



Exported goods, 2019:
Crude Petroleum (**USD 1.89 Billion**), Cocoa Beans (**USD 647 Million**), Sawn Wood (**USD 518 Million**)



Imported goods, 2019:
Scrap Vessels (**USD 939 Million**), Special Purpose Ships (**USD 294 Million**), Rice (**USD 223 Million**)



USD 1.21 Billion
Balance of trade Deficit, 2020

2. COVID-19 Situation

As of April 7, 2022, Cameroon had 119,544 confirmed cases with 117,455 recoveries and 1,927 deaths.^[7] The country reported its first case on the 5th of March 2020.

A total of 4.95% of the populations is vaccinated, with 3.85% being fully vaccinated and 1.1% being partially vaccinated.

3. Health Overview

Cameroon's healthcare system is divided into three sub-sectors:^[8]

- Public sector, includes public hospitals and health structures under the stewardship of other ministerial departments (Defence, Labour and social welfare, education etc.)
- Private sector for-profit and non-profit (religious groups, associations, and NGOs)
- Traditional medicine

The public sector is further divided into three tiers: primary, secondary, and tertiary care. ^[9] The poverty rate in Cameroon stands at 40%, and most of the healthcare payments are financed through out-of-pocket (OOP) payments. This inevitably deters people from seeking care, affecting the countries' goal of achieving universal health coverage (UHC). In 2018/2019, Cameroon allocated 4.29% of its budget to health, well below the 15% target of the Abuja Declaration.^[10]

Cameroon has a public social insurance system (Caisse Nationale de Prévoyance Sociale, CNPS) which is based on voluntary contributions. Up until 2014, contributors to the fund were limited to formal workers, and employees in public or state-owned companies. The informal sector has now being incorporated in an effort to increase the funding pool.^[9] As of 2016, the fund had 136,588 registered Cameroonians. The fund is slowly gaining traction, but it needs more government support in terms of providing subsidies to the most vulnerable and creating awareness about its benefits.^[11] The government also attempted to introduce mutual health insurance to cover 45% of the population. It was based on an annual subsidised fee and solidarity, once registered could access a broad range of services at integrated health centres.^[9] There are other private health insurance companies in Cameroon but, their uptake has dropped from 17% (2005) to 10% (2010) due to high preference to the public health insurance.^[9] The country is in dire need of consolidated national health insurance that covers all its citizens.

Cameroon suffers a low coverage of human resources for health (HRH) population ratio, with roughly 1.1 physicians, 7.8 nurses and midwives per 10,000 population in contrast to the WHO recommended ratio of a minimum of one doctor per 1000 population. Aside from low HRH numbers, the uneven spread of the health professionals further drives inequitable access to care for rural, remote and hard to reach areas.^[17] With limited financial resources, providing financial incentives has been a struggle to encourage health professionals to work in hardship areas. Additionally, limited career advancement opportunities further discourage them to work in rural facilities.^[9]

Top Ten Causes of Mortality are:^[13]



HIV/AIDS



Malaria



Diarrheal
diseases



Lower Respiratory
Infections



Neonatal
disorders



Stroke



Ischemic
heart diseases



Tuberculosis



Road
Injuries



Diabetes

3.1 Key Health Statistics^[12]



3.53

Current health
expenditure as a
percentage of GDP,
2018



85.5

Private health
expenditure as
a percentage of
current health
expenditure, 2018



5.96

Government health
expenditure as a percentage
of current health
expenditure, 2018



75.6

Out-of-pocket
expenditure as
a percentage of
current health
expenditure, 2018



529

Maternal mortality
ratio (national
estimate per
100,000 live
births), 2017



74.8

Under-five mortality
(per 1000 live births),
2019

4. Key Challenges Faced by the Private Sector

- Political unrest
 - Poor infrastructure
 - High poverty rates
 - Skewed distribution of workforce in urban areas
-

5. Key Opportunities for The Private Sector

- Remote digital solutions to help with human resource challenges in rural areas.
- e-Health and Tele-medicine to service hard to reach areas
- High GDP in the country indicates the potential for companies to grow
- Investing in the health sector through private health insurance funding

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 (+254) 704 838 150
(+254) 700 014 557

 www.ahb.co.ke
www.africahealthbusiness.com

 New Rehema House
Rhapta Road, Westlands,
Nairobi, Kenya

 info@ahb.co.ke

 P.O. Box 49874 - 00100
Nairobi, Kenya