

Overview

More than 100,000 people in twelve Local Government Areas (LGAs) have been affected by severe floods in Benue State after days of torrential rainfall. President Muhammadu Buhari directed the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to immediately mobilize personnel and resources to assist victims of the flooding following the incident. A government statement issued last week in Abuja quoted the president as saying, he is closely monitoring the situation, and receiving regular updates on the scale of the disaster to ensure the Federal Government's humanitarian response. Residents of affected homes were moved to temporary shelters in the state while the government and its humanitarian partners assessed the extent of the damage.

More than 800 suspected cholera cases have been recorded over the last several days in internally displaced person (IDP) camps in Maiduguri, Dikwa and Monguno. About 28 people were reported dead while hundreds more remain hospitalized. The Borno State Ministry of Health is leading a coordinated humanitarian response with the support of aid agencies including UNICEF and Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF).

General Security Situation Outlook

On August 31, an attack by suspected Boko Haram insurgents on the border town of Banki, left eleven refugee returnees killed and seven injured. The victims were all refugee returnees from Cameroon's far North Region. The attackers also attempted to overrun the military base where staff of humanitarian agencies including those of UNHCR are being accommodated. Following the incident, security in and around the camp is being heightened. There were also incidents of attacks including arson on villages and military positions in the northeast by Boko Haram.

Population Movements

From 1-5 September, a total of 90 refugee returnees from Cameroon arrived in Ngala (72 individuals) and Banki (18 individuals). The returnees are being registered by the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS). They said their decision to return was voluntary following the liberation of areas previously occupied by Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Situation Analysis and Response Efforts

The increasing incidents of Boko Haram attacks underscore the volatile and unpredictable nature of the crisis in the North-East and compromise the safety of humanitarian workers and civilians seeking refuge at displacement centers. Ultimately, due to insecurity, operations of humanitarian agencies are affected thus hampering the timely delivery of lifesaving assistance to those in need. Ongoing counter-insurgency activities by the military and its allies also continue to result to more internal displacements of civilians in search of protection.

As UNHCR and the Governments of Nigeria and Cameroon work together to operationalize the provisions of the Tripartite Agreement, the latest deadly attack on Banki further validates concerns that despite the liberation of the areas from Boko Haram, security remains a concern and is a serious pre-requisite for any safe, dignified and sustainable return of refugees. The absence of civilian authority to administer the affairs of the areas and lack of basic social service delivery remain a concern. While the government is working towards taking measures to improve the situation, attacks such as the one on Banki still remain rife and seem to continue to be a fundamental threat.

Meanwhile, following the killings of IDPs in the Banki camp on 31 August, a UNHCR team visited the area on 2 September to assess the ground conditions. The team also distributed 500 bags of charcoal to vulnerable IDPs and refugee returnees in Banki as a measured approach to address firewood collection which is one of the sources of sexual and gender exploitation.

UNHCR is increasing its advocacy efforts for the protection of civilians in the North-East who have been forced to flee their homes. UNHCR seeks to address the challenges of attacks on civilians; particularly those at IDP camps including security and humanitarian access in newly liberated areas. UNHCR will also increase its advocacy for more resources to address challenges posed by insufficient water and sanitation facilities in camps and newly liberated areas.

The World Food Program (WFP) lifted the suspension placed on food distribution in the Gubio IDP Camp in Maiduguri following an attack by some IDPs on staff of WFP's partner, the International Medical Corps (IMC). During the incident, some IMC staff and IDPs were injured and several humanitarian vehicles smashed. The state Management Agency (SEMA) said the government reassessing security of the camp before the suspension could be lifted.

55,604 IDP and refugee children from 0-17 years have been issued birth certificates in Banki, Bama, Damasak, Ngala and Monguno in Borno State. The exercise was a joint pilot by UNHCR and the National Population Commission, targeting 50,000 refugee returnee and IDP children in 2017.

UNHCR office in Benue is also assessing the recent flood situation to support the government in assisting the most vulnerable people affected by the floods with essential non-food items.

