



# PROTECTION STRATEGY FOR CAMEROONIAN REFUGEES IN NIGERIA

2018 – 2019



## Executive Summary

This strategy is designed to provide immediate to medium term protection and assistance to Cameroonian refugees fleeing crises in the South-West and North-West regions of Cameroon.

The strategy is informed by the findings of several needs assessments conducted by UNHCR and Partners, and is guided by regional priorities and the High Commissioner's 5 core directions in imparting UNHCR's international protection mandate. These are: to **protect** and **respond** effectively to emergency situations; **include** Persons of Concern into local systems and communities; **empower** persons of concern to participate in decisions affecting them and endeavour to **solve their** problems as much as practicable.

The strategic objectives and interventions of the strategy are as follows:

- Enhancing access to asylum through monitoring and advocacy, recalling the fundamental principle of non-refoulement and States international obligations;
- Preserving the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum;
- Registration and documentation of all refugees in a manner that enhances their protection,
- Relocation away from the border areas to new refugee sites
- Protection of vulnerable groups including women and children (protection against sexual violence, abuse and exploitation)
- Promoting co-existence with host communities through community based interventions
- Ensuring access to essential services (Food, shelter, water and sanitation, health and nutrition, education) to all refugees.
- Instituting measures to prevent and reduce Statelessness
- Promoting self-reliance and livelihoods through Cash-Based Interventions (CBIs)
- Exploring durable solution options

As the crisis between the authorities in the majority francophone Cameroon and English-speaking protesters in the North West and South West Cameroon continues, tens of thousands of Anglophone-Cameroonians have been forced to flee their homes to seek refuge in neighbouring Nigeria. As of 8 May 2018, the Government of Nigeria with support from UNHCR has registered 21,291 Cameroonian refugees of which children make up about 50% of the population. These refugees are currently located in four states - Cross River 17,003, Benue 3,525, Akwa Ibon 197 and Taraba 584.

This strategy will be implemented in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including the Government of Nigeria - both at the Federal and State levels, national and international organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs), refugees, local communities, etc. The implementation will be monitored by relevant stakeholders and reviewed periodically to assess its continuing need.

## 1. Introduction

The document sets out strategic protection objectives and interventions that will help to ensure effective protection and assistance to Cameroonians seeking asylum in Nigeria, following the outbreak of hostilities in the fourth quarter of 2017. This strategy has been developed based on several field assessments and consultations with relevant

stakeholders. It also draws from findings of an Inter-Agency Multi-Sector Rapid Assessment conducted in February 2018 in 5 Local Government Areas (LGAs): Obanliku, Boki, Ikom, Etung, and Akamkpa; and follow-up field missions in Cross River, Benue and Akwa Ibom States. These assessments were all geared toward identifying the needs of an estimated 20,000 refugees and developing a comprehensive plan that will ensure a coordinated and effective response of relevant stakeholders including the Government. This strategy is also consistent with the Central Emergency Response Funds (CERF) submission by UNHCR, FAO, UNICEF and UNFPA to respond to the Cameroon emergency.

## 1.1. Background and operational context

Although the Anglophone region of Cameroon has been pursuing self-determination and autonomy since the 1970s when Cameroon moved from a form of federalism to a unitary state, the agitation reached new heights when on 1 October 2017, the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC), unilaterally declared independence. Following this declaration, the government responded swiftly with the deployment of huge numbers of security forces into Anglophone areas of Cameroon. Demonstrations were violently suppressed resulting in 40 deaths and over 100 injured.

The crisis began in 2016 with protests by lawyers and teachers over the influence of French in court rooms and schools. The root of the grievance includes anger over the region's under-development, its lack of political representation, and the perceived erosion of an Anglophone cultural heritage.

The government has labelled the demonstrators terrorists and muzzled dissents with hundreds of arrests. Internet accessibility in western Cameroon was prevented for three months, arguing that social media was used to fan the unrest.

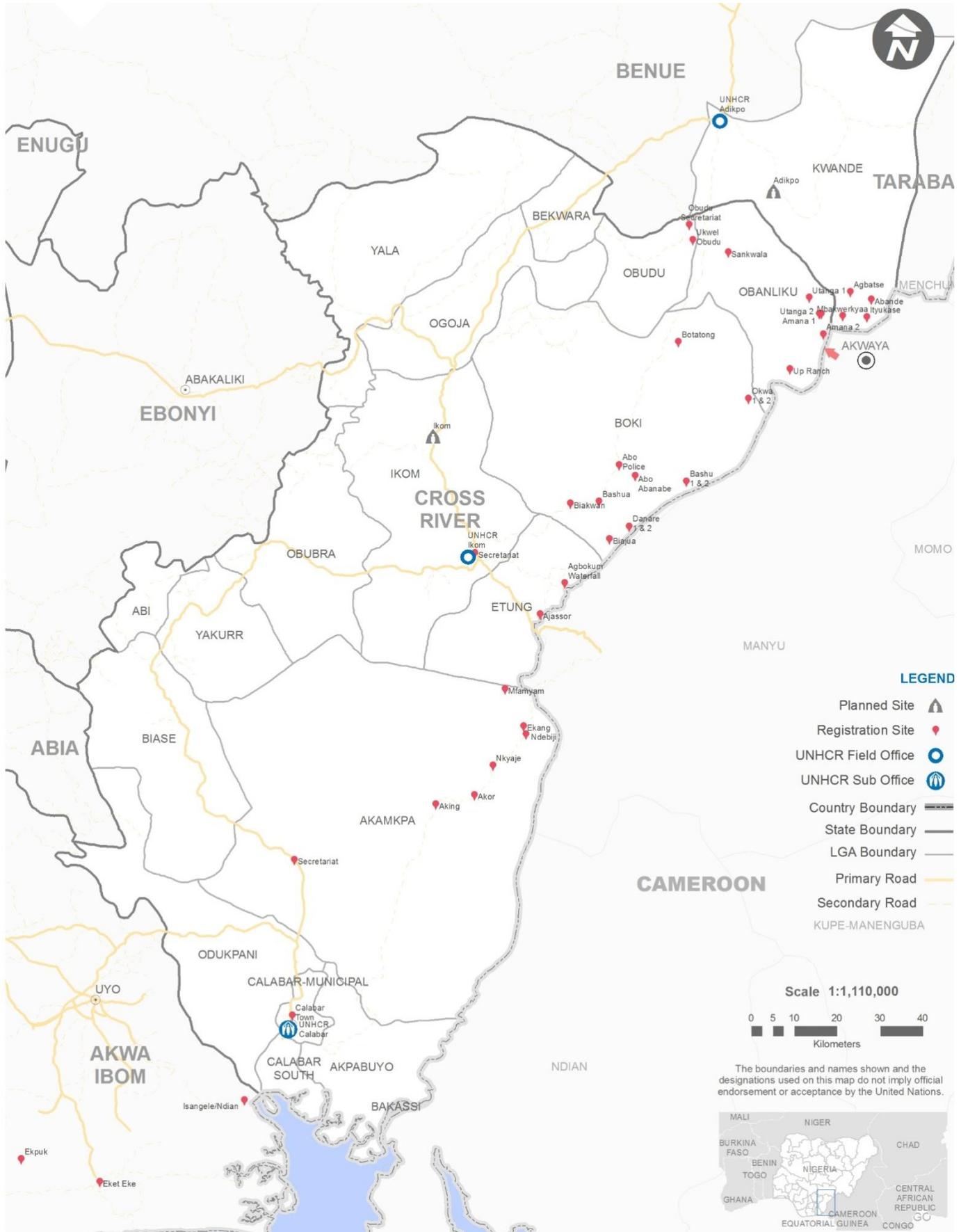
This situation deteriorated even further, following a unilateral declaration of Independence by Anglophone Activists called "Ambazonia Governing Council" of Southern Cameroon on 1 October 2017, which resulted in deadly clashes and mass displacement of thousands of Anglophone Cameroonians. The majority of these displaced persons are now seeking refuge in Cross River State, while others are found in Akwa Ibom, Benue and Taraba States.

The forced return of 47 Cameroonians, including recognized refugees and registered asylum seekers, on 26 January 2018; as well as the continued detention of another 8 Cameroonian asylum seekers remains a matter of deep concern to UNHCR and International human rights organisations.

To date, Nigeria has registered 21,291 refugees affected by the crisis in the North-West and South Western Regions of Cameroon. With the influx of these refugees into Nigeria, the protection environment has been quite challenging with the risk of arrest, detention and refoulement; maintaining the civilian character of asylum, accessibility to persons of concern, etc. These events urged UNHCR to declare a Level 2 emergency for the Cameroonian situation in Nigeria for an initial period of six months, subject to review thereafter. The Regional Bureau for Africa has been authorised to take the necessary actions to scale up UNHCR's operational capacity to respond to this emergency.

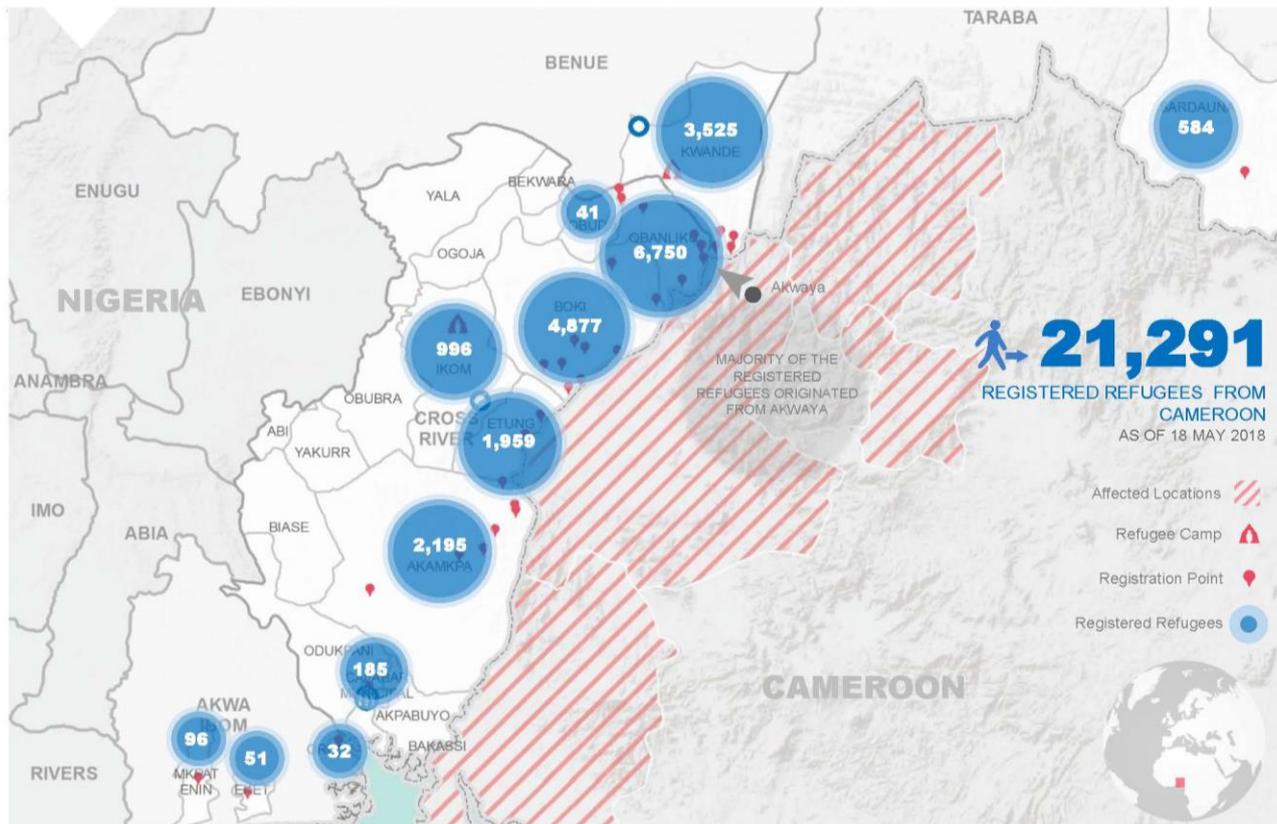
In March 2018, the Federal Government of Nigeria granted a two-year Temporary Protection Status to Cameroonians seeking asylum in Nigeria. In addition, the government, UNHCR and other humanitarian actors have been providing protection and life-saving assistance to refugees with the limited available resources.

# REFERENCE MAP OF SOUTH NIGERIA

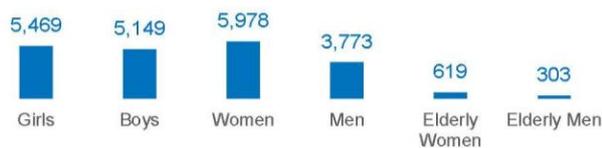


## 1.2. Population profile

As of 8 May 2018, the Government of Nigeria with support from UNHCR has registered 21,291 Cameroonian refugees. However, there is significant number of refugees who are yet to be registered in some of the border communities. If the security situation remains the same in Southern Cameroon, new arrivals across the borders will continue streaming and the refugee population is likely to reach about 50,000 by end of 2018.



### AGE AND GENDER BREAKDOWN OF REFUGEES



### REGISTERED REFUGEES PER MONTH



STATE	LGAs	0-4		5-11		12-17		18-59		60+	
		FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE
CROSS RIVER	OBANLIKU	502	528	893	765	523	358	2,024	835	232	90
	BOKI	349	329	502	497	358	360	1,247	1,008	151	76
	AKAMKPA	142	155	162	172	98	120	774	451	79	42
	ETUNG	117	112	168	190	103	105	427	674	38	25
	IKOM	84	60	87	69	55	48	351	215	15	12
	CALABAR	8	7	8	7	15	19	55	58	4	4
BENUE	OBUDU	1	5	4	5	1	3	14	8	0	0
	KWANDE	399	415	500	500	212	147	844	381	85	42
TARABA	SARDAUNA	53	55	72	70	35	29	177	79	10	4
AKWA-IBOM	MKPAT-ENNIN	4	3	3	2		4	38	35	5	2
	EKET	4		1	1	2	2	14	21	0	6
	ORON	2	2	1	3	1	2	13	8	0	0
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>1,665</b>	<b>1,671</b>	<b>2,401</b>	<b>2,281</b>	<b>1,403</b>	<b>1,197</b>	<b>5,978</b>	<b>3,773</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>303</b>

To achieve the stated objectives of this strategy, UNHCR and relevant partners will undertake the following strategic interventions:



## ACCESS TO ASYLUM, REGISTRATION AND DOCUMENTATION:

### Problem Statement:

Increasing incidences of arrest and detention of refugees remain a serious concern as refugees continue to be at risk of refoulement. In January 2018, 47 asylum seekers were arrested and refouled to Cameroon, while 08 others were still in detention and at risk of refoulement. This has led to increasing fear among the refugees for their physical safety in the asylum country.

90% of refugees currently live in communities located about 1.5 to 15kms to the Cameroon borders. Clandestine movements across borders between Nigeria and Cameroon may pose a threat to the civilian character of asylum. There were reports of 02 incursions of Cameroon Security Personnel into border communities hosting refugees in Nigeria, to abduct, harm or kill Cameroonians suspected to be members of the separatist group agitating for independence. Similarly, there were reports of asylum seekers engaging in military training and launching attacks across the border against security personnel in Cameroon. These activities may lead to risks of infiltration of Cameroon security forces into border communities; recruitment of children into militant groups, stringent measures imposed by Nigerian authorities against refugees and could also contribute to undermining the protection space for refugees.

Registration of refugees has been a challenge due to the following:

- Inaccessibility to refugees in some remote communities due to poor road conditions, and other means of travel
- Gaps on the part of both UNHCR and Government to carry out registration exercise in a timely manner. This includes: limited staffing capacity in the field, lack of technical expertise, inadequate registration equipment.

Registration exercise was conducted using proGres. However, in remote locations with poor or no internet connectivity, excel spreadsheets were utilised. UNHCR is planning to support the Government to enhance its registration capacity through the provision of Biometric Information Management System. (BIMS).

### Key priorities

- Enhancement of protection and border monitoring
- Improvement of access to territory and, reduction of risk of refoulement
- Preservation of the humanitarian and civilian character of asylum system.
- Registration and documentation of all refugees.

## ACTIVITIES

- Strengthen protection and border monitoring through partnerships with various stakeholders, including Government, National and International NGOs, Community volunteers etc.
- Collection of information and document protection issues/incidents.
- Engagement of government authorities (at both Federal and State levels) to promote respect for the principle of non-refoulement
- Follow-up with local authorities and other relevant actors for identification, separation and management of individuals who may pose a threat to the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum system.
- Provision of biometric registration system and technical support to enhance the capacity of government (NCFR).
- Facilitate issuance of identity documents to refugees
- Map refugees' skills/capacities and update individual records in database
- Negotiate with the government to establish an MoU for the security of refugees in hosting areas
- Sensitize refugees of their rights and obligations in the asylum country, through awareness campaigns.
- Advocate with relevant authorities and actors for birth registration and issuance of birth certificates to refugees



## RELOCATION

### Problem Statement:

The majority of refugees are currently hosted within communities located along the borders between 1.5 to 15kms from Cameroon. Recent reports of two incursions of Cameroonian security personnel across the border to refugee communities in Nigeria, as well as, attacks on Cameroon security personnel by militants/activists seeking asylum in Nigeria, pose a high risk for the refugee population hosted along the borders. Such activities could lead to repressive measures by the Nigerian authorities against refugees to protect its territory and maintain peaceful relations with neighbouring Cameroon. The Government of Nigeria has also requested UNHCR to help relocate refugees away from the border to camp sites.

Some refugees may not opt for relocation due to close family ties, cultural and linguistic links with their host communities. Some are engaged in economic activities like harvesting crops, weeding and clearing farmlands of host community members for meagre payments in the form of cash and food. While some children have been enrolled in schools, the majority are out of school and the close proximity to the borders poses a threat to their physical security and well-being in those communities.

A shelter strategy has been developed to facilitate relocation from the border and integrate refugees into community structures.

## KEY PRIORITIES

- Relocate refugees to reasonable distance (minimum 30kms) away from the borders to ensure better protection and assistance.

## ACTIVITIES

Relocation will be conducted on a voluntary basis to sites allocated either by the government and or community leaders and host families.

- Negotiate with authorities for allocation of land for camp sites/settlements
- Develop relocation plan
- Develop clear and consistent messages on relocation
- Organise information campaigns to enable refugees to make informed decision.
- Facilitate go and see visits to relocation sites
- Advocate with local and traditional authorities for acceptance of refugees in hosting communities and facilitate peaceful co-existence
- Liaise with local and traditional leaders for acquisition of land documentation to ensure security of refugees' occupancy.
- Provision of shelter kits including cash assistance for other construction materials.
- Engage refugees in skilled and unskilled labour for shelter construction



## PROTECTION MONITORING AND SUPPORT IN HOST COMMUNITIES

### Problem Statement:

Although UNHCR's priority is, as mentioned above, the relocation of the refugee population into sites/settlements, refugees will not be moved involuntarily. However, sensitization meetings conducted in some communities revealed that not all refugees will relocate. Reluctance to relocate would include: close family, linguistic and cultural ties in border communities, access to farm land for agriculture, children's enrolment in schools etc

Refugees continuing stay in border communities presents a number of challenges. Firstly, the risk of incursions by the Cameroonian security forces and infiltration by militants/activists who are not *bona fide* refugees. Secondly, risks of recruitment of children into military activities; limited and overstretched community resources that may result to conflict between refugees and hosts, etc. In some communities, the refugee population outweighs that of the host population. This impacts on communities' facilities and service delivery.

Finally, if the situation in Cameroon further deteriorates, this will lead to an increasing number of refugees into Nigeria. These individuals will most likely go into the same host communities where refugees are currently residing, amplifying the abovementioned problems and risks.

### KEY PRIORITIES

- Protect, support and enable refugees that are either waiting to move to a camp/settlement or have decided, for one reason or another, not to move to a camp/settlements, to achieve solutions
- Support and include host communities so as to allow them to better cope with the influx of refugees into their communities and the potential drawbacks thereof



## ACTIVITIES

- Strengthen protection monitoring to the various border communities
- Respond to protection needs where possible and refer to other protection actors (traditional leaders, police, etc.) where needed
- Promote an enabling protection environment, where the legal, policy and administrative frameworks provide refugees with the rights they are entitled to, notably the freedom of movement and access to basic services
- Strengthen community-based protection monitoring, outreach and case management, notably through Protection Action Groups, involving community members trained on protection issues and protection implementing partners
- Advocate with local and traditional authorities for acceptance of refugees in hosting community and facilitate peaceful co-existence
- Sensitise both refugees and host community members on protection risks, especially on the risks related to military incursions, taking part in hostilities, SGBV and Child Protection issues
- Provide community based support to communities hosting refugees to promote peaceful co-existence



## ASSISTANCE, SPECIAL NEEDS AND CBI

### Problem Statement:

About 20% of the registered refugee population has one or more specific needs identified such as female headed households, single female, child headed households, Unaccompanied and Separated Children, persons with disability, elderly, persons living with HIV, malnourished children, etc. The majority of the population is made up of women and children, while only 17% of the population is made-up of adult male refugees. A number of cases have been identified, which may require psychosocial support due to violence suffered during flight such as killing of close family members, separation from families, loss of property, and violence perpetrated in the country of asylum.

Health care remains a serious challenge for refugees in the hosting communities as health facilities are overwhelmed due to an increasing population of the refugees, lack of health staff and medical drugs, lack of financial means to access health care, etc.

Most of the communities hosting refugees have limited access to pipe borne water or no functional boreholes. As such, most refugees access water from unsafe sources such as streams, ponds etc. Public sanitation is also a critical area of concern with significant manifestation of open defecation sites and lack of hand washing facilities.

### KEY PRIORITIES

- Access to health care services, water and sanitation facilities for refugees facilitated
- Persons with specific needs identified and supported through Community Based Approach
- Regional strategy on health Insurance Scheme for Refugees implemented

## ACTIVITIES

- Improve access to quality health care programmes through provision of blanket health insurance to all refugees in 2018
- Engage the Ministry of Health to implement health insurance scheme
- Facilitate access to integrated prevention and control of non-communicable diseases including mental health care.
- Strengthen communities' infrastructures including health facilities in collaboration with other Partners to increase absorption capacity and service delivery
- Establish a sub-working group on Health
- Explore possible partnership with the government and operational partners for provision of psychosocial support.



## SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE INCLUDING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

### Problem Statement:

Findings of recent field assessments conducted indicate high risks of sexual and gender-based violence such as teenage pregnancy, early marriage and rape, more especially among women and girls suffered during flight and in asylum country. This was attributed to outbreak of hostilities, lack of food and non-food assistance, lack of livelihood opportunities, inadequate and overcrowded accommodation, and resources to meet their basic needs. Thus these refugees resort to negative coping mechanisms including survival sex. Few cases of trauma were identified among the population. These included: trauma related to sexual violence perpetrated by Cameroonian authorities during flight to Nigeria.

A Gender Based Violence working group has recently been established in Cross River State involving relevant line Ministries, UN Agencies, and NGOs and co-lead by the Ministry of Women Affairs and UNFPA. UNHCR will work in close collaboration with UNFPA and the Ministry of Women Affairs and Development

### KEY PRIORITIES

- Risk of Sexual and Gender Based Violence reduced and responses improved
- Prevention and response mechanisms are aligned to national GBV system to protect from acts of violence and exploitation.
- Effective commitment of UNHCR and Partners to ensuring protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

## ACTIVITIES

- Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on SGBV to strengthen IP responses

- Establish referral pathway for SGBV in collaboration with line Ministries and other Partners
- Organise awareness raising campaigns and sensitization activities through Partners and Community based structures
- Encourage co-existence with hosts through provision of community-based livelihoods projects targeting survivors and women-at-risk
- Establish Community based protection mechanisms and safe spaces in communities
- In collaboration with Government and other Protection partners build capacity of various stakeholders on SGBV
- Support national policy, sensitization responses and preventive measures on SGBV
- Establish a monitoring mechanism and investigation of allegations
- Provision of budgetary line for SGBV and SEA activities (trainings, public information materials, response, etc.)

## CHILD PROTECTION AND EDUCATION

### Problem Statement:

About 50% of the refugee population is made up of children. 75% of school age children are out of school due to lack of financial means. Many children have also missed out in 2 academic years as a result of outbreak of hostilities in Cameroon. These challenges expose children to risks of abuse and exploitation within their communities. Findings of a multi-sector needs assessment conducted in February 2018 indicate that there are many unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) amongst the population. Few cases of malnutrition were also identified and attributed to inadequate food supply.

Humanitarian partners including UNICEF and UNFPA are willing to support the Cameroonian refugees in the areas of child protection, education, sanitation facilities and Gender Based Violence. However lack of adequate resources has been a challenge expressed by many stakeholders. UNHCR, FAO, UNFPA and UNICEF have submitted a proposal to the Central Emergency Response Funds (CERF) for response to the needs of refugees.

### KEY PRIORITIES

- Establish mechanisms to identify children at risk including Unaccompanied and Separated Children
- Refugee children are integrated into national child welfare and child protection systems

### ACTIVITIES

- Establish child protection systems and comprehensive referral pathways through coordination with national child protection systems.
- Develop Standard Operating procedures (SOPs)
- Strengthen partnership with national authorities, UN organisations such as UNICEF and other Partners especially those dealing with Child protection related issues
- Strengthen operational partnerships with child protection organisations and referral networks for the protection and care of children-at-risk

- Organise awareness campaigns on Child Protection issues through IP and other Partners
- Integrate refugee children in national education system
- Support outreach responses by supporting community mobilizers
- Support the creation of child friendly spaces and/or strengthen existing one within communities



## LIVELIHOODS AND SOLUTIONS

### Problem Statement:

Lack of livelihood opportunities to meet basic needs remain a serious concern among the majority of refugees in the host communities. This risk exposes refugees to exploitation and abuse. There have been reports of refugees engaging in menial jobs mainly working as labourer on farmlands for meagre income.

Given the current political and security situation in Cameroon, voluntary repatriation is not foreseen in the short term. Limited quotas for third country resettlement also pose a challenge to the physical and legal protection needs of potential cases.

### KEY PRIORITIES

- Persons of concern are empowered through self-reliance activities to reduce protection risks and eventual search for solutions.
- Market based self-reliance programmes with sustainable livelihoods opportunities are provided to refugees
- Explore resettlement possibilities as a protection tool for cases with urgent legal and physical protection needs, emergency medical cases with good prognosis.

### ACTIVITIES

- Design livelihoods programmes based on socio-economic profiles of individuals and groups
- Conduct market survey to determine opportunities for refugees to undertake socio-economic activities
- Advocate for refugees to be included in national/local development plans
- Create alliances with UNHCR Innovation Team and other Partners to explore innovative opportunities and encourage partners to invest in refugee potentials in order to improve livelihoods
- Liaise with UNHCR office in Cameroon to obtain Country of Origin information on the political and security situation
- Engage Regional Resettlement Unit and explore possibilities for resettlement
- Manage resettlement expectations among refugees
- Strategic use of resettlement as a protection tool for emergency cases with medical and/or legal and physical protection needs.
- Develop SOPs for case identification and referral mechanisms within UNHCR and with relevant Partners
- Advocate for residency with relevant authorities where feasible
- In collaboration with financial institutions and other partners, promote refugees' access to financial services.

## STATELESSNESS

### **Problem Statement:**

Findings of UNHCR field monitoring have identified vulnerable groups of persons at risk-of statelessness. It has also been observed during registration exercises that many refugees are without proper identity document. A number of individuals believed to be Nigerians who have been living in Cameroon for many years but forced to return home due to the ongoing crisis in Cameroon, are unable to provide proof of their nationality and re-establish family links upon return to Nigeria. There is a lack of awareness on birth registration and acquisition of birth certificates among the refugee population which can contribute to the risk of statelessness.

### **KEY PRIORITIES**

- Measures are put in place to prevent and reduce statelessness

### **ACTIVITIES**

- Collaboration with other stakeholders, Government, UN Agencies, International and National Organisations
- Strengthen mass sensitization campaigns through Partners on birth registration and documentation
- Advocate with relevant government authorities to facilitate issuance of national identity documents to individuals with links to Nigeria (i.e. born in Nigeria and either parents or grandparents is Nigerian or someone with at least one Nigerian parent but born outside Nigeria).

## URBAN REFUGEES

### **Problem Statement:**

Majority of the first group of individuals who sought asylum in Nigeria following the outbreak of violence in October 2017 were intellectuals including magistrates, lecturers, engineers, journalists and university students. Many of these refugees currently reside in Calabar, Enugu and Lagos, in rented and or shared accommodations. Many of them live in overcrowded accommodations and face difficulties in accessing social and economic services such as health care, education and cash based assistance

### **KEY PRIORITIES**

- Urban refugees receive protection and assistance.

## ACTIVITIES

- Provision of tertiary education opportunities including DAFI scholarships and distance learning programmes
- Provision of cash assistance on an individual basis
- Development of skills and provision of starter kits
- Facilitate issuance of documentation



## PARTNERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING

### Problem Statement:

There is generally limited capacity in refugee emergency response among Partners, local authorities. The need for capacity building training on international protection of refugees is critical to ensure timely and appropriate protection interventions.

The severe and protracted IDP situation in Northern Nigeria has stretched the resources of the government and many development partners. As a result, there is a risk of lack of adequate funding to effectively support the refugee emergency.

### KEY PRIORITIES

- Strengthening partnership with relevant government authorities, UN Agencies, International Organisations and local NGOs to ensure timely response to the refugee situation

## ACTIVITIES

- Establish partnership with relevant stakeholders to improve protection and assistance
- Organise capacity building training for border authorities, community leaders, IPs, Volunteers, other Partners and UNHCR staff
- Establish and strengthen inter-agency coordination mechanisms to ensure a coordinated response by all actors
- Build community networks through establishment of Protection Action Groups (PAGs)
- Empower/ build the capacity of refugees to monitor implementation of protection and programmes designed for them.