

CHAD

UPDATE ON NIGERIAN REFUGEES

8 September 2014



*Left: Nigerian refugee woman in front of her make-shift shelter in Choua; Right: Nigerian refugees in Choua, August 2014.
Photo: M. Balde/HCR*

CONTEXT

On 30 July 2014, the Government of Chad informed UNHCR of the arrival of some 1,000 Nigerian refugees fleeing persecution by Boko Haram in Borno State, north-eastern Nigeria. Refugees had arrived in Choua in the Lake Chad region, some 4 km from the borders of Nigeria, Niger and Chad. All refugees hail from Kolikolia in Borno State, and travelled about 11 km to reach Choua.

UN Agencies took immediate action to respond to the urgent needs of the newly arrived population. On 2 August, food and NFIs were collected and dispatched to the Lake region for distribution among the newly arrived refugees.

On 3 August, UNHCR and UNICEF conducted a rapid assessment of the newly-arrived refugee population in Choua. This population fled with few possessions and was in need of urgent support; however it did not show signs of malnutrition or grave illness.

It was agreed that the refugees would be relocated to hosting villages in Ngouboua at a safer distance from the border, where protection assistance and access to basic services could be provided. To expedite this exercise, the Government offered to provide HCR with two (2) helicopters for the relocation of this population.

Deployment of emergency staff: Within 3 days, UNHCR had deployed a team of emergency staff from various field offices and composed of protection, community services, security, ICT, registration, logistics, etc. to Bol and Ngouboua in the Lake Region, to meet with regional authorities in Bol, formulate a relocation strategy, set up reception facilities in Ngouboua (including medical screening, registration), evaluate priority needs by sector and assess the need and / or feasibility of establishing a presence in the area. UNHCR's mission was joined by CNARR, WFP, UNICEF, OCHA, CSSI, CRT, IMC and APSELPA.

Nigerian refugees already in the Lake area live among local hosting villages with whom, many have close ethnic, linguistic and cultural links.

Coordination UNHCR began regular meetings at the Ndjamen and Ngouboua levels with government representatives (including relevant line ministries and local authorities), UN agencies,

NGOs, partners, donors, and other stakeholders to share latest developments on the ground, identify partners in the Lake Chad area and NGOs/partners willing to establish and /or expand their presence in the Lake region and to invite the assistance and support of other actors.

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Relocation: Due to the unavailability of helicopters sponsored by the Government, HCR began the relocation of refugees from Choua to Ngouboua on Monday 25 August with the transfer of 179 individuals (51 families) in the first convoy. A second convoy was organized on 1 September and found that there were no refugees in Choua. The reasons for the departure of refugees from Choua are being verified. As the number of refugees appears to be smaller than anticipated, UNHCR has revised its strategy vis-à-vis its operation in the Lake Chad area.

CURRENT SITUATION

Protection

As of 5 September, there are 1,611 Nigerian refugees (in Chad, among these, over 1,000 arrived in 2014). The majority of newly-arrived refugees are composed of women (54%), children (34%). The overall Nigerian refugee population in the Lake Chad region shows a composition of 67.7% children under the age of 18, with 38.5% under the age of 5. The Nigerian refugees include 7.8% Persons with Specific Needs (PSNs), among these 31.4% are single parents and 18.1 % women at risk. Based on the recent registration results, UNHCR and CNARR will provide protection assistance to Nigerian refugees in the Lake Chad region, with particular attention to the vulnerable and those with Persons with Specific Needs (PSNs).

Shelter

Two (2) sites within the community, Koussery and Ecole, were identified in the Nougoua area to accommodate refugees among hosting communities. HCR through CRT, constructed 15 temporary communal shelters accommodating 200 families pending the construction of (individual) family shelters.

Food

At the onset of the influx, WFP provided HEM biscuits. More recently, UNHCR and partner CRT distributed meals to all relocated and previously-registered Nigerian refugees in the Lake region.

Non-Food Items (NFI)

HCR through CRT, distributed NFIs (composed of plastic sheeting, mat, jerry can, blanket, bucket, kitchen set, soap) to all Nigerian refugees. Other partners distributed hygiene kits (UNFPA) and mosquito nets (UNICEF and UNFPA).

Water and Sanitation

HCR partner APSELPA, has constructed 18 showers and 18 latrines. UNICEF, through the Provincial Representative for the Ministry of Water/Hydraulics, provided hygiene kits (including buckets, jerry cans, soap, water-purification tablets) to 87 households

Health

UNICEF and IMC provide health facilities (including mid-wives) in the area from their base in Mao and Bol respectively.

Livelihood

In order to promote self-reliance and livelihoods among the newly-arrived refugees, UNHCR is in negotiation with local authorities to secure access to agricultural land for this population. UNHCR plans to provide community-based assistance to hosting villages with a focus on basic services through strengthening / rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities health and education services. FAO has conducted a mission to Ngouboua to evaluate the agricultural needs of refugees in the area. Findings of the report will be shared.

Needs

In addition to the distribution of emergency relief items, UNHCR and partners plan to strengthen / rehabilitate national programmes that serve both the refugee and the hosting populations in Ngouboua. In keeping with UNHCR's strategy to promote refugee self-reliance, Nigerian refugees will be assisted among hosing villages and communities. Based on a needs assessment to be conducted, UNHCR and partners will provide community-based assistance to both refugees and local communities hosting them to ensure access to potable water, primary education and health.

Challenges

- Lack of access (roads, etc.) which poses enormous logistical challenges vis-à-vis transport and the implementation of activities.
- Lack of infrastructure in the lake area including housing, communication mechanisms availability of basic materials on the local market
- Lack of partners and capacity on the ground
- Lack of basic needs (water, sanitation, access to health, education, etc.)
- Challenging environmental conditions (difficult access in particular during the rainy season)

Operational Priorities

- Ensuring the **safety and security** of staff, premises and the implementation of activities in a sensitive and complex security environment.
- Ensuring **access to basic services** (shelter, wash, health, etc.) for Nigerian refugees and their hosting communities in the Ngouboua area.
- Ensuring access to adequate land to promote **livelihoods** and food security for the population.
- **Protection monitoring** of refugees in the area and providing timely protection to those in need.

Next Steps

Working closely with the CNARR, local authorities and partners on the ground, UNHCR will continue to monitor the situation of refugees in the Lake area. Dedicated staff on mission and based in Ndjama, will coordinate, oversee and follow up with protection and the implementation of activities in Ngouboua. UNHCR will construct a small structure to accommodate staff on mission and to house basic necessities. Permanent deployment of staff will depend on the level of refugee influx into the area.

Working in partnership

UNHCR works closely with its government counterpart, the Commission Nationale d'Accueil, de Réinsertion des Réfugiés et des Rapatriés (CNARR), line ministries (ministries of water/hydraulics, health and education in particular) and local authorities in Ndjama as well as in the Lake Chad region. UN and NGO partners include UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, FAO as well as International Medical Corps (IMC), Centre de Support en Santé International (CSSI), Croix Rouge Tchadienne (CRT) and Action pour la Protection de la Santé de l'Environnement et de Lutte contre la Pénurie Alimentaire (APSELPA).

Funding

An Inter-Agency Appeal for the Nigeria Situation in Chad is underway, due to be launched shortly. UNHCR has requested a total of USD 3.6 mln under this appeal.

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