URBAN REFUGEES IN NIGERIA
May 2023 (Issue 2)

Nigeria is a sanctuary for 93,130 refugees and asylum seekers, 6,842 of whom reside in urban regions such as Lagos, Ijebu, Abuja, Kano, and other states. A fresh wave of asylum seekers from Cameroon, currently undergoing individual registration, increases this count, with an additional 2,530 individuals having been registered in Adamawa State's Mubi South and North Local government Areas (LGAs) as of 27th May 2023.

Most of the Cameroonian refugees are individually recognised by the Nigerian Government following refugee status determination. The urban refugee population, meanwhile, comprises asylum seekers from 43 different countries, with the majority originating from nations such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Syria, Turkey, and Mali, amongst others.

With the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Nigerian authorities register the refugees and assess their claims for asylum. Notwithstanding a myriad of challenges, Nigeria has consistently proven its generosity and compassion. For decades, it has opened its borders and provided a safe haven to thousands of asylum seekers and refugees, manifesting a remarkable commitment to international humanitarian principles.

UNHCR Nigeria Representative met with six Cameroonian refugees who were awarded the UNICORE University Corridors Scholarship. © UNHCR/Gabriel Adeyemo.
Operational Highlights

PROTECTION

Access to Asylum

- Between October 2022 and April 2023, 220 new applications for asylum were received (152 from Lagos and 68 from Abuja), primarily from individuals from the Syrian Arab Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Cameroon. In this period, authorities issued 305 asylum certificates, 42 refugee identity cards, and 10 Conventional Travel Documents (CTD), facilitating access to essential services and enhancing freedom of movement for these individuals in Nigeria.

- Notification letters of the Eligibility Committee (EC) decision of November 2022 on asylum applications were disseminated to asylum-seekers. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted for 30 of the 102 asylum applications received in 2022. EC session is yet to be convened in 2023 due to the pending reconstitution of the committee by the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs (NCFRMI). The new National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) Act, passed into law in February 2023, expands the membership of the EC from three to seven members, and confirmation of the agency representative is still ongoing.

- UNHCR and NCFRMI held a meeting with the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) Identity for Development (ID4D) project on 8th March to deliberate on the implementation of the ID4D project and how this would ensure inclusive enrolment of refugees for the National Identity Number (NIN). It was agreed that NCFRMI should activate its licence and start the enrolment of refugees. As part of quality control measures, NIMC also committed to supporting data modification for already enrolled refugees at no cost.

General Protection

- The National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) conducted a phased verification exercise from 21st - 23rd December 2022. This initial phase in Abuja led to the verification of 210 individuals. A subsequent exercise in Lagos, conducted between 17th – 24th January 2023, saw the verification and updating of records for 1,087 individuals (382 children, 291 women, and 414 men). This verification exercise, part of a nationwide effort for all refugees and asylum seekers, is pivotal for maintaining accurate data on forcibly displaced persons and thus facilitating efficient protection and solutions assistance.

- Between the 1st and 16th of April 2023, UNHCR's registration and case management system (ProGres V4) was temporarily unavailable due to a migration exercise to a cloud-based platform. While registration and verification activities were paused during this period, the time was used productively to train NCFRMI staff in Lagos and Abuja on the new platform. This training, encompassing twenty staff members (9 Lagos and 12 Abuja), is crucial to ensuring optimum system utilisation. More training sessions are forthcoming to ensure seamless data management.

- In April 2023, a series of Town Hall meetings were held with 241 asylum seekers and refugees in Ijebu Ode, Ikorodu, and Lagos Island. These meetings offered invaluable
information exchange between UNHCR, its partners, refugees and asylum seekers. Topics included asylum processing, durable solutions (complimentary pathways), education, livelihoods, documentation (including National Identification Number enrolment), and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse. These interactions enhance trust, transparency, and service provision for forcibly displaced persons.

- On 4th April 2023, UNHCR held a strategic meeting with NCFRMI in Lagos to review pending asylum claims. So far, in 2023, 113 new asylum applications have been lodged. Ten applicants from Cameroon were interviewed to ascertain their origin from crisis-affected regions in Cameroon, after which Temporary Protection Status was granted to them in accordance with the November 2022 Eligibility Committee (EC) recommendations. Further EC sittings for Refugee Status Determination for the first half of 2023 are currently delayed pending the nomination of the addition of new members as guided by the new NCFRMI 2022 Act.

- In a collaborative effort, UNHCR and NCFRMI Protection resolved the cases of 25 individuals who had previously sought asylum in other countries before coming to Nigeria. By conducting joint interviews in Abuja, they verified the unique status of these individuals, prompting the closure of their prior records in those other countries, such as Togo, Pakistan, and Lebanon. The streamlined information now solely resides in the Nigerian database, ensuring a more efficient provision of assistance and protection for these individuals.

Law and Policy Developments

- The NCFRMI Act of 2022, ratified by Nigeria and receiving presidential assent on 27th January, represents a pivotal step in solidifying the country’s commitment to international and regional refugee protection instruments. The Act, which replaces the previous legislation from 2004, maintains the objective of implementing all relevant treaties and conventions for the protection of refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, and internally displaced persons. It increases the size of the Eligibility Committee for reviewing refugee status and brings additional stakeholders into the process, enhancing the comprehensiveness and fairness of the procedures. Furthermore, the Act facilitates the coordination of migration through the establishment of a National Consultative Committee on Migration and mandates the implementation of assistance programs for Internally displaced persons. The Act also serves as a legal foundation for the Statelessness Determination Standard Operating Procedures, thereby providing a structured approach to address statelessness in Nigeria.

- On 28th March 2023, a collaborative briefing was held with partners, including the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons NAPTIP, NCFRMI, UN Agencies, civil society actors, and members of the Lagos State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking. The briefing aimed to review protection documents and integrate trafficking in persons (TiP) indicators/questions. This marked an important step in establishing and strengthening mechanisms to screen and refer trafficking victims among asylum-seekers and refugees in Lagos for necessary support.

- To further enhance refugee reception procedures, a training program was conducted for security personnel stationed at the UNHCR compound in Abuja on 16th and 17th March, 2023. The training aimed to familiarise security staff with protection standards, appropriate conduct towards refugees and clients, and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse. Similar programs are planned for the security guards at the Lagos office, contributing to an environment conducive to refugee protection.
A thematic discussion was held on 26th and 27th April 2023 on nationality screening in the registration and adjudication of refugee status. It was an opportunity for relevant officers to understand the criteria for determining Nigerian nationality and to discuss applicants with dual or multiple nationalities. This collaborative effort resulted in a draft guidance note on nationality screening, an important tool for ensuring fair and accurate refugee status determination. Experts from the Citizenship Department in the Ministry of Interior, the Nigerian Immigrations Service and a Constitutional lawyer participated in the event.

Facilitated Convention Travel Documents

The Nigerian Government has taken notable strides to facilitate the mobility of refugees seeking to utilise available complementary pathways. This was accomplished through a communication issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to all foreign missions in Nigeria in October 2022, reinforcing the validity of Refugee Convention Travel Documents (CTDs) to refugees in the country. This crucial step was instrumental in overcoming the non-recognition of CTDs by Embassies, which previously made the process of pursuing complementary pathways opportunities practically unachievable. This progress has allowed for the issuance of 732 biometric Convention Travel Documents to refugees by the Nigerian Immigration Service, marking a significant milestone in refugee protection in Nigeria.

In the interest of enhancing coordination around the issuance of the CTDs to refugees, UNHCR undertook an advocacy visit to the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) Headquarters on 14th March 2023. The meeting with the Assistant Comptroller General of Immigration led to agreements on reducing the processing period for the issuance of the CTD, with a specific focus on fast-tracking priority applications. This collaboration is a significant stride in accelerating the processing of travel documents for refugees, thus expediting their access to vital opportunities for a safer future. Further areas of potential partnership were also identified, including training for NIS officers, pointing to a promising trajectory of continued cooperation.

Statelessness

On 19th January 2023, UNHCR took part in the first-ever High-Level Steering Committee (HLSC) meeting aimed at eradicating statelessness in Nigeria. This crucial assembly, presided over by the Minister of Interior, discussed and agreed upon the action plan for implementing the National Action Plan to Eradicate Statelessness in Nigeria (NAP). The HLSC, inaugurated in September 2022, is an important framework through which significant progress in combating statelessness is expected to be achieved. The assembly marked a crucial moment in the nation’s concerted effort to address statelessness, setting April 2023 as the deadline for presenting the first interim implementation report. As a result, agencies are now working towards accelerated implementation in anticipation of the 2024 conclusion of the #IBelong campaign.

A representative from Nigeria’s Ministry of Interior attended a regional meeting on statelessness in Senegal from 27th – 30th March 2023. This meeting provided an opportunity to finalise and adopt the draft regional law on procedures for determining statelessness and to review the progress made on pledges committed during the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness. This event allowed Nigeria to present its advancements in drafting and validating the statelessness status determination procedures. By the close of 2022, Nigeria had established a legal basis for operationalising statelessness status determination by incorporating the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons into the amended 2022 NCFRMI Act. Furthermore, a standard operating
procedure for statelessness status determination, endorsed by multiple stakeholders in December 2022, is set to be implemented, strengthening the national infrastructure for addressing statelessness.

EDUCATION

UNHCR, in conjunction with Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), conducted a preselection process for the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative scholarship (DAFI) in October 2022. From the pool of 175 applicants, 104 were preselected for interviews which took place both virtually and in person across several locations in November 2022. Following these processes, 40 refugees, equally balanced in gender, were granted the DAFI scholarships. The DAFI scholarship programme aims to help refugees achieve their academic goals by providing them with financial assistance for their tertiary education.

In November, the Italian Embassy in Nigeria approved study visas for nine refugees living in Nigeria. Seven were recipients of the University Corridors for Refugees (UNICORE) 4.0 scholarship, and two were granted the Progetto Mediterraneo scholarship. Both these scholarships facilitate refugees’ access to higher education in Italy. The UNICORE 4.0 project is supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Caritas Italia, Diaconia Valdese, Centro Astalli, UNHCR and other partners. While the Progetto Mediterraneo is a scholarship programme for refugees and disadvantaged students from the Mediterranean region. They both provide vital educational lifelines, enabling refugees to pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees and ultimately enhancing their prospects for a sustainable future.

Nigeria has been chosen as one of seven departure countries for the 2023 UNICORE 5th edition Scholarship, which allows refugee graduates to pursue master's degree programmes in Italy. Some 33 universities are participating, with 31 offering a total of 59 scholarships and 2 providing pre-departure Italian classes. The call for applications was open from 3rd April to 19th May 2023, and refugees in Nigeria were informed via diverse communication channels.

The call for applications for the EU-Passworld (EUPW) scholarship, an important opportunity to pursue a Master's degree programme at the University of Galway, was officially opened from 9th February to 17th March 2023. This information was distributed to refugees through various information dissemination and feedback channels. Of the twelve refugee applicants in Nigeria, three refugees from Cameroon were shortlisted and subsequently participated in interviews on 4th May 2023. The EUPW scholarship plays a crucial role in fostering the academic growth of refugees, paving the way for higher education that can enhance their prospects for employment, foster self-reliance, and promote a more stable and prosperous future.

On 30th March 2023, UNHCR and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) met in Abuja to discuss the pressing need for additional support in refugee education, specifically targeting rural and urban refugees. The discussions focused on the importance of reinforcing the national education system as a vehicle to improve the inclusion of refugees.
In collaboration with JDPC, UNHCR has supported refugees undergoing vocational skills training in tailoring, computer studies, and construction across various locations in Lagos state. Regular site visits confirm consistent class attendance and engagement by the refugees. From October 2022 to April 2023, transport allowances were provided to 43 refugees involved in these trainings, ensuring uninterrupted participation.

Following advocacy for refugee inclusion, eHealth Africa (eHA) extended a call for refugees in Abuja and Kano to apply for the eHA 2023 Internship Program Recruitment. eHA designs and implements data-driven solutions and technologies to improve health systems for and with local communities. The call for applications was disseminated to refugees using various information dissemination and feedback platforms.

To further improve access to training opportunities, meetings were held with the Lagos State Employability Trust Fund (LSETF) and the Lagos State Ministry of Women Affairs and Poverty Alleviation on 7th March 2023. These discussions aimed to enable refugees’ enrolment in training programs across various Lagos LGAs (Adeniji, Surulere, and Alimosho) in 2023. A follow-up engagement with LSETF in April 2023 resulted in the procurement of an application form link for LSETF’s training programs, which was subsequently disseminated to refugees via a town hall meeting and various WhatsApp groups. These initiatives reaffirm JDPC and UNHCR’s commitment to expanding refugees’ access to local training and employment opportunities, fostering their self-reliance and integration.

MIXED MOVEMENT AND ADVOCACY AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING

On February 2nd 2023, UNHCR and NAPTIP unveiled a short anti-trafficking film titled “Dangerous Hope,” produced by UNHCR High-Profile Supporter, actress, and filmmaker Judith Audu. The premiere was graced by significant dignitaries, including the Vice President of Nigeria and the Ministers for Women’s Affairs, Social Development, and Humanitarian Affairs. This event marked the beginning of a broader initiative aiming to raise awareness about human trafficking in forced displacement situations and to equip viewers with knowledge and tools to assist survivors in reclaiming their lives. Attendees encompassed a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including diplomats, government agencies, UN colleagues, NGOs, CSOs, and the media.

A subsequent screening of “Dangerous Hope” took place on April 18th, 2023, at McCrystal Cinemas in Ijebu-Ode and reached a diverse audience, including refugees, asylum-seekers, and host community members. After the film, an interactive panel discussion facilitated a deeper understanding of the issues presented. With further screenings planned in Lagos and other locations, this initiative continues to extend its reach and impact.

Anti-human trafficking club meetings were held in 6 schools across 3 LGAs (Egor, Ikpoba- okha and Uhunmode) in Edo state, 2 LGAs (Ikom LGA and Boki LGA) in Cross River state. The meetings are a platform to discuss the misinformation and deception tactics of traffickers and gain an understanding of the referral pathways for reporting suspected cases of trafficking.

Anti-Human Trafficking awareness-raising campaigns and school sensitisations across 10 schools in 2 LGAs of Edo State (Ovia North-East and Uhunmode). A total of 905 students (438 males and 467 females) were reached during the awareness and
sensitisation exercise. Other public campaign activities carried out include 15 door-to-door sensitisation in selected communities in Uhunmwode, Egor and Ikpoba Okha LGAs, as well as Market and Motor Park sensitisation in selected communities in Ovia Northeast, Owan East and Etsako West LGAs.

- A focused group discussion with artisan groups in Egor LGA of Edo state was conducted. The **focused group discussion was aimed at understanding how trafficking occurs in the communities**, factors promoting trafficking in the communities and community action to mitigate the risk of trafficking in the communities. Nine community dialogue meetings were held in nine schools across Ogoja and Ikom LGAs, to continue awareness creation on the risks and dangers of human trafficking and irregular migration in Cross River State. **2,463 students (1,023 males and 440 females) were reached during the meetings.** Similar Community Dialogue meetings were held in Adagom 1, Adagom 3 and Ukende refugee settlements, respectively. **Three Anti-Human Trafficking Community Watch Group meetings were conducted in Ogoja LGA (Adagom 1 refugee settlement and Ogboja-Ishiborri host community)**

- UNHCR, through its partner, Caritas Nigeria, **facilitated various anti-Human Trafficking (AHT) public awareness and sensitisation activities reaching at least 127 persons in ten communities across five local government areas.** Some of the messaging explained the **risk of human trafficking for young girls, lured into travelling abroad “free of charge” for greener pastures, only for them to be forced into prostitution or domestic servitude on arrival at the destination country**, with their “agents” forcefully collecting all or most of their earnings as “payback” for their travel expenses.

### Working in partnership

Together with the Government of Nigeria, UNHCR ensures international protection and delivery of multi-sectoral assistance to urban refugees. The following partners implement specific sector activities: National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI), Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), and the Nigeria Red Cross Society (NRCS).

### Funding Situation

UNHCR extends its sincere gratitude for the unwavering financial support from global donors and those directly contributing to the Nigeria Operation. The comprehensive budget for the operation in 2023 is set at $98.2 million. However, by the end of the reporting period, we have only reached 14% of this target, underscoring the urgent need for increased support to meet our commitment to those in need.
FUNDING UPDATE | 2023

$98.2 million
UNHCR’s financial requirements 2023

14% funded

NIGERIA
as of 23 May 2023

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Methodology: Unmarked funding is allocated and reallocated multiple times during the year to allow UNHCR to fund prioritized activities. This funding update includes an indicative allocation of funds so as to accurately represent the resources available for the country. The contributions earmarked for Nigeria shown above are combined with an indicative allocation of the softly earmarked and unmarked contributions listed below. This allocation respects different levels of earmarking. Adjustments relate to programme support costs and carry-over.

OTHER SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS

United States of America 7.2 million | Canada 3.9 million | Finland 3.1 million | Private donors Australia 3 million
France | Isle of Man | Luxembourg | Private donors

UNMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS

Sweden 69 million | Norway 63.1 million | Denmark 35.6 million | Netherlands 34.1 million | France 26.7 million | Private donors Spain 24.1 million
Germany 23.1 million | Switzerland 18.9 million | Private donors Japan 13.3 million | Private donors Republic of Korea 12.5 million
Belgium 11.9 million | Ireland 11.9 million

Notes:
1. The financial requirements for Nigeria include requirements for the operation’s regular programme and the Western and Central Mediterranean.
2. The percentage funded (54%) and total funding amount ($13,990,122) are indicative based on the methodology described above. This leaves an indicative funding gap of $94,389,253 representing 36% of the financial requirements.
3. Contributions to Nigeria are shown by the earmarking modality as defined in the Grand bargain.
4. Contributions from the region or sub-region, or to a related situation or theme, the other softly earmarked contributions listed are those which can potentially be used for Nigeria. Where a donor has contributed $2 million or more, the total amount of the contribution is shown.
5. Contributions without restrictions on its use, unmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk. Where a donor has contributed $10 million or more, the total amount of the contribution is shown.

More Information

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