

UNHCR Cameroon Refugee Response

December 2023

Cameroon is confronting a **multi-faceted humanitarian and protection crisis** caused by conflict, inter-communal violence, and the effects of climate change.

Over **two million people** have fled their homes in search of safety and security in Cameroon, including nearly **half a million refugees**.

UNHCR works to **protect and assist** forcibly displaced throughout the country, ensuring **access to basic services and** searching for **durable solutions**.

FORCIBLY DISPLACED PERSONS: 2.2 MILLION

488,285

Refugees and Asylum seekers in Cameroon*

Cameroon : Statistiques des personnes déplacées de force (décembre 2023) ; Gouvernement du Cameroun avec le support du HCR –2023

1.08 million

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) **

*** IOM, OCHA Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) août 2023, Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) août 2023]*

659,000

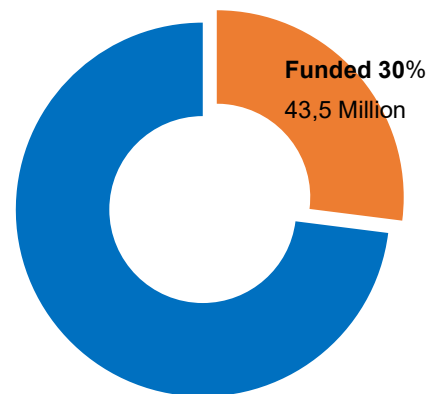
IDP returnees **

*** IOM, OCHA Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Août 2023, Multi-Sectorial Needs Assessment (MSNA) août 2023]*

FUNDING (FROM 1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2023)

USD 142.8 M

requested for the Cameroon Multi Country Office (MCO)



UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff: 257 Staff

156 National Staff

56 International Staff

45 Affiliated Workforce

Offices:

01 Branch Office in Yaoundé

03 Sub Office: Bertoua, Maroua, and Douala

03 Field Office: Bamenda, Kousseri and Meiganga

01 Field Unit: Batouri

01 Hub: Touboro



Maimouna Hamadou is part of a group of 40 people (38 refugees and two Cameroonians) supported by UNHCR to farm cassava, a primary staple food, on 10 hectares of land in Borgop, Adamawa Region.

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Working with Partners

UNHCR works closely with wide range of partners including key Government ministries and decentralized entities, UN agencies, NGOs, civil society, private sector, the refugee community, donors and other humanitarian and development actors to respond to the most pressing needs of refugees and others displaced persons across the country.

Government partners: UNHCR works in collaboration with the following ministries: In addition to reinforcing the capacities of the Secretariat Technique (Government counterpart) and working with the National Institute of Statistics in handling refugee matters, UNHCR collaborates with the following ministries: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX), the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS), the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT), the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB), the Ministry of Defense (MINDEF), the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family (MINPROFF), the Ministry of Justice (MINJUSTICE), the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER), Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFEF), Ministry of environment Protection (MINEP), Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development (MINDDEVEL), the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and other government institutions.

UN sister-Agencies: WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNWOMEN, UNDP, ILO, UNOCHA, FAO, IOM, and WHO.

Twelve implementing INGO and NGO partners:

International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs): African Humanitarian Action (AHA), African Initiatives for Relief and Development (AIRD); Développement Equité Durabilité et Innovation (DEDI), International Medical Corps (IMC), Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), INTERSOS, and Plan International (Plan).

National Non-Governmental Organisations (NNGOs): Action Citoyenne pour le Developpement Communautaire (ACDC), Bihndumlem Humanitarian Association of Peace and hope (BIHAPH), Centre pour la Promotion de la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (CPDH), Research and Advocacy for Gender Justice (RAGJ), Public Concern (PC), Food security (SAHELI) and National Commission for refugees (CNR).

Main Achievements

Protect:

Refugee Status Determination (RSD): The Government of Cameroon have continued to facilitate access to effective RSD procedure for those seeking international protection, including those in mixed migration movements thanks to the quality trainings provided by UNHCR. For instance, the support provided by UNHCR to the government's "Secretariat Technique", enabled 6,071 individuals to apply for asylum and to have access to procedures out of 6,397 individuals who contacted UNHCR for registration in Yaounde and Douala.

Protection Monitoring: UNHCR is implementing the Project 21 Protection Monitoring Systems to collect and examine protection-related information across Cameroon's various regions. Insecurity and violence due to conflict between State Security Forces and non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and banditry have continued to disrupt daily activities in UNHCR areas of operation in Cameroon. In the Far North, population movement, including to the Minawao camp, has been observed as a result of inter-communal conflict and NSAG attacks. Over 1,500 Chadians were displaced to the Touboro district due to intercommunal conflict in the Pao canton bordering Chad.

Emergency preparedness and response: In the Far North, since January 2023, 13,000 refugees have fled renewed non-state armed group attacks at the border town with Nigeria into the Gouroungel Transit Center, seeking protection and assistance. After an initial registration, many have been transferred to the Minawao camp, while nearly 1,500 continue living in overcrowded conditions at the transit center. Most new arrivals had initially fled Northeast Nigeria in 2013 and lived in Cameroonian host communities. Registration and relocation of the Minawao camp is ongoing. Already, the camp has crept past its formally designated site boundaries. Many of the open spaces within the camp have been transformed into new housing sites.

Continuous registration, biometric verification and support: As of December 31, 2023, Cameroon had 488,285 refugees and asylum seekers, an increase of 1,911 from September 2023. The fluctuation is due to UNHCR verification exercise ongoing in the Far North and Eastern facade, with a reduction in number from voluntary repatriations, resettlement and closure of inactive cases. The increase in population is from newly arrived and reactivated cases. UNHCR has strengthened its regulatory frameworks, protection coordination and response,

including access and documentation, child protection, justice support, education, health, WASH, livelihood, and material assistance.

Documentation: More forcibly displaced and stateless persons benefited from international protection in 2023 due to a conducive protection environment witnessed. In this light, 87.5% of refugees and asylum seekers were registered on an individual basis, 77% of children under 5 years of age's births were registered with a civil authority and 60% of forcibly displaced and stateless persons benefited from legally recognized identity documents or credentials. However, with an aim to deliver 220,000 identity cards to refugees, the government only issued 152 refugee identity cards to urban refugees after the pilot project that issued 5,164 identity cards to refugees in the East Region in 2022.

Child protection: Child protection risk got reduced due to the collaboration between UNHCR and partners with the improvement of child protection system through coordinated interventions and strengthening capacities of child protection sub-groups and participation of parents and children. In 2023, a total of 3,343 at-risk refugee children received psychosocial follow-up and other types of support as needed. Out of these children, 264 were assessed according to best interests and 84 decisions were taken by the Best Interest Determination panel (composed of UNHCR, UNICEF, Ministry of Social Affairs/MINAS, Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family/MINPROFF and social partners) to facilitate the implementation of durable solutions.

On International **Day of the African Child** (16 June), UNHCR supported the participation of 8 refugee junior members of parliament (MPs) in the Children's Parliament Session. During the session, the refugee MPs voiced their views on children's issues to the Ministers and Seniors MPs attending.

Communities engagement

Community-based protection mechanisms were strengthened through the engagement of traditional authorities, trained social workers; women support groups, and youth groups in the existing community support structures. Also, the ownership and sustainability were enhanced through the establishment and support of 44 community-based mechanisms which met the needs of hard-to-reach populations and ensure participation of all vulnerable groups in targeted areas. The service registered of 1,355 persons including 57% women. In the Northwest and Southwest, 300 women and girls of cash for start-up kits to start small income-generating activities, vocational training in various fields. Improved community feedbacks were realized through to the establishment and support of 74 community-based complaints, feedback, and response mechanisms, building the capacity of community committee resulting in 65% displaced persons access to safe and effective feedback and response mechanisms.

Prevention and response to gender-based violence: UNHCR contributed to reducing and mitigate the risks of gender-based violence **with the support of IDPs, refugees, host communities, partners and government officials.** . In 2023, 100% of forcibly displaced and stateless persons accessed available GBV services with 27% satisfied with GBV case management services. To enhance the protection environment, the GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS) tools was disseminated using UNHCR database ProGres, by building the capacity of ministry staff in GBVIMS, strengthening coordination, review strategy documents according to the GBV policy, and reinforcing prevention, mitigation, and response.

The community-based established complaints and feedback mechanisms to prevent and end sexual exploitation and abuse support the report of 2,124 GBV incidents reported by refugees in the Far North, Eastern, and Urban setting in 2023. Incidents affected most women - 97% of identified survivors. The most frequent incidents were denial of resources and opportunities of services (41%), physical assault (19%), psychological and emotional violence (16%), rape (15%), forced marriage (5%), and sexual aggression (4%). A range of responses was provided to survivors, including psychosocial support (66%), medical assistance (58%), legal assistance (28%), material assistance (43%), socio-economic support (13%), and safe shelter (17%).

More than 90,000 displaced people, host communities and refugees were reached during awareness-raising campaigns in the East and Far North regions and in urban areas. The themes addressed during group discussions through door-to-door canvassing and public events included the prevention of sexual and psychological aggression, the prevention of GBV and the services available for survivors, the consequences of forced marriages, sexual exploitation and its prevention, parental responsibility in the prevention of GBV, the empowerment of women and girls as a means of combating GBV, the role of the community in the fight against sexual aggression: recognizing and denouncing sexual exploitation within the community. This phenomenon, which is rooted in cultures and practices, has seen a slight improvement in the number of cases reported, with an increase of 37% compared to last year. Men are also becoming increasingly involved in GBV prevention and mitigation activities through programs such as the *Ecole des Maris*.

The updated version of the strategy to fight GBV in forced displacement for 2023 to 2026 has been developed in collaboration with the UNHCR and the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Family. The strategy aims to strengthen GBV programming for the forcibly displaced and establish a foundation to develop specific action plans adapted to the local context for each intervention zone. Already, UNHCR, through its collaboration with the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Family and MINPROFF, UNHCR and partners have referred GBV survivors for psychosocial support and other holistic services such as legal and medical assistance.

With other UN Agency: The Second Chance Education project, in partnership with UNWOMEN, trained 2116 refugee women out of a total of 3,836 women in vocational skills. This enabled them to start income-generating activities and raise the socio-economic level of their families.

Education: In the 2023-2024 school year, over **48,000** refugee children have been enrolled in primary and 4,000 in secondary school, out of the 174,798 children of school age in these two cycles. UNHCR also supports the provision of stipends to 330 teachers and parents-teachers associations. Further, 86 active DAFI scholarship holders for the academic year 2023/2024.

Peaceful coexistence: Together with IOM, UNDP and FAO, UNHCR is implementing a programme to increase stability, return, legal access, and social cohesion in Logone Birni, focusing on restoring peace, justice and livelihoods to ten (10) communities severely impacted by flood and intercommunal conflict.

Prevention of Statelessness: A workshop on statelessness was held in Douala on 5-6 October 2023, with attendees from various backgrounds and the regional focal point on statelessness from UNHCR Regional Bureau in Dakar. Recommendations were made on legislative, operational, strategic, and structural levels. The most important recommendation was for Cameroon to accelerate its accession to the 1954 and 1961 Conventions on statelessness, preferably by 2024. The Prime Minister's services, along with MINJUSTICE and MINREX, have committed to following up on the necessary actions.

The UNHCR Regional Office for West and Central Africa and the Catholic University of Central Africa hosted the 5th Francophone Course on Statelessness and Nationality Law in Yaoundé from 27 Nov to 1 Dec 2023. The aim was to boost government bodies' capacity to advocate for Cameroon's accession to two conventions on statelessness.

Assist: UNHCR impacted refugees and asylum seekers' lives by providing quality social services in an equitable and sustainable manner through cash transfers or in-kind assistance, psychosocial and material support (non-cash) to mitigate protection vulnerabilities, provision of clean (cooking) fuels and technology, and in-kind assistance.

Providing direct humanitarian assistance to meet basic needs:

Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) modality: UNHCR distributed approximately USD 2.3 million to 78,417 refugees and forcibly displaced persons, representing 11.5% of Cameroon's operation budget. This answer was done in response to their needs including protection, shelter/NFIs, and livelihood. The impact of these actions was reflected in a survey that demonstrates a 40% improvement in food security among beneficiaries, as well as personal stories that highlighted the direct benefits to their lives. By nationalities, beneficiaries were from Central Africa (26%), Nigeria (1%), returnees (8%) urban (13%), IDP and host communities (52%).

Core Relief Items (CRIs) and Shelters were provided to 93,509 people - 33.8% of the targeted affected population (276,620 persons)- in four regions. The CRIs kits compositions included blankets, mats, buckets with lids, solar lamps, mosquito nets, jerry cans, and bar soaps. Other received underwear, flashlights, jugs, bags for packaging. Meanwhile 94,332 people, including 81,388 refugees received bars soap. Finally, 360 committee members, 13 refugees in detention, 27 minors in detention, and 2,464 vulnerable and sick individuals were supported in Kadey, Bouba, and Ngoko areas.

In the Transit Center, Far North, UNHCR sets up 08 Refugee Housing Units for 40 refugees and 963 tents to host 4,800 newly arrived Nigerian refugees. In addition to UNHCR, an additional 1,717 shelters were installed by the partner Public Concern under Shelter Box funding, benefiting 1800 households comprising 9050 individuals.

Health: In 2023, Refugee populations and host communities have access to primary health care in health centers in refugee camps, sites and urban settings. **156,925** health consultations were provided to refugees (81%) and surrounding host communities (19%). Among them, **105,828** were Nigerian refugees, **46,337** Central African refugees from Eastern facade, and **4,760** urban refugees (Yaoundé and Douala). Children under five years old represent **39 %** of consultations. The main diseases were respiratory tract infections

(38,30%), malaria (24,16%) intestinal parasites (7%), diarrheal conditions (6%), skin diseases (4%), ear infections (3%), urinary tract infections (2.5%), eye infections (2%), and acute malnutrition (0.4%).

With UNHCR advocacy and support, **32,555** refugees have been enrolled in the universal health coverage (UHC), which included free treatments to several diseases, namely antiretroviral treatment to HIV-positive refugees, tuberculosis and malaria. UNHCR has signed four collaboration agreements with health structures in Yaounde (Cite Verte Hospital and Central Hospital) and Douala (Laquinitie Hospital and Nylon Hospital) to ensure a cost sharing approach to the care and support of refugees. These agreements are in line with Cameroon commitment to promote the inclusion of refugees in the national health system.

WASH: Real Time Monitoring: A Pilot Project initiated by UNHCR HQ WaSH section has been implemented in Cameroon to remotely monitor, in real time, the quality and operation of drinking water systems and providing quantitative and graphical data.

UNHCR installed 16 autonomous water stations with solar pumping in the Far North and the East regions (seven in Minawao, two in Gado, one in Mbile, one in Firkiliwa (Logone Birni), one in Almagoché (Logone Birni), and one in Lyamagra (fotkol and 1 in Blangafé (Blangoua). The system serves over 45,000 people in refugee settlements in Cameroon.

In 2023, 36% of refugee households got safe access to family latrines demonstrating, a 5% increase from 2022. These actions positively impacted the refugees and host populations lives for they provided protection to girls and women and contributed to the reduction of the risk of GBV or harassment while they fetch water to distant location, it reduced diarrhea and water-borne diseases by promoting good hygiene practices and contributed to improving the nutritional status of children who are among the most vulnerable by making clean water available in adequate quantity and quality, and finally, it reduced the rate of open defecation from 34% to 22%, thereby improving the health and well-being of refugees and host communities.

EMPOWER: Refugees life's got improved as they benefitted from increased opportunities in a green, diversified, transformative, resilient, and inclusive economy that creates decent jobs in productive sectors.

Livelihood: Improved employment opportunities were experience as increased numbers of refugees benefitted from enhanced technical skills, capacity building, mentoring and participation at trade and craft fairs, as well as providing starter kits, boosted their entrepreneurship skills and opportunities. For instance, 18 refugees were admitted to a six-month certificate course on automobile maintenance and repairs offered by Cami Toyota/Toyota Tsusho Corporation. In Far North and Eastern Façade, farmers yield increased, leading to improved quality and quantity of food rations as well as improve income as 1,630 farmers benefitted from access to 988 hectares of land, assets (tools and seeds), and livestock breeding and fish farming. Furthermore, with the MINEFOP support, refugees in the Far North and Eastern façade are effectively running cooperatives. The establishment of a livelihood platform, and partnership with ILO, WFP, FAO, GIZ has contributed to the empowerment and inclusion of refugees.

Green Actions: To mitigate the negative impact of refugees, IDPs, and host community activity on the environment in Far North Cameroon, nearly 500,000 forest, fruit, and nutritional seedlings have been planted by Nigerian refugees and the host community members since 2017, including 44,792 using the cocoon technique. The plant trees cover an area of 977 ha and have an 86 percent tree survival rate. Several high-level missions have been conducted in the area. In November, the UNHCR Goodwill ambassador activist Emtithal Mahmoud visited the area to ascertain these actions.

SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS

UNHCR works with the government and partners to find durable solutions for forcibly displaced populations in Cameroon. Advocacy for refugee inclusion in the country's national system (health, education, and finances) have yielded some positive results, but additional funding is needed for an effective and consistent response.

Local Integration

Following UNHCR advocacy, since 2022, already 5,124 refugees received government-issued refugee identification cards. The document facilitates the protection of refugees' rights (education, employment, movement, and association) in Cameroon, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees and international

conventions on recognizing their rights. Also, UNHCR has issued refugee ID cards to all verified adult refugees in the Far North.

Voluntary repatriation - UNHCR has facilitated the **voluntary repatriation of 3,057 refugees** - 1,319 Nigerian Refugees, 1,730 CAR refugees. 117 urban refugees were included (109 CAR refugees and 08 of other nationalities - Ivorians, Burundian, and Chadian). During the process, UNHCR's role was to ensure that return is voluntary, well-informed, and carried out in safety and dignity.

Returns : In Kousseri, border with Chad, UNHCR received 2,028 Cameroonian who spontaneously returned from Chad in 2023.

- **Resettlement** - In 2023, a total of 1,017 Individual refugee cases (54 percent females) were submitted from Cameroon to various resettlement countries, an increase from the 850 assigned quota. As of December 2023, a total of 923 refugees have departed from Cameroon to various resettlement countries - USA, France, Finland, Norway, Canada, and Australia.

Education pathways - UNHCR Cameroon targets to have refugee students benefit from various scholarship opportunities in countries such as France, Germany and Italy. Currently five refugee students have been accepted under the University Corridor Program in France to pursue their master's degree at the University of Clermont Auvergne and Université Paris 1 Panthéon – Sorbonne. One student has benefited from Daad Scholarship to Saarland University in Germany to study Masters in European and International Law.

Labor mobility – UNHCR Cameroon is encouraging Refugees interested in Skilled Labor Program in areas such as truck drivers, cooks and nursing assistants to register their profiles through two NGOs, Talent Lift and Talent Beyond Boundaries. They match refugees with employment opportunities in third countries.

Strengthen Coordination for Solutions

- Cameroon, with UNHCR support, held two consultations to review its 2019 pledges and formulate new ones for the 2023 Global Refugee Forum. The consultations involved national authorities, civil organizations, and two urban refugees from Central Africa. Cameroon pledged to improve education, health, documentation, environment, and local inclusion for refugees.
- The UN Country Team in Cameroon has pledged to promote refugee inclusion in UN programmes and support the Government's commitments made at the World Refugee Forums of 2019 and 2023.
- **Launch of the Durable Solutions Support Platform in CAR:** Following the Regional Ministerial Conference on Solutions on Forced Displacement in the context of the Central African crisis organized in Yaoundé in 2022, UNHCR, and the Governments of the Central African Republic and Cameroon met in CAR in October 2023. During the meeting, they validated the launch of the coordination platform and underlined roles that Cameroon and ECCAS would play in the [platform](#).
- **A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** has been signed between the UNHCR and the Human Rights Commission of Cameroon for the respect of rights and the implementation of protection instruments, legal assistance to forcibly displaced persons and stateless persons.
- On 17 November 2023, **the digital platform "Opportunities for Refugees"** was launched under the patronage of the Minister for Employment and Vocational Training. It aims to showcase the skills and achievements of refugee graduates in Cameroon and help them find employment opportunities.
- 44 refugee women were trained in entrepreneurship as part of the "Women's Empowerment for Resilient Economies and Peaceful Communities in the East and Adamawa Regions of Cameroon" project by the International Labor Organization (ILO). The project was funded by KOICA.

UNHCR MCO- Law and Policy development: Through UNHCR advocacy and support, the following have been achieved in 2023:

- In Sao tome and Principe: Ratification of four International Conventions (Refugee and statelessness).
- Signature of an MoU between UNHCR and the Central Bureau of Census and Population Studies (BUCREP) guaranteeing the inclusion of refugees in the fourth general population and housing census in Cameroon. It will enhance the identification and socioeconomic integration of refugees and IDPs in Cameroon.
- Signature of an MoU between UNHCR and the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) / the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry/ICRAF for joint interventions in climate actions.

Financial Information

The total recorded contributions for the Cameroon MCO amount to **43.5 million USD**. **UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed directly to this operation**, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

UNHCR Cameroon says thanks to the Government of Cameroon | United States of America | Germany | Sweden | UN Peacebuilding Fund | Canada | Toyota Tsusho Corporation | United Kingdom | UNAIDS | UN Trust Fund for Human Security.

Special thanks to the major donors of softly restricted and regional funds in 2023: **United States of America** 51 million | **Italy** 8.8 million | **Private donors Australia** 7.8 million | **Private donors Germany** 4.2 million | **Australia** 3.9 million | **Canada** 3.9 million | **Private donors USA** 3.2 million | **Finland** 3.1 million | **Private donors United Kingdom** 2.4 million

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted funds in 2023: **Sweden** 69 million | **Norway** 63.1 million | **Private donors Spain** 55.7 million | **Netherlands** 36.3 million | **Denmark** 35.6 million | **Private donors Japan** 34.1 million | **United Kingdom** 28.9 million | **France** 26.7 million | **Private donors Republic of Korea** 23.5 million | **Germany** 23.1 million | **Switzerland** 18.9 million | **Private donors Italy** 13.7 million | **Belgium** 11.9 million | **Ireland** 11.9 million | **Private donors USA** 10.8 million

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