




## Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science (JAHSS)

ISSN: 3006-9491 (Online)

Volume 2 Issue 2, (2025)

 <https://doi.org/10.69739/jahss.v2i2.804>

 <https://journals.stecab.com/jahss>



Published by  
Stecab Publishing

### Research Article

## Humanitarian Response by Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) in the Anglophone Crisis, Fako Division: Case of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon

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### About Article

#### Article History

Submission: July 11, 2025

Acceptance : August 18, 2025

Publication : August 21, 2025

#### Keywords

*Faith-Based Organisation, Humanitarian Response, The Anglophone Crisis*

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### ABSTRACT

Over the years, armed conflict and other chemical demonstrations of might and power have become the order of the day. This phenomenon, coupled with the onslaught of different disasters, has brought untold pain and misery to humanity, necessitating prompt and effective humanitarian response from humanitarian actors, including faith-based organisations (FBOs). This study on the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon and the role of FBOs in humanitarian response, with special focus on the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), has the objective of assessing the role played by the PCC in the provision of humanitarian assistance to victims of the Anglophone crisis in Fako Division of the Southwest Region of Cameroon. The study employed a mixed study research design. Qualitative data were captured through interviews with the Development Secretary of the PCC, while quantitative data were obtained through a semi-structured questionnaire administered in some communities within Fako Division. Findings from the research revealed that the Development Department of the PCC is the main office for Humanitarian actions. However, all the arms (Ministries) of the PCC are also engaged in humanitarian activities. Strategies put in place for relief assistance revealed that more foodstuffs and items for washing materials are the main items distributed. Congregational pastors, in collaboration with their Elders and standby teams, ensured fair, transparent and non-discriminatory distributions of the items. Findings on the general appraisal of the humanitarian intervention by the PCC to IDPs revealed that a majority (67%) of the respondents affirmed that the assistance was excellent, and 21% remarked that it was good. In comparison, 12% viewed it as average. The distributions were timely and gender unbiased. The projects were done cost-effectively; 80% of funds were used to purchase goods, 15% to ensure transportation, while only 5% went as honorarium to those involved in the exercise. The study concludes that with the minimal means available, the PCC has respected at least the minimal theoretical standards set as guidelines for humanitarian assistance.

### Citation Style:

Agbor, E. M. (2025). Humanitarian Response by Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) in the Anglophone Crisis, Fako Division: Case of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. *Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Science*, 2(2), 323-330. <https://doi.org/10.69739/jahss.v2i2.804>



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, humanitarian assistance provided in situations of war and disaster by donor governments, international organisations like the United Nations (UN), and, particularly, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) has saved hundreds of thousands, perhaps even millions, of lives (Smock, 1996). According to Good Humanitarian Donorship (2003), Humanitarian Action is underpinned by the Good Humanitarian Donorship initiative with the objectives to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of artificial crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations.

The armed crisis in Cameroon, and particularly the English-speaking regions, has attracted many international organisations to Cameroon to relieve the suffering people from pain and misery. Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), being an expression of the continuation of the salvation mission of God, are expected to guarantee some degree of assistance to victims of disasters, whether natural (earthquake, flood, landslide, etc.) or anthropogenic (wars, armed conflict, accidents, etc.). Jesus Christ, the head of the church, an expression of God's salvation plan towards humanity, looked at the needs of the people, especially the poor and needy, the sick, the dying, the downtrodden and suffering masses, etc. This makes humanitarian assistance to victims of disasters part of the moral, social and spiritual responsibility of Faith-Based Organisations and other humanitarian actors.

As part of the responsibility of the PCC as a faith-based organisation to aid those in need, she has carried out several humanitarian assistance projects for victims of the crises. These humanitarian activities carried out by the PCC privileged the provision of psychosocial, medical, financial, educational and material support to bring relief to victims without gender distinction in Fako Division. In order to ensure that the minimum standards stipulated by the sphere model were respected and to improve accountability and the improvement of actions, this work sets out to evaluate the appropriateness of the assistantship by the PCC.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Faith-based organisations have been engaged in a wide range of services as broad in scale as those delivered by secular counterparts. Burchardt (2015) reported that within the last 20 years, religious organisations have become involved in regimes and projects of development aid and humanitarian assistance in Africa to an unprecedented extent. Ferris (2005) reports that in 1988, the World Council of Churches and the Friends World Committee for Consultation made a joint submission to the UN Human Rights Commission on the particular needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Belshaw (2005) quoting Gifford (2015) reported that "In Africa, in 2010, the Catholic Church operated 16,178 health centers, 1074 hospitals, 5373 outpatient clinics, 186 leper colonies, 753 homes for the elderly and the physically and mentally disabled, 979 orphanages, and 2947 educational and rehabilitation centers". According to Gifford (2015), half of all AIDS-related organizations in Africa are provided by Catholic organizations. Gifford (2015) concluded

that "in health, as with schools, the church led the way, long before governments. Green (2020) reported that FBOs are much better at soliciting donations than their secular counterparts. Despite the significant contributions of Faith-Based Organisations in crisis times, some authors have raised some limitations in their service delivery. Identifying these limitations is relevant to the current study of the PCC humanitarian activities in the Fako Division to assess the effectiveness of service delivery to victims of the Anglophone crisis.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study made use of both the qualitative and quantitative research designs. The qualitative research design aims to answer the questions raised through an exploratory and descriptive research procedure. The study also generates quantitative data through semi-structured questionnaires. These research designs are intended to bring out the extent to which the relief assistance given to victims of the Anglophone crisis has been of help in relieving them from pain and hardship. According to Brink and Wood (1998), an explorative approach is also used. It also makes use of the case study approach. Seven congregations in seven different communities in Fako were purposively used as sample areas to access some victims of the Anglophone crisis in the different communities. These congregations are PC Muea, PC Mile 16, PC Tiko Town, PC Mutengene, PC Bonadikombo, PC Beach, PC New Town, and PC Mukindi. These congregations are found in different subdivisions and municipalities in Fako, where the PCC is heavily represented. These communities are selected based on their instrumental roles as they serve as major host communities to many internally displaced persons within the Fako Division. The targeted population was estimated at 5000 IDPs, divided into male (adults), female (adults) and youths. The sample size stood at 370 individuals. The sample size was obtained using the Yamene Toure formula (indicated below) with a sampling intensity of 5%.

$$N = \frac{N}{1 + N(\alpha)^2}$$

Where,

n is the sample size

N= sample population

α= sampling intensity, which was 5%

Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. In contrast, Secondary data was collected from administrative documents of the PCC on project implementation strategies and those about the humanitarian response project carried out. The questionnaire was the main instrument for field data collection. A questionnaire was utilised for the survey. It is a very efficient method since it allows for the standardisation of the collection of quantitative data, so that the data is internally consistent and comprehensible for analysis. The questionnaire was formulated based on the study's objectives and comprised open- and closed-ended questions. Before the data collection, a field visit was done to identify the IDP population and some of the targeted locations, which the administration of the questionnaires later followed up with the sampled population. Respondents were IDPs who benefited from the humanitarian aid and were willing



to participate. One face-to-face interview was conducted with the development secretary, head of the development secretariat of the PCC, to source relevant information on the strategy for the humanitarian response project. These interviews aimed to acquire information on the various research objectives set for the study. The collected data were subjected to descriptive statistics (percentages, frequencies, bar charts, pie charts, tables and cross tabulations). The data was analysed using the SPSS statistical package.

### 3.1. Description of the study area

This study is carried out within the Fako Division. Fako is a division of the South West Region in Cameroon. The division covers an area of 2,093 km<sup>2</sup> and, as of 2005, had a total population of 466,412. The department's capital lies in Limbe. The division is divided administratively into seven communes: Buea, Limbe I, Limbe II, Limbe III, Muyuka, Tiko, and West Coast (wiki/Fako-department, 2009). Fako Division is one of those divisions with a good number of IDPs migrating there for safety. Though not completely safe from threats from the armed civilians, there is relative calm, making habitation more secure. This researcher is interested in carrying out this research in the Fako Division because it has recorded many IDPs from different communities over the past few years. This makes the area very relevant for the research. The second reason is that some faith-based organisations have recorded remarkable results of humanitarian assistance to victims of the Anglophone crisis within the Fako Division. Moreover, the PCC, the case study, has its headquarters in Fako Division, known as the Synod Office. The above reasons make Fako Division very relevant to evaluating humanitarian response carried out by faith-based organisations (FBOs) in the Anglophone crisis, focusing on the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

### 3.2. PCC Congregations in fako division

The PCC has a strong hold in the Fako division, which also serves as the church's headquarters. Fako Division has two presbyteries out of the 30 presbyteries nationwide. The presbyteries are Fako North, which covers the whole of Buea Subdivision, right up to Muyuka Subdivision. Fako South comprises Tiko Subdivision, the three Limbe Subdivisions (Limbe 1, 2, and 3), and the West Coast Subdivision. The congregations are as indicated through the map, as shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Map 2 showing PCC Congregations in fako division  
Source: Conceived by the author.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. The humanitarian arms of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)

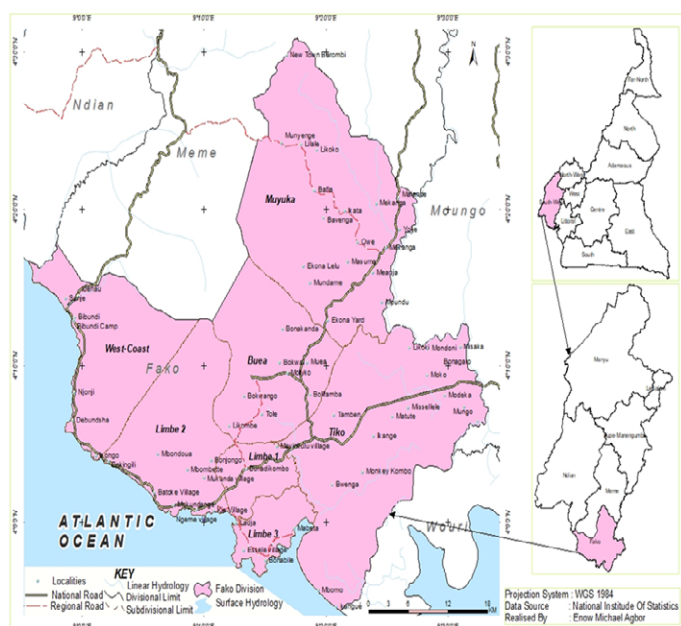
Based on findings from the field, it was established that the main office for Humanitarian actions in the PCC is the Development Secretariat, which stands as the focal point for such activities. Despite its direct implication in humanitarian activities, it should be noted that all arms (Ministries) of the PCC are engaged in humanitarian activities.

#### 4.1.1. The ministry of word and sacrament

This concerns the Pastoral mission through church services rendered. They also provide humanitarian assistance to crisis victims according to their means. The Development Department of the PCC uses the different congregations and pastors of the PCC as focal points for both distribution and relevant feedback from the field on their humanitarian response.

#### 4.1.2. The Healing Ministry (holistic healing)

This involves spiritual healing done by the pastors through prayers and physical healing, done in the hospital through medical attention. The Development Department highly uses hospitals to provide medical attention to victims of the Anglophone crisis.



**Figure 1.** Map 1 showing Fako Division and the different localities  
Source: Conceived by the author





#### 4.1.3. The teaching ministry

This is realised through the PCC schools and other vocational training programs and units. The Education Department of the PCC focuses on young Cameroonians' education. This department mainly demonstrates humanitarian action through its scholarship programs for the less privileged people.

#### 4.1.4. The liberation ministry

This concerns the Development Department of the PCC. They intervene in human suffering caused by both natural and anthropogenic forces. They are funded from internal funds through the congregations and other units of the church. They also have direct partnerships with some international organisations. They relate with all the ministries or departments of the church to meet the different humanitarian responses. An example can be explained in the domain of health, which is realised through their association with the Health Department of the PCC for medical assistance to crisis victims in the form of treatments and payments of their bills.

#### 4.2. Strategies put in place by the PCC to relieve victims of the anglophone crisis

According to the results obtained from field research, it was revealed that IDPs/victims of the Anglophone Crisis are being identified to meet up with their humanitarian activities through the congregations of the PCC. Pastors must first submit a list of IDPs with an appeal for the most desperate cases. The names of IDPs come from their congregations and communities. While on the part of the Department, precautionary measures are taken to make available extra materials for those whose names may not have been included in the list, as well as for those who may hear about their services from the community and come with a great desire to benefit. This approach, I think, is relevant because of the limited resources and representation. Making materials available for the faithful and some community members is a great credit to their effort.

Findings from the interview with the Development Secretary of the PCC on how they ensure a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory distribution exercise report that distribution is always done using the household strategy. Congregational Pastors identify with their Elders in collaboration. The distribution team stays on standby till all items are distributed. Pastors are notified and instructed to announce on Sunday that they will give the same opportunity to all IDPs in that congregation. Moreover, they reported that their activities have been more about food and washing items for internally displaced persons because they are survival needs that meet basic attention, which can be seen as short-term humanitarian interventions. This is how far they can go with the limited resources.

The above item for humanitarian assistance aligns with what is written and emphasised in the sphere theory for humanitarian assistance. According to Sphere (1998), four main areas were highlighted in the handbook of tools for assuring quality response. They are water, sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, food

aid, shelter, and health (Sphere, 1998). Moreover the PCC humanitarian action also falls in line with the activities of some International organisations like the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), who support the Cameroon Red Cross (CRC) to deliver assistance to some 35,000 Internally Displaced People (IDPs) for 6 months, with a focus on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), Shelter and Household Items (HHI), Health, Water Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion (WASH), Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) (IFRC, 2019). Based on their limited resources, the PCC is doing its best to guarantee food, washing items, and other services like counselling.

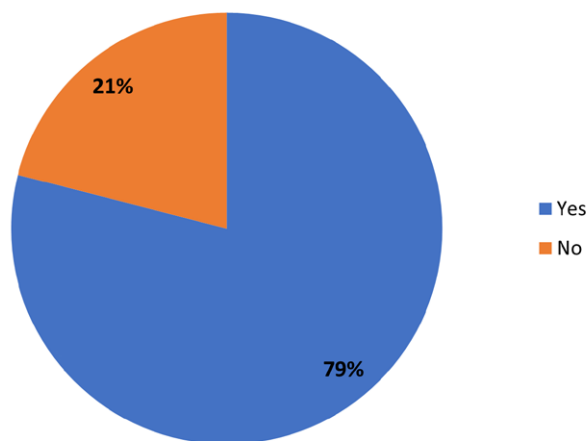
The strategy is to ensure that the available resources are used for what was intended, without diversion or wastage, which is good. According to the report, after the request for the funds with indications of what is to be used is scrutinised at their office, a follow-up of the activity is done to ensure adherence, a report with pictures of the activities is forwarded to our office and the donors. Monitoring ensures actual activities match planned activities, strongly supporting the "EHA" theory of evaluating humanitarian action. The approach calls for a systematic and objective examination of humanitarian action, to determine the worth or significance of an activity, policy or programme, intended to draw lessons to improve policy and practice and enhance accountability (Buchanan-Smith *et al*, 2016).

Another strategy put in place to improve their services based on information from the activities of other humanitarian actors, as reported, is what they called actor analysis. This involves knowing who is operating in the humanitarian domain and what services they are rendering to avoid conflicts and to chart a referral pathway in cases necessitating referrals. This aligns with Hilhorst (2002), basing his argument on the ALNAP theory of evaluating humanitarian action, emphasising the need for humanitarian actors to come together. In addition to attempting to facilitate learning and improved accountability, ALNAP serves as a repository for evaluative reports of the relief efforts of various groups. ALNAP is particularly focused on the sharing of knowledge between organisations, which the PCC humanitarian actors admitted that they join other actors to improve the quality of their services (Hilhorst, 2002).

#### 4.3. The effectiveness of the PCC in relieving victims of the anglophone crisis.

A finding from the research reveals that 79% of the respondents expressed that they were given what they desired most. This is because the donations met their basic food needs and other household items, like mattresses. This aligns with the Sphere theory of evaluating quality humanitarian response to focus on the necessities of life: food and hygiene (Sphere, 1998). On the other hand, 21% think that it was not what they desired most. This could be explained by the fact that this group of respondents had already settled down, so their needs went beyond basic needs to economic sustainability.



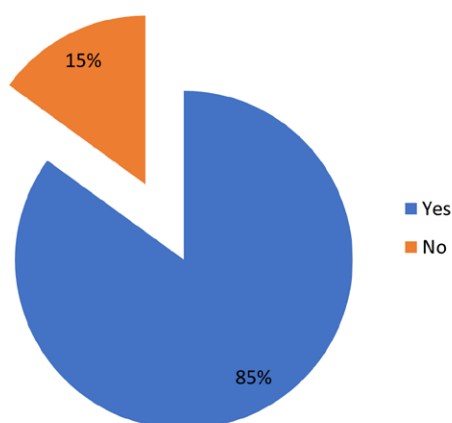


**Figure 3.** timeliness of humanitarian assistance from the PCC Assistance in the Fako Division

Source: Authors' field data

Meeting the needs of the victims of the Anglophone crisis gives credibility to the efforts and sacrifices of the PCC. The above reported in percentage (%) of people who expressed their evaluative satisfaction with what was given as meeting their needs is a significant remark and encouragement.

The need for an evaluation goes against the Orthodox approach or assumption, which is based on a scientific, positivistic, and quantitatively oriented model with an exclusive role of the evaluator as the expert having specialist knowledge, and a view on policy formulation as a rational process (Frerks & Hilhorst, 2002). This calls for evaluating the effectiveness of what is being done and not the work's credibility based on the presence of experts and formulas. This appraisal helps understand the importance of an adequate feasibility study before properly distributing humanitarian assistance to crisis victims. Relief assistance has to be directed towards the possible interest of the people and not the donors. The timely nature of their reaction is based on the fact that 85% of the respondents attest that the PCC's reaction was timely. The humanitarian aid, therefore, came when they needed it the most, while 15% hold a contrary view.

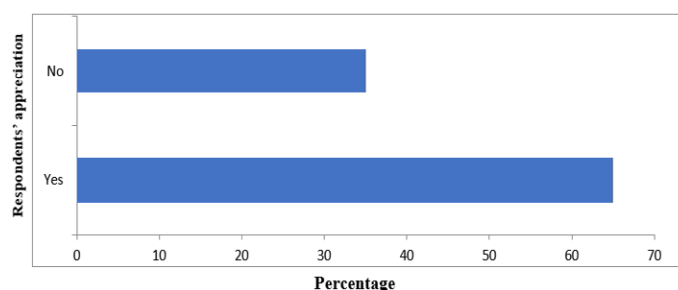


**Figure 4.** Timeliness of humanitarian assistance from the PCC Assistance in the fako division

Source: Authors' field data

The humanitarian aid, therefore, comes in when needed the most. Based on this, one may view the intervention by the PCC towards victims of the Anglophone crisis to be divinely guided by God to produce such a result. Findings on the general appraisal of the humanitarian intervention by the PCC to IDPs reveal that (21%) affirmed that the assistance given to them by the PCC was good, and (67%) remarked very good. This meets up with the call for respecting the dignity of beneficiaries in humanitarian response action, as Sphere (1998) emphasised. In addition, talking about the number of people they attended to, findings based on what is given to victims of a crisis can represent your respect for the dignity of victims of a crisis.

The reaction of the estimated range of people who received humanitarian assistance from the PCC reveals that (34%) of the respondents from the different communities remarked that the number ranged from 50 to 100 people, and (36%) attested the number to be 100 or more.



**Figure 5.** appreciation of the equity of Humanitarian assistance from the PCC in the fako division

Source: Author's field data

This helps to affirm the report by the Moderator of the PCC, captioned "Wake Up; Watch out Against Deception" (2021), which reports that the PCC has supported about 90000 IDPs all over the national territory. This affirms what Burchardt (2015) reported about the humanitarian activities of FBOs, in which he highlighted that within the last 20 years, religious organisations have become involved in regimes and projects of development aid and humanitarian assistance in Africa to an unprecedented extent. This presents the PCC as a faith-based organisation, a key actor with limited resources. This activity occurs from one community to another in the North West and the South West Regions of Cameroon. From the above discussion, one can say that the PCC is meeting up; though with limited resources, the objectives of humanitarian action which is to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and in the aftermath of crises and natural disasters, as well as to prevent and strengthen preparedness for the occurrence of such situations (Buchanan-Smith *et al.*, 2016)

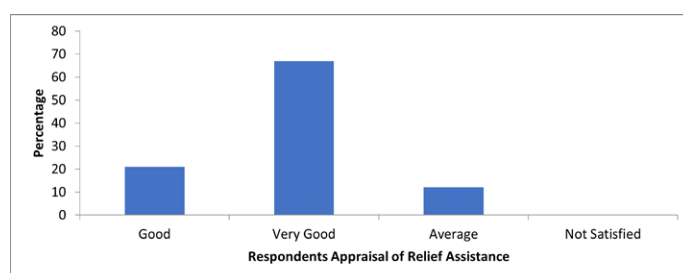
According to the Development Office of the PCC, on how they evaluate the effectiveness of their services towards victims of the Anglophone crisis, they say that their actions are rated through interviews with some IDPs after the distribution of relief assistance—live testimonies from the beneficiaries on the importance and quality of items distributed. The number of persons they reach out to also gives information on the numeric result of their humanitarian action. The quantity of items and



**Figure 6.** Plate 1 showing PCC Humanitarian Action towards victims of the Anglophone crisis

Source: Author's field data

materials distributed also helps evaluate the humanitarian response. The scope of the area covered by their interventions gives an evaluative impression of their humanitarian response. They are also evaluated through the remarks of the donors from their reports and other avenues that their sponsors may use to credit the effectiveness of their work.



**Figure 7.** General appraisal of the humanitarian intervention by the PCC to IDPs

Source: Author's field data

On a general appraisal of the humanitarian intervention by the PCC to IDPs, it is revealed that 21% affirmed that their assistance was reasonable, 67% remarked very good, 12% viewed it as average, and 0% were not satisfied. This appraisal helps understand the importance of adequate feasibility studies before properly distributing humanitarian assistance to crisis victims. Relief assistance has to be directed towards the possible interest of the people and not the donors.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study findings conclude that the PCC, as a faith-based organisation, uses its development department to carry out humanitarian activities for victims of the Anglophone crisis. The humanitarian action is being carried out in communities through congregations with the help of the religious authorities, from names given through the pastor to extra material for some whose names were not registered. A majority, 67% of the respondents, affirmed that the assistance was very good, and 21% reported that the assistance was reasonable, while

12% viewed it as average. The distributions were timely and gender unbiased. The projects were done cost-effectively; 80% of funds were used for the purchase of goods, 15% used to ensure transportation, and only 5% went as honorarium to those involved in the exercise. Most participants affirmed that special attention was given to physically challenged persons 85% Children 65% and elderly persons (aged) 80%. The study also concludes that with the minimal means available, the PCC has respected the minimal standards set in the guideline for humanitarian assistance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

An independent humanitarian unit should be created in the PCC to manage any life-threatening situation that exposes people to risk. It may be called a Humanitarian Action Unit of the PCC, just as the Roman Catholic Church has the Catholic Relief Services and CARITAS, which assist in different areas of humanitarian needs. This is because of the charged nature of the Development Department with unrelated activities to humanitarian Activities.

The PCC must continue doing adequate feasibility studies on the best distribution approach before distributing humanitarian assistance to crisis victims. This enables the team to be well-equipped for distribution in the target area so that their actions remain relevant to the people. It may also be necessary for the PCC to evaluate its humanitarian activities at the end of every project and to meet up with relevant approaches and materials relevant to the needs of the IDPs, especially with the changing times and conditions.

It may be necessary for the PCC to solicit more funds from the government and other secular organisations to increase the support materials to meet the needs of a broader population than the limited population that their means can support and what their religious partners can offer. This may also help them move away from short-term assistance of food and other material support to long-term sustainable projects like schooling and housing, which may be the needs of those displaced for years.

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