

Situational Context

The Government's decision to intensify its military campaign against members of the pro-independent movement in Southern Cameroon is creating more population movement towards Nigeria in search of international protection. Civilians have allegedly been killed by security forces while the government has accused suspected separatists of being responsible for the death of more than 10 security personnel since the crisis intensified following the unilateral declaration of independence on October 1, 2017.

New Arrivals

More Cameroonians are arriving in Cross River, Taraba and Benue states in Nigeria with the main receiving communities recorded as Amana, Akamkpa, Agbokim, Ikom/Ajassor and Boki (Cross Riverstate) and Abande (Benue state). Due to the closure of official border entry points in those states, the asylum seekers continue to use informal crossing points. As a result, the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) says monitoring the arrivals and recording them remain a challenge. Those arriving are coming from Akwaya, Otu, Eyumojock, Nsan, Dadi & Bodam in Cameroon's South-West Anglophone region. There are several accounts by asylum seekers as reasons for their flight including fear of generalised persecution because they are Anglophone Cameroonians, and heavy military and police deployments by government to prevent infiltration by militants of the independent movement in the English-speaking Cameroon regions.

Response & Advocacy Efforts

By 24 January, UNHCR and its main government counterpart, the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) had biometrically registered **11,651** asylum seekers in Cross River, Benue and Taraba States. UNHCR and partners have provided Protection and life-saving needs such as food, non-food items (NFIs), health and water and sanitation facilities to most of those registered so far, and for those yet to receive assistance, the teams on the ground are working to extend their services to the areas concerned. Some of the areas where food and NFIs have been provided include Utanga, Amana, Up-Ranch, Ikom, Agbokim Waterfalls, Ajassor and Danare-1 in Cross River state. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) International has provided support in water and sanitation in Cross River state. UNHCR has also distributed food and NFIs in Taraba State while for those arriving in Benue State, the government there through the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) is providing food and other assistance. The asylum seekers are utilizing existing healthcare facilities with the host communities even though this has brought further pressure on local resources UNHCR hopes additional resources can be made available to enable it respond adequately to the needs.

To ensure the proper management of the influx in line with international humanitarian principles, UNHCR is continuing its advocacy with Nigerian authorities to safeguard the rights of those fleeing the crisis and facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance in safety and dignity. UNHCR has negotiated the release of some asylum seekers arrested by Nigerian authorities. For others still in detention, including the leadership of the pro-independence group, the government has agreed to grant UNHCR access for the determination of their status. The government has further reassured UNHCR that those detained would not be returned to Cameroon.

UNHCR also remains concerned by the plight of thousands of vulnerable children who neither have means to survive nor lack education opportunities on arrival. Unaccompanied and separated minors are among children that make up more than half of asylum seekers registered so far, and with more people yet to be registered, the number is likely to increase. UNHCR and its partners are working together to assist these children, but limited resources and lack of access to some receiving communities remain key functional challenges impacting the capacity of the agency to respond adequately.

In addition to routine field missions, UNHCR is stepping up efforts to establish permanent office presence in Calabar and in two other locations closer to proposed sites of temporary camps as agreed with the Government of Nigeria. The measure is intended to move asylum seekers away from the border in line with international protection principles. Meanwhile, on 19 January, UNHCR donated a vehicle to NCFRMI to strengthen its logistics capacity in Cross River State, and to enable the agency effectively respond to the Cameroon influx.

Coordination

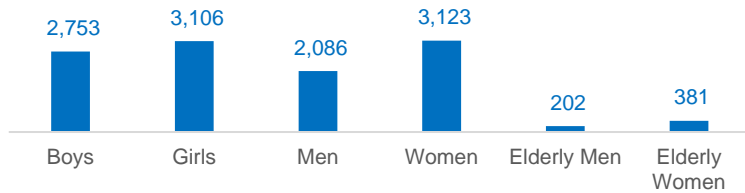
During a coordination meeting in Calabar, Cross River State on 19 January, UNHCR and partners agreed to trigger the Cameroon Refugee Contingency Plan after the number of new arrivals registered passed the 10,000 mark, which constitutes 25 percent of estimated 40,000 planned figure. The agencies will also undertake a joint-assessment exercise this February to inform their coordinated approach in the humanitarian response in Cross River, Benue and Taraba States.

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 **11,651** REGISTERED ASYLUM SEEKERS FROM CAMEROON

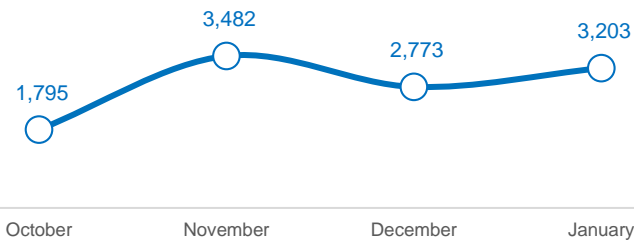
ASYLUM SEEKERS BY AGE AND GENDER



AGE AND GENDER BREAKDOWN OF ASYLUM SEEKERS PER LGA

LGAs	Boys	Girls	Men	Women	Elderly Men	Elderly Women	Total
Boki	591	644	545	647	43	70	2,540
Etung	423	402	642	409	25	35	1,936
Ikom	143	178	201	297	7	13	839
Obanliku	1,596	1,878	698	1,769	127	263	6,331
Odukpani	-	4	-	1	-	-	5

REGISTERED ASYLUM SEEKERS PER WEEK



METHODOLOGY

UNHCR in collaboration with the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs (NCFRMI) launched a registration exercise for newly arrived Cameroonian asylum seekers in Cross Rivers State. The information helps identify vulnerabilities among the asylum seekers population as well as baseline data in order to plan and coordinate the humanitarian response.

