

PLACE

Yola,
Adamawa
State, Nigeria

DATE

23 August
2019

134 NIGERIAN REFUGEES RETURN TO ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA, AFTER YEARS IN CAMEROON

The first voluntary repatriation of refugees started on 22 August 2019, coordinated by the Government of Nigeria, the Government of Cameroon and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.

134 Nigerian refugees landed yesterday in Yola, Adamawa State, after leaving Minawao refugee camp in Cameroon earlier. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, supported these first repatriation efforts by the Governments of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Cameroon, all parties to the Tripartite Agreement for the Voluntary Repatriation of Nigerian refugees living in Cameroon.

Sadiya Umar Farouq, Nigeria Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development, Government of Nigeria said: *“Pursuant to the Tripartite Agreement, Nigeria, as a responsible Member of the international community and in compliance with the Action Plan, is welcoming 25 families who have decided to voluntarily come back home to join the effort to develop the Nation. I want to take this opportunity to thank President Muhammadu Buhari and the Government of Adamawa State for all the support extended for the success of this first voluntary repatriation operation”.*

The Governor of Cameroon’s Far North Region, Mijiyawa Bakari, led the Cameroonian delegation to see off the first group which flew from Maroua to Yola, where transit centres have been set up, said *“the Nigerian government sent a mission here yesterday and we discussed how to assist these refugees in their return. All measures have been taken to ensure a smooth operation. This is the first departure and we want to see that the refugees are able to go back with all their possessions”.*

In March 2019, the Nigerian government allocated resources for the repatriation of the 4,000 refugees. These resources are to cover the costs for the renovation and management of a transit and reception centre in Yola, for air transport to Yola, where returnees will receive food and essential items, and onward journey to final destinations, where they will be provided with shelter kits and reintegration packages.

“UNHCR joins the Government of Nigeria, to welcome these 25 families from Adamawa and Bauchi States and fulfil their dream to return home. We are committed to supporting these families for sustainable integration back into their communities,” said Roger Hollo, Deputy Representative, UNHCR Nigeria, adding that *“we call on the Government and the entire humanitarian community to continue working hand in hand to ensure the provision of protection, services and livelihood opportunities to both the returnees and the host communities”.*

Mylene Ahounou, Head of UNHCR Sub Office Maroua in Cameroon, added *“This repatriation operation has been prepared for a long time with Cameroonian and Nigerian authorities on both sides of the border. More than 2,000 Nigerian refugees expressed their wish to go back to their country, and we facilitated this repatriation in safety and dignity for refugees originally from Adamawa and Bauchi States, where the conditions of security have improved.”*



Indima Peter, 22, who has just arrived in Yola with his wife and one year old child, could not contain his excitement; *“We are back in Nigeria! Cameroon was good to us, we got shelter and help. It was not home but we were safe. We are happy to be back home in Nigeria.”*

Violent attacks by Non State Armed Groups in parts of North East Nigeria has displaced over 240,000 Nigerians, with Borno State being the most affected. 107,840 of them have sought refuge in Cameroon with over 59,000 in the Minawao camp, and about 44,000 others living in host communities. Given the relative security and stability, Adamawa State constitutes a pilot phase. The Commission and its Technical Committee will keep the situation in Northeast Nigeria under constant review, in order to seize all opportunities for an end to the refugee situation, and a durable solutions approach to the current humanitarian situation.

About the Tripartite Agreement

The Governments of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Cameroon and UNHCR, signed on 2 March 2017 a Tripartite Agreement for the voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees living in Cameroon. The Agreement provides the legal framework and sets out modalities for the voluntary repatriation and facilitated return of Nigerian refugees, in safety and dignity. The agreement also established a Tripartite Commission (TC) and a subsidiary Technical Working Group (TWG) with representatives of both governments and UNHCR, to oversee the implementation of the said agreement. A first meeting took place in August 2018, where it adopted Practical Modalities and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the implementation of the Agreement.

About UNHCR

UNHCR is a global organisation dedicated to helping governments to protect the fundamental human rights of, and to find durable solutions for refugees, forcibly displaced populations and persons at risk of statelessness. UNHCR works with Governments and with civil society organizations (CSOs) in establishing response platforms for refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and other persons of concern. UNHCR lives by, and intend to share in the spirit of the Istanbul World Humanitarian Summit: leave no one behind in restoring human dignity, and creating and fostering a protective environment.

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