

## Population Movements from Cameroon to Banki

Before the June 27 involuntary movement of **887** individuals from Kolofata, Cameroon to Banki in North-Eastern Nigeria, the number of registered returnees between January and May this year stood at **19,257** individuals. That included the **12,428** people that came from Cameroon between the April 9 and May 22 when there was a surge in spontaneous movement mainly from Minawao Refugee Camp in Cameroon. Also on 29 June, **18** Nigerians spontaneously returned to Banki from Kolofata, Cameroon. This brought to **13,333** people known to have come back between April and June this year alone. Following the arrival of the **887** individuals, the Borno State government relocated 300 of them to Bama Local Government Area where the absorption capacity is also challenged by inadequate shelter, food, water and sanitation and other essential services. The population of Banki is estimated at over **45,000** people. The complexity of the situation remains unresolved and humanitarian agencies, which are severely hit by insufficient resources are struggling to cope with the return of more Nigerians to areas that are unready to receive.

Between 2015 and 15 June 2017, the number of Nigerian returnees registered by the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) with UNHCR support reached nearly **360,000** individuals. They represent individuals both registered in official refugee camps and others who fled the insurgency but were never registered in the countries of asylum.

## Situation Analysis

The Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, Mr. Vulker Turk undertook a brief visit to Nigeria from 2-3 July as part of efforts to highlight the High Commissioner's concern for Nigerian refugees in Cameroon in particular and the situation of returns to areas unprepared to receive returnees. He met with Nigerian officials including the Minister of Interior and head of the Federal Commissioner for Refugees and IDPs as well as the humanitarian and donor communities in Abuja on 3 July to restate UNHCR's opposition to any form of forced returns. He later departed for Cameroon when he will reiterate that position. The common challenges facing the areas to which new arrivals are returning highlight the complex and sometimes unpredictable nature of the humanitarian situation in Nigeria's North-East. Majority of those returning have found themselves in the situation of secondary displacement.

In addition to that are ongoing counter-insurgency operations and reports of explosions in the countries of asylum, which eventually could be the trigger for further displacement and returns to areas where conditions are not conducive. Consequently, the protection risks associated with such population movements continue to have consequences on women, girls, men and boys residing in areas where civil administrations are limited. UNHCR led-focus group discussions conducted with returnee and IDP women, girls, boys and camp management highlighted increased incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) since March 2017, with response services not adequate. UNHCR is also concerned about the absence of dedicated partners on the ground to implement comprehensive SGBV prevention and response services in Banki and other areas to which people are returning. Most humanitarian agencies are unable to expand services to these areas due to the lack of funding and security concerns.

## Gaps and Response Efforts

Limited food supply, inadequate shelter, health, water and sanitation remain critical gaps in Banki and other return areas in the North-East. While UNHCR and IOM are working to address the shelter needs of new arrivals, the magnitude of the situation overwhelms the capacity of intervening agencies. As a result, people continue to be exposed to difficult weather conditions during the rainy season. By 30 June, UNHCR had completed the construction of **1,430** emergency shelters for new arrivals Ngala and IDPs in Monguno. The construction of shelters for new arrivals in Banki was delayed because of limited land space. With the establishment of security parameters, UNHCR is construction **500** shelters and four reception facilities.

The Nigeria Immigration Service is registering new arrivals following the completion of military screening. UNHCR, the government National Emergency Management Agency and the military provided wet feeding for the new arrivals. UNHCR staff in Banki reported signs of malnutrition among children of new arrivals. As a result, UNHCR has requested its sister UN agency, UNICEF to support with further medical screenings as part of the broader appeal to other humanitarian agencies to deploy staff and intervene in areas where they have expertise and resources particularly in shelter, food, water and sanitation, health and education. On 28 June, UNHCR briefed the government and other humanitarian agencies on the Banki situation with particular reference to the 27 June population movement for coordinated response measures. Participating agencies were National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), IRC, OCHA, WFP, DIFID, UNICEF, IOM, IRC and OXFAM.

## Key Operational Challenges

Incidents of suicide explosions and attacks on military and civilian infrastructure including education institutions and IDP camps remain a daily concern. These developments have limited the capacity of humanitarian workers to access people desperately in need of assistance and in areas where they are most needed. The challenging security environment and lack of resources underscore the narrow parameters of the operational scope. UNHCR and other aid agencies continue to maintain a strong presence where it is possible through local partners and rotation of staff where necessary.

