

Northeast Nigeria Operational Update

January 2022

UNHCR provided technical support for drafting **the Child Rights Act** and made important contributions to the **milestone** document **enacted into law by the Borno State Government** on 10 January 2022.

Camp closure in Borno: With the Stadium IDP camp, hosting some 17,300 individuals, **six camps** are now **closed**. Closing the **remaining five camps** is going to **affect an estimated 60,000 IDP** women, men and children.

Through its monitoring of **spontaneous refugee returnees** from Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, **UNHCR** and the National Immigration Service **registered some 4,100 individuals** in some local councils in Borno State.



In many parts of North-East Nigeria, water is scarce and children like those at this borehole in El-Miskin IDP camp in Maiduguri have to help fetch it. Where they trek long distances, they are exposed to diverse forms of abuse. To protect them against any abuse and safeguard their rights, the Borno State Government recently passed a Law with stringent measures. © UNHCR/Francis Garriba.

Operational Highlights

- Non-state armed groups (NSAGs) continued to attack security forces and civilians in North-East Nigeria. **Many people continued to be displaced into Chad and North-East Nigeria** following skirmishes between Arab Shoa and Musgum ethnic groups in the Far North Region of Cameroon.
- In Borno State, **violence**, including armed attacks, use of Person-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (PBIED)/IED, abductions, illegal vehicle checkpoints, crimes, were reported, as **NSAG members continued to surrender** to government forces. A **gradual improvement in the security situation** of the State was seen, especially on the main supply routes. Consequently, United Nations Department for Safety and Security declassified the Maiduguri-Bama-Gwoza/Banki and the Maiduguri-Dikwa-Ngala main supply routes from “No go” to “restricted”, signifying that the UN may use these roads under certain safety conditions.
- In Adamawa State, **most return communities continued to live in fear caused by criminality**. For instance, in Gidan Madara and Va’atita communities of Mubi South and Mubi North Local Government Areas (LGAs), armed men attacked homes of IDP and refugee returnees, kidnapping people and demanding ransom. A seven-year-old boy and a community leader were abducted in Mubi North and Yola South, respectively.
- In **Yobe State**, NSAG attacked communities located in the fringes of the Alagarno Forest in Gujba LGA. On 4 January 2022, the groups **attacked an ambulance** with drugs for an International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) in Gujba town. More attacks were reported in Muktum, Goniri, and Kasatchiya communities and people were abducted on the Damaturu-Biu road between 16 and 29 January.
- Meanwhile, the humanitarian community in the Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) States continued to **provide support to the Government of Nigeria** as a way of fighting the spread and impact of **COVID-19** including community engagement and risk reduction education, vaccination, contact tracing and testing, and treatment, among others.
- On 10 January 2022, Borno **Governor signed an important law on child protection**, the Child Rights Law, making Borno the 29th State in Nigeria to domesticate the Child Rights Act. The Governor also assented to the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act. The Child Rights Act of 2003 is meant to protect the rights of children in Nigeria, while the VAPP Bill was passed into law in 2015 to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls in the country. Borno’s Child Rights Law will **enhance the implementation of UNHCR’s child protection project** funded by the Muslim World League.
- The new Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator in Nigeria and the **Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Coordination and Emergency Relief** visited Borno State to **raise awareness about the displacement** situation in the region.

POPULATION MOVEMENTS

- As part of the COVID-19 cross-border monitoring, **UNHCR and its partners recorded 2,027 spontaneous Nigerian refugee returnees (549 households)**, from the regular and irregular entry points between Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon. UNHCR border monitors, in collaboration with other UN and government agencies, provided services to the returnees such as health and **temperature screening**, provision of hygiene materials, and awareness on physical distancing. Most returnees either moved to visit their families fleeing from insecurity, to search jobs, or to access better services in camps across the border. The returnees included children and other people at risk, most of whom had no legal documents. **No case of refoulement** was reported.

- UNHCR recorded **3,214 new internally displaced people** (IDPs): 2,397 in Borno State and 817 in Adamawa State. Borno State recorded the highest number of **displacements**, including many secondary displacements, **due to the ongoing camp closure and relocation programme** of the government.
- UNHCR and the Nigerian Immigration Service, through its continuous monitoring and observation of **spontaneous returns of Nigerian refugees** from neighbouring Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, registered **4,147 individuals** (1,155 households) in a few local councils in Borno State. The returnees included people with specific needs such as breast feeding and lactating women, female-headed households, people with serious medical conditions, and people living with disabilities. They returned mainly because they received news that peace had returned. Refugee returnees reported that they had not been registered for food distribution in the country of asylum and continued to face **major challenges such as lack of food**.
- On 10 January 2022, **Borno State Government closed Stadium IDP camp**, which was hosting **17,287 individuals** (3,492 households), bringing the number of camps closed in Maiduguri to six. The affected IDPs had been given a 10-days notice to vacate the camp. The closure of camps is part of the Borno Government's plan to relocate the estimated 60,074 IDPs (11,590 households) in the Maiduguri Metro Council (MMC) to their local councils of origin by December 2021. Five camps, including Dalori 1, Dalori 2, Gubio Road, Muna El-Badawee, and El-Miskin camps, are pending closure. To respond to this emerging need, **UNHCR has developed an Urban IDP Outreach Programme** with the objective of providing IDPs **access to protection**, solutions, available **services** and assistance **on equal footing with host communities**.
- The newly displaced population in the North-East was facing serious **food shortages**. The situation deteriorated further by the decreasing humanitarian assistance and the **directive by the Borno State Government to humanitarian actors not to give food assistance to the recently returned IDPs**, resulting in acute food insecurity and negative coping behaviours. Theft of food and non-food items such as rice, cooking oil, clothes, pots, plates, and other kitchen utensils, as well as the emergence of robbery targeting point of sale operators, have been reported in Maiduguri.
- In **Adamawa State**, **gunmen continue to target refugee and IDP returnee communities** for abduction and ransom, while in **Yobe State**, the increasing activities of NSAG have continued to instill fear in members of return communities, triggering **occasional displacements**. Because of their unplanned arrivals, the returnees could not access humanitarian assistance, and also continue to stretch the existing limited resources.

**PROTECTION****Protection Sector Coordination**

Under UNHCR lead, the Protection Sector Working Group held camp-based coordination meetings in various places in Borno and Adamawa States, with UNHCR and the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in both States as co-chairs. The meetings were attended by members of government, UN agencies, INGOs, and NGOs. In Adamawa State, participants discussed major issues like the eviction of displaced people from an IDP settlement by their landlords. The Adamawa State Ministry of Lands and Survey requested the affected population to submit letters of interest to be relocated to another earmarked place. To avoid the recurring eviction notice by the landowners, UNHCR has come up with a local integration project in one of the local councils.

PROTECTION BY PRESENCE, PROTECTION MONITORING

- UNHCR visited and **monitored the protection** and **human rights** situations of **39,225 IDPs, IDP and refugee returnees**, and host community members at the borders, in Borno State with

63 per cent women and children. A total of 974 Key Informant Interviews were conducted using the Protection Monitoring Tool. Despite the prevailing security challenges and COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR and its partners maintained presence in the field to deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection services to reduce risks and address the needs of different groups. UNHCR continues playing the lead role of coordinating the Protection and Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) / Shelter / Non-Food Items Sectors in the BAY States.

- UNHCR and partners reached 10,215 individual IDPs, IDP returnees, and refugee returnees (1,888 displaced Households) through **registration and vulnerability screening**, to identify people at heightened risks. The screening was conducted in nine local councils in Borno State, eight in Adamawa, and two in Yobe. While the study revealed that **most of the vulnerable populations with specific needs were women, children, and elderly people** it also identified the prevalence of need for continuous lifesaving assistance to this most vulnerable group.
- A total of 1,089 IDPs, IDP returnees, refugee returnees, and host community members accessed UNHCR's 30 **Protection Desks** in ten local councils in Borno State for various needs such as medical services, lack of access to services, and seeking dispute resolution as well as for vulnerability screening, legal issues, and **access to justice**, filing complaints about denial of resources or opportunities, child labour, hawking, and begging, as well as violation of human rights. UNHCR referred cases to specialized service providers and partners for appropriate interventions.
- Disputes were addressed through the community mechanisms for dispute resolution. According to the affected population and stakeholders, **Protection Desks remain the most preferred place to lodge complaints**. The organisation also distributed English, Hausa, and Kanuri versions of information communication materials on protection services, flood safety, and COVID-19. Overall, 459 complaints and feedbacks were received at CCCM community Help Desks in Borno and Adamawa States.
- **UNHCR visited 74 detention and correctional facilities** hosting 104 individuals, including women, in Borno and Adamawa States. The detainees (both IDPs and community members) were mainly suspected of petty theft. Following the visits that were conducted under strict COVID-19 guidelines, the identified cases were scheduled to be referred to the appropriate courts for litigation. UNHCR also provided cleaning materials to various detention facilities to improve hygiene.
- The Borno State Government reopened and eased restriction measures on some major roads, that had been closed hitherto. This move greatly **enhanced freedom of movement, access to livelihoods, and the search for durable solutions**. Unfortunately, most roadsides remain uncleared of **IEDs** planted by NSAG members which pose a **great danger** to affected populations, including civilian casualties, bodily harm, and destruction of property.
- Shelters in some camps burned down completely by frequent **fire outbreaks**, thereby creating huge gaps in the provision of and access to adequate shelter. Therefore, UNHCR and partners are **raising fire safety awareness**.
- In Adamawa State, **kidnapping for ransom** and criminal activities continued to pose a threat to the affected populations. NSAG members also attacked communities located at the fringes of Sambisa Forest, the stronghold of NSAG. This unstable security environment has caused panic and apprehension amongst the civilian populations. Criminality was on the rise as children continued to experience molestation, defilement, and other forms of Gender Based Violence (GBV). It is worrisome that many **young boys under the age of 13 are being sexually abused** especially in parts of Adamawa State where significant number of IDPs and spontaneous refugee returnees live.

Protection Response

- UNHCR and its partners **reached 24,672 individuals** in the BAY States through raising awareness and sensitising them **on gender-based violence prevention and risk mitigation**. Other thematic issues covered included human rights and citizens' responsibilities, dangers of child marriage, and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, personal hygiene, nutrition, referral pathways, cholera prevention, and environmental sanitation.
- UNHCR and its partners referred 3,493 cases of persons with specific needs for various specialized protection services in the BAY States. Most of them were **referred for medical care, food assistance, and shelter support**. There were, however, critical gaps a, such as slow response and bureaucratic challenges faced by partners.
- In Borno State, UNHCR's Child Protection partner Caritas Nigeria informed community leaders about the new **Child Protection Law enacted recently by the State Government**. They discussed ways of identifying community-based mechanisms to strengthen child protection referral systems given the increasing IDP influxes and consequent reduction in food ration in some parts of the State. Meanwhile, in Adamawa and Yobe States, discussions centred on the various roles of the community leaders and government officials in reducing the risks of GBV in their communities and the need for children to be in school.
- Within the **Access to Justice** and Legal Representation framework, UNHCR and its partner Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) received 13 cases from individuals, most of them related to matrimonial issues for hearing at the Sharia Mobile Court in the Borno State capital Maiduguri. In Adamawa State, NBA also received a rape case, the perpetrator was arrested and remains in police custody. Seven other cases are being heard in various courts in the State, with NBA legal representation. Meanwhile, a Shariah court sitting at the Mobile Court in Maiduguri passed a judgment separating a couple involved in a matrimonial dispute. According to the court, separation was the only option to prevent further violence. Other cases before the Mobile Court in Maiduguri are matrimonial cases involving **women who want to remarry following their prolonged separation from their husbands** because of the crisis.
- In Adamawa State, a joint UNHCR and Caritas Nigeria Protection team conducted community mobilization targeting various communities for local reintegration. In addition, with the support of the Adamawa State Emergency Management Agency (ADSEMA) and local authorities, **two pieces of land have been identified for the implementation of the durable solution and integration project** where a shelter project will soon commence. I UNHCR, ADSEMA, and representatives of the local authorities already held a series of meetings to draft the land agreement document.
- With the **continuous surge of infections with the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus**, UNHCR and partners **reached 16,462 IDPs, IDP returnees, refugee returnees, and host community members** with 359 COVID-19 awareness sessions and border monitoring

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