

NIGERIAN REFUGEES IN THE LAKE REGION



Arrival of Nigerian Refugees in Bagasola, Lake Chad region in February 2015. Photo: M. Farman- Farmaian/UNHCR

CONTEXT

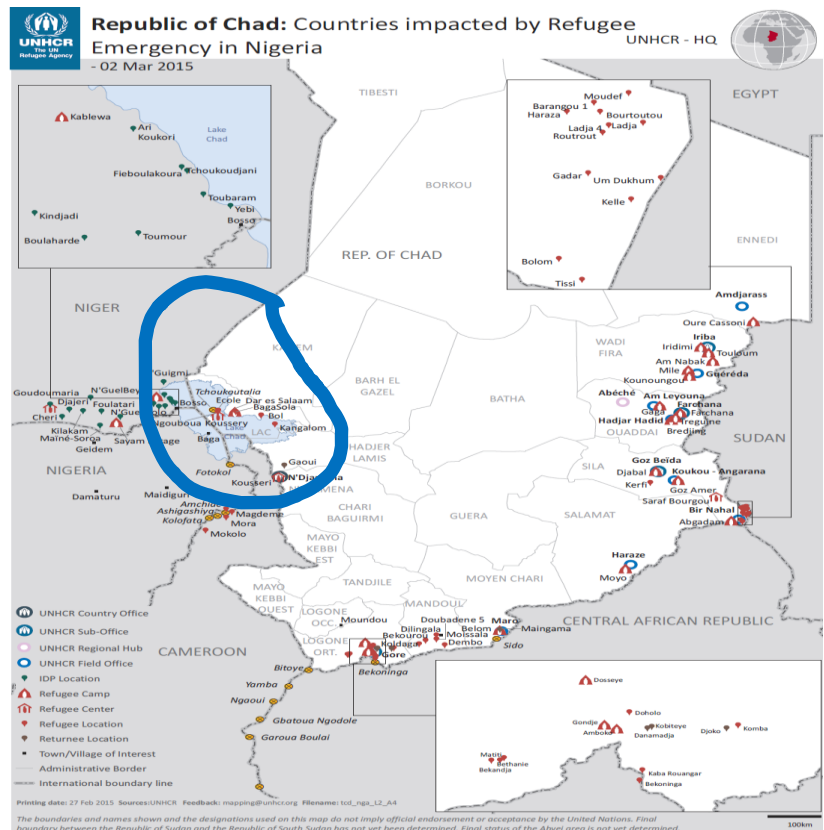
In the early morning of Friday 13th February, some 30 members of the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram (BH) attacked the village of Ngouboua, a village in the Lake Chad Region that hosts some 8,000 Nigerian refugees. According to the authorities, militants arrived on canoes at approximately 3 am; they shot at the population causing the death of some 10 people including the Chief of Ngouboua Canton, a reliable protector of refugees and partner of UN agencies and NGOs, and his assistant. Militants pillaged the village and burned a number of homes as well as the market place before they were pursued and fled. The local population was awakened by gunshots; some ran to hide into the bush while others fled to Forkolom, located at some 10 km from Ngouboua. This was the second attack by Boko Haram in Chad, following an ambush on the Island of Kantanrom on 31 January which caused the death of 3 individuals.

Since the Boko Haram attack on 3 January on military installations and civilian populations in and around the northeastern Nigerian town of Bagakawa, more than 15,000 Nigerian refugees have sought refuge in Chad, many of them on the small islands scattered of the Lake.

While a number of refugees crossed the Lake and arrived in Chad, others fled to the northern parts of Cameroon. Repeated attacks in northern Cameroon however forced some of hosting Cameroonian population and Nigerian refugees to flee into Chadian territory, most specifically into the Mayo Kebbi East area, at 235 km South of Ndjamen.

Limited security in and around the islands scattered in Lake Chad (including the village of Ngouboua and Tchoukoutalia) and difficult access to these areas prompted the Government of Chad to allocate the site of Dar Es Salam, located some 12 km from Bagasola, for the accommodation of Nigerian refugees.

As of 28 February 2015, Chad is hosting 18,131 Nigerian refugees among whom more than 15,000 arrived in 2015. To date some 3,813 Nigerian refugees are living in Dar Es Salam.



SECTORIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE POPULATION

UNHCR is working closely with its government counterpart *Commission Nationale d'Accueil des Réfugiés, Retournés et Rapatriés* (CNARR), line Ministries (Ministries in charge of Internal Affairs, Health, Education and Water), UN agencies (WFP, UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA), and other partners (Chadian Red Cross-CRT, IMC, APSELPA, ADERBA) to provide protection and multi-sectorial assistance to the refugees and some of the surrounding populations.

PROTECTION

Following the 13th February's attack in Ngouboua, UNHCR met with CNARR and local authorities to formulate a strategy for the transfer of refugees, who wished to relocate, to Dar Es Salam. UNHCR deployed 5 trucks, and facilitated the relocation of persons from Forkolom to Bagasola; local authorities identified households where newly-arrived refugees could be hosted.

UNHCR and partners assisted newly-arrived refugees at the site of Dar Es Salam in the transit center where they were registered and were provided with access to shelter, food and Core Relief Items (CRI). Some 100 persons also arrived in Dar Es Salam on foot seeking safety and protection and were received by the *Sous-Prefet* of Bagasola, CNARR, UNHCR, CRT and IMC.

Ngouboua:

UNHCR teams visited three times Ngouboua, right after the attack; and met with refugees, host communities and local authorities. Vulnerable persons from amongst the host community were assisted and refugees advised to relocate to Dar Es Salam.

From 17 to 28 January 2015, IMC conducted a poll with 4,550 Nigerian refugees in Ngouboua¹. About 2,655 male (58%) and 1,895 female (42%) of the site of Kousseri 2 participated. The poll sought to evaluate the situation of Nigerian refugees in the site of Kousseri 2 (Ngouboua), the reasons of displacements, to measure the mortality and the disappearance and to evaluate the type of violence the refugees were exposed to. Most of the refugees confirmed the information gathered during their registration, and that they mostly fled due to the attacks against their villages of origin. They also reported a high level of deaths registered in their families: 732 deaths. The deaths mostly occurred in their villages of origin (67%), during the flight to Chad (15%), and upon arrival in Chad (15% in the site and 2.5% in host families). Refugees also reported 28 instances of SGBV.

Mayo Kebbi East: Following information from the Government of Chad on the presence of refugees and returnees from Nigeria, UNHCR and National authorities conducted two joint missions to Mayo Kebbi East. The first mission composed of UNHCR, CNARR and CRT (3 to 13 February 2015) aimed to assess the living conditions and the needs of newly-arrived Nigerian refugees. According to the CRT and local authorities, 1,449 Nigerian refugees and 366 Chadian returnees were living in five (5) localities of the region namely, Bongor, Pont Caroual, Moulkou, Nanguigoto and Geulendeng. The findings of this mission pointed out to the lack of basic necessities such as food and healthcare. The mission provided the persons with NFIs.

The second mission carried out from 20 to 26 February, was composed of UNHCR and CNARR and aimed to carry out a profiling of the population to obtain much reliable data. According to the profiling exercise, 527 Nigerians (102 households), 553 Cameroonians (156 households) and 232 Chadian returnees reside in the Mayo Kebbi East region. This population arrived in Chad in different waves between 2013 and 2015. Most of them had experienced multiple displacements. In line with the Chadian domestic legislation, CNARR and UNHCR will undertake an assessment of the persons' international protection needs.

Profile of the populations visited in Mayo Kebbi East: initial profiling of the population shows that these populations are mainly Nigerians and Cameroonians. The Cameroonians are largely from Fotokol, Amchide, Biya, Gambarou, kolofata, Limani and Madiné. The Nigerian populations are from Bankee, Gambarou (Nigeria), Bama, Maiduguri, Baga, Bembem, Kangalari; and belong to the Hausa and Bornou (Kanuri) ethnic groups. The length of their presence in Chad varies from 2 month to 18 months. Most Cameroonian reported living at the proximity of Bongor, city with whom they share the same culture and often conduct their commercial activities. Once their local town was attacked they fled across the border into Chad. The Nigerians fled from their native places after the attack, and transited through Maroua, Yagoua and Mora, directly into Chad to escape the violence of Boko Haram they knew were targeting Northern Nigeria and Northern Cameroon. 114 Persons with Specific Needs (PSN) were identified amongst these persons, including 46 separated children, 12 children at risk (child marriage), 33 women at risk, and 23 persons showed at least one (1) vulnerability.

Child protection:

UNICEF has established a Child Friendly Space in Dar Es Salam where there are currently 615 children enrolled, 315 of these are school aged children. 128 vulnerable children were identified including 94 separated children and 34 non-accompany minors (NAM). 9 children were reunited with their families on February. The remaining children are placed in foster families on the site. UNICEF has also provided clothing to refugee children of the site of Dar Es Salam

Monitoring of refugees in the Islands and relocation:

UNHCR and CNARR have continued the monitoring of refugees and have organized 15 convoys to facilitate the relocation of refugees from remote islands and / or insecure areas of Lake Chad as well as Ndjama to the site of Dar

¹ IMC, La mortalité retrospective de la violence subie par les réfugiés, Janvier 2015

Es Salam. On 12 February, UNHCR conducted a monitoring mission to Tchoukoutalia where 350 Nigerian refugees live within hosting communities and met with local authorities and refugee communities. While many refugees expressed during the mission a wish to remain in on the island where they have access to livelihood activities, a number of them decided to relocate to the safer site of Dar Es Salam following the attack on Ngouboua.

Returnees and IDPs:

CNARR, UNHCR and IOM have established a presence at the mayor's office in Bagasola in order to assist local authorities in identifying returnees and IDPs. As of 27 February, the three agencies recoded a total of 154 (34 families) Chadian returnees from Nigeria and 2,708 Chadians who have temporarily relocated from Ngouboua and other villages in the area. This population lives with family members at Bagasola.

On 26 February, the Governor of Bol visited Bagasola where he met with local authorities the humanitarian community and the local population. The Governor informed participants that security was reinforced at Ngouboua and that the population may return back to their villages of origin in safety.

FOOD

UNHCR, WFP and the Chadian Red Cross (CRT) provide food to the affected Nigerian population. On 9 and 10 February, WFP and CRT distributed a food ration of 20-days to relocated refugees and registered Nigerian refugees in the site of Dar Es Salam.

Following the attacks of Boko Haram at Ngouboua on the 13 February and the movement of population to Bagasola, from 16 to 18 February, UNHCR assisted 54 families of IDPs and returnees with food (Rice and beans) and non-food items.

At Dar Es Salam, UNHCR and CRT provide newly-arrived refugees with warm meals for two days. WFP also provides high energy protein biscuits. Refugees then receive a food ration for 20 days composed of rice, beans, salt, sugar and oil, an equivalent to a daily ration 2100 kcal/p/d. WFP is planning to introduce a cash and voucher system for the upcoming distribution in Dar Es Salam.

On 25 February 2015, a Turkish NGO provided 19 cows and food supplies to refugees and returnees in Dar Es Salam and Bagasola. This contribution was composed of 8,950 kg of flour, 8,850 kg of rice and 117 boxes of cooking oil.

HEALTH

Ngouboua: UNHCR, through partner IMC and the local Medical District, supports access to primary healthcare through preventive and curative interventions provided. Activities include vaccinations, sensitization and treatment of common disease. Serious cases in need of secondary healthcare are transferred to the Bagasola hospital.

Bagasola: In response to the humanitarian crisis affecting Nigerian refugees, the secondary healthcare hospital of Bagasola has been provided with two additional IMC expat doctors financed by ECHO. These doctors will support the secondary care (pediatric, maternity, internal medicine) and the emergency room and reinforce the surgical Unit.

Dar Es Salam: Two training sessions were organized to reinforce the capacity of the health care staff that provides assistance to refugees. On the 23 February, 28 nurses and nutrition assistants were trained on treatment of acute malnutrition. On 24 February, 23 nurses were trained on Cholera treatment. During the week of 23-28 February, 249 patients were consulted and 16 cases of acute malnutrition identified at the hospital in Dar Es Salam.

WASH AND SHELTER

Shelter: The construction of shelter, water points, latrines and showers at Dar Es Salam have continued during the months, with partners CRT, APSELPA, UNICEF and ADERBA. To date, a total of 720 family shelters have been constructed with plastic sheeting. Additional shelters are under construction on the site.

Shelter assistance to the displaced population in Ngouboua: Following the BH attack of 13 February and the burning of a number of houses in Ngouboua, UNHCR donated plastic sheeting to the Governor's Office for the temporary construction of shelters to accommodate the local population whose homes had been burned down during the attack; WFP also distributed food to those affected.

Water: 12 water points are operational in the site and the standard amount of water provided per person per day stands at 32 liters, surpassing UNHCR standard of 20 (l/p/d).

Sanitation: A total of 205 latrines and 104 showers are completed and in use in Dar Es Salam, for an average of 19 persons per latrine and 38 per shower. (The standard ratio is 20 persons per latrine and 50 persons per shower). UNICEF works with its partner NGO ADERBA on prevention and awareness on hygiene focusing on personal and living space cleanliness, hand washing and non-defecation in open air. They also raise awareness on the maintenance of water and sanitation, and these awareness campaigns were coupled with distribution of hygiene kits made of linen soap, toilet soap, bucket of 10 liters, Sakhan (toilets kettles) and 6 packs of pills aqua tab (water filters). On the 22 February, CRT received cleaning set made of 50 garbage bins, 10 wheelbarrows, 10 shovels, 10 brooms and detergents offered by APSELPA; the material offered will be used by the 5 cleaning committee in charge of the maintenance in the site of Dar Es Salam.

CRIs: UNHCR has distributed Core Relief Items (CRI) (composed of 1,800 jerry cans (10l), 450 buckets (15l) 500), 1,800 thermal synthetic fleece blanket, 450 Kitchen sets, 450 kgs of laundry soap and 1800 synthetic sleeping mats) to Nigerian refugees and returnees in Mayo Kebbi East

EDUCATION

From 2 to 13 February, a thorough assessment of the education needs of Nigerian refugees was undertaken by UNHCR and the Ministry of Education. The mission established an overview of the students' educational level, identified and evaluated the potential teachers within the communities and among refugees and set up an action plan to deliver quality education to school-aged children (refugees and hosting communities in Dar Es Salam area).

UNICEF through partner CRT has completed the construction of 8 (eight) temporary learning centers to host refugees and local community children. The construction of another learning center is ongoing at Dar Es Salam 2.

On 26 February 16 teachers and 4 assistant teachers identified and took the exam aimed at recruiting qualified teachers.

The information sharing system for better coordination and monitoring of field activities was set up by CRT and IPEP.

An education campaign was organized in communities and among refugees to enroll school aged children living in the areas. As a result, 410 students registered and will start school on 2nd March 2015.

LIVELIHOODS AND ENVIRONMENT

In an effort to create opportunities for livelihoods for the refugees as early as they arrived in Chad, a joint UNHCR, WFP and Ministry of Agriculture and Environment mission was carried out in the Lake Region from the 05 to 13 February. It aimed to make a rapid assessment of livelihood activities and resources available/lacking within the refugees and host communities. The results of the mission are being reviewed, with the aim to specifically linking up opportunities for refugees and selected members of the host communities. Areas explored include fisheries and agriculture.

An environment committee has been established to provide training and awareness on environmental protection during the past week. In this context, refugees will be provided with 6 kg of firewood per person per month.

SECURITY

The security situation is calm. Following the attack on Ngouboua, security measures were reinforced with a curfew to restrict movement after 18:00. During his visit to Bagasola on 26 February, the Governor called on the population to be more vigilant and to report any suspicious activity. He also requested authorities to pay close attention to the refugee site and Chadian returnee areas for fear of infiltration by militant elements.

COORDINATION

UNHCR works in close collaboration with the government of Chad (CNARR), local authorities (health and education line ministries in particular) as well as partners. Coordination meetings take place once a week in Ndjama and twice a week in Bagasola. These meetings, organized by UNHCR are attended by representatives from the Ministry of Public Health, donors, UN agencies (WFP, UNICEF, OCHA, PNUD, UNFPA, WHO, IOM, UNDSS), the NGOs and other interested organizations. The draft of the contingency plan for the Nigerian refugee crisis on the Lake Tchad is being finalized.

FUNDING

UNHCR is grateful to many partners for their support and funding. An Inter-Agency Appeal for the Nigeria situation will be launched in April 2015.

MAJOR CHALLENGES

- Harsh weather conditions and logistical challenges of the Lake Chad Region
- Remoteness of the many islands and limited accessibility to these areas
- Closeness of the Nigerian border and the heavy military presence in the area



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