**Context:**

Cameroon is officially at war with Boko Haram since 2014. The conflict for some time having gradually intensified, after reaching its climax between 2014 and 2016, the recurrent incidents and attacks, and the sharp increase in suicide attacks from May to August 2017 and those of the last year remind us that the jihadist movement is far from being defeated. Since 2014, approximately 10,000 civilians and soldiers have been killed and more than a thousand people have been kidnapped in the Far North region. Between 3,000 and 5,000 Boko fighters Haram would also have been killed in the fighting against the Cameroonian defense forces or the vigilance committees. The fight against Boko Haram has only worsened the already precarious economic situation of the four million inhabitants of this region. Nevertheless, the populations have demonstrated a great capacity for adaptation and resilience which offers the Cameroonian government and international partners the possibility of implementing development policies integrating the diversity and fluidity of the economic traditions of this border region between Nigeria and Chad. The Far North of Cameroon is a veritable crossroads of trade routes and cultures. In addition to trade, its economy is structured around agriculture, livestock, fishing, tourism, freight transport, crafts and hunting. The informal sector is predominant and smuggling activities occupy a considerable place. The local economy is dominated by wealthy merchants and traditional chiefs, often members of the ruling party, who occupy high positions within the administration.

**History of the Blue Shield in Cameroon**

**HERITAGE ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION**

The security situation in the English-speaking North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon has deteriorated since the end of 2017. Deadly violence has been taking place since the end of 2016 in the English-speaking regions of the North-West and South West. In the Far North, the army is also deployed to fight the Boko jihadists Haram who have launched repeated attacks since 2014 on the Cameroonian populations. This is how Cameroon lives to the rhythm of upheavals: political, economic, social and cultural instabilities due to the abuses of the Islamic sect Boko Haram on the one hand, and the security crisis in the two English-speaking regions on the other; Added to this is the covid-19 pandemic. In the Far North of Cameroon, insecurity is alarming. It is now estimated that more than 460,000 people have been displaced in the region because of the violence. Attacks by armed groups are on the rise. These anthropogenic crises have done a lot of human, material and cultural damage to the
Cameroonian population. These repetitive crises are always the first threat to cultural heritage. They promote not only the destruction of cultural property, but also their illicit trafficking. Cultural property then becomes a privileged target during armed crises. Since the outbreak of these hostilities, many museum institutions have closed their doors, those who resist most often see their works destroyed, looted and stolen. More than half of the museums in the regions in crisis no longer have staff on duty even though they have not closed their doors. The Royal Museum of Babungo and the Royal Museum of Mokolo in the North West and Far North Region of Cameroon are among many institutions that are severely affected by the consequences of the security crisis in the western and northern regions of Cameroon. Cameroon. In addition, buildings for educational and health purposes, including historical monuments, were partially or totally destroyed. Along the way, the appearance of the coronavirus comes to deal a very hard blow to the previous situation, since the phenomenon is on a global and national scale. Whether small or large museums and cultural sites, both public and private, they have had to close their doors, and most of them for an indefinite period. It is estimated that 90% of some 33 museums and heritage sites in Cameroon are subject to total, partial or eventual closure. Cultural activity in Cameroon derives almost 80% of this income from visits and these visitors are in recent years, Cameroon is facing several complex crises: the Far North region is seriously affected by the Boko crisis Haram in the Lake Chad Basin; in the Eastern region, the arrival of refugees from the Central African Republic has increased humanitarian needs by more than 30%; and the North-West and South-West regions are weakened by the so-called "Anglophone" crisis. Faced with this particularly volatile situation, many communities have had to flee, leaving behind their traditional practices, built heritage and artistic collections. Following the repeated destruction and looting of cultural property in the Far North by Boko-Haram,

Prior to these crises, the region's rich heritage and local museums were a key unifying element, bringing communities together and creating income-generating activities such as cultural tourism. To restore culture and hope, Blue Shield Cameroon carried out a rapid damage assessment mission to seven cultural sites and museums, with a particular focus on safeguarding built heritage and securing museums and their collections.

This assessment revealed that the built structures, such as the Royal Palace of Bafut, Mankon and the Goto Tower Goulfey, and the Babungo Museum all on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List, were damaged. Stone shrines were demolished, monuments were hit by bullets and some museum collections were destroyed. The recurring violence has also led to
the displacement of entire communities, which has had the effect of disrupting practices and expressions of intangible cultural heritage.

In all countries facing insurrectionary movements, the question of reconstruction or development policies arises when the conflict decreases in intensity. Cameroon is no exception to this trend. Government and development actors need to combine ongoing emergency projects with longer-term development projects. They must stop perceiving the Far North and the NOSO only as regions to be assisted, but rather consider it as an area of economic opportunities that could promote local development and the revival of growth for the whole of Cameroon. Thus, the protection of cultural heritage during an armed conflict is a challenge, which can sometimes endanger the responders. However, this protection of cultural heritage corresponds to a deep need for communities, because it gives them a sense of continuity in turmoil and uncertainty.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The establishment of a working group
- Support for the restoration of damaged buildings and the securing of collections
- Set up an inventory program for movable assets
  - Workshops and work to strengthen the capacities and tools of museum professionals to deal with and respond to this type of problem
  - Provide them with a digital device and an Internet connection to be able to connect their Museums and their work to the Global network of professionals.
  - We have attached to this report activities and works that can help to meet a certain number of challenges and difficulties faced by its museum professionals and heritage managers in general in Cameroon.
  - Given that fighting and attacks continue to be perpetrated, on the ground populations and institutions such as museums are the first victims and first affected.

Hence the need for urgent action.