



Press Release, for immediate release

Voluntary repatriation

UNHCR Representation in Nigeria

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About 400 Cameroon refugees voluntarily return home

Abuja, Nigeria, 15 January 2015, UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency in Nigeria has facilitated the return of some 400 Cameroon refugees who have freely chosen to return to their native villages in Akwaya sub-division of the South West region of Cameroon after six years of stay on Nigerian territory.

The decision by UNHCR to assist the refugees was taken following a profiling exercise in 2010 in which an estimated 200 refugees opted for voluntary repatriation. Series of consultations were conducted with the Nigerian and Cameroonian authorities and UNHCR Branch Office in Yaounde to ensure that their areas of return are now conducive for a voluntary repatriation in safety and in dignity. From 27-30 October 2014; UNHCR conducted its last registration and assessment missions to ascertain the return conditions.

The refugees are supported with transportation through designated and agreed routes, luggage allowance of 50kg per individual from Agbatse in Benue State of Nigeria to Lagos (in Akwaya), on the Cameroon border, free vaccination against yellow fever, polio and meningitis and voluntary return cash grant of USD 150 per adult refugee or USD 75 per minor refugee.

The refugees fled into Nigeria in January 2008 following violent clashes between the Olitis and Oyive communities over a longstanding chieftaincy dispute. The clashes resulted in the death of people and destruction of properties, forcing the two communities to cross into two different states in Nigeria-Cross River and Benue States (The Oyives into Benue and Olitis into Cross River State).

Despite the fact that refugees lived in remote and inaccessible rural communities, UNHCR regularly provided them healthcare, livelihood sustenance activities, education and other forms of assistance throughout their stay in Nigeria. Following a screening mission conducted by UNHCR and the National Commission for Refugees, majority of the case load hosted in the Cross River State was closed by the Eligibility Committee because many had either returned on their own or benefitted from dual nationality to remain in Nigeria.

The exercise is coordinated by National Commission for refugees, NCFR, and UNHCR with the participation of representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Cameroon High Commission in Nigeria, Benue State Government, Obalinku Local Government Area, LGA, of Cross Rivers State and security agencies (Nigerian Immigration, Nigerian Police, State Security Services and Nigerian Security and Civil Defence).

UNHCR is particularly grateful to the authorities and communities in Benue and Cross River States who hosted these refugees for six years in peace and harmony, thereby further demonstrating the legendary hospitality of Nigeria. UNHCR also seizes this opportunity to express utmost appreciation to the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the perfect collaboration afforded to UNHCR in general, and for this particular refugee situation. As the country undergoes these turbulent times, UNHCR's reaffirms its sincere solidarity with the authorities and people of Nigeria for a peaceful, cohesive and prosperous NIGERIA!

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