

North-East Nigeria

January 2021

Over 6,100 men, women and children were newly displaced in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States in January.

UNHCR's protection, human rights and border monitoring teams reached nearly 33,000 internally displaced people and refugee returnees in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) States.

UNHCR and partners raised awareness about COVID-19 and protection among over 22,000 people in the BAY States in January 2021.



A UNHCR protection partner colleague conducts a rapid protection assessment with internally displaced people in Bama, Borno State. © UNHCR/Daniel Bisu

Operational Highlights

- The security situation in the North-East remains unpredictable. The operational area continues to be impacted by the **ongoing violent conflict**, terrorism, and criminal activities, which have resulted in the **displacement, killing and abduction of civilians** as well as the destruction of properties and critical infrastructure. The second wave of COVID-19 also continues to exacerbate the already worsening situation. A total of 43 security incidents perpetrated by NSAG in the BAY States comprised of attacks on civilians, improvised explosive devices, and attacks on security forces.
- In **Borno State**, members of the non-State armed groups (NSAGs) continued their attacks on both civilian and military targets, attempted to overrun of villages and towns and mounted illegal vehicle checkpoints for the purpose of abduction, looting and robbery. The main supply routes Maiduguri-Gubio, Maiduguri-Mafa and Mungono-Ngala in the Northern axis were most severely hit. The situation along the **Maiduguri-Damaturu road**, a main supply route, worsened further in January, forcing the **reclassification** of the route from the hitherto “Restricted” to “**No go**” for humanitarian staff and cargo.
- In **Adamawa State**, NSAG activities significantly increased, with a surge in attacks on villages in the Northern parts, located at the fringes of the Sambisa forest. The attacks witnessed the **looting of food** and **abductions**. In the Southern part, criminal activities were reported in Yola North and South Local Government Areas (LGAs).
- **Fires** broke out in Monguno, Pulka, Gwoza, Dikwa, Ngala, Rann camps and destroyed the humble belongings of internally displaced people, increasing their need for shelter, food and Non-Food Items (NFIs).
- In **Yobe State**, several attacks on some villages such as Gaidam and Gujba LGAs saw shops vandalized and food carted away. The NSAG also targeted the hospital and carted away drugs and other supplies while health facilities and some structures in the hospital were set ablaze. The unwavering attacks resulted in the **displacement of several communities to Damaturu** where they remain as internally displaced.
- Despite the official closure of entry points due to COVID-19 preventive measures, **cross-border movements** were recorded at the four **entry points monitored by UNHCR and partners** in Banki, Damasak, Ngala and Pulka. A total of 1,012 households comprising of **2,578 individuals were recorded moving across borders in Borno State**, about 92 per cent at the official entry points, of which 51 per cent in Banki, 35 per cent in Damasak, 8 per cent in Pulka and 7 per cent in Ngala. The major triggers of the movement include family visits, job opportunities, forced movement due to the insurgency and seasonal migration.
- While people encountered no challenges such as Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and extortion during the movements, individuals with specific legal needs, unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), single parents and women at risk were recorded amongst the population. All the individuals had access to services such as hygiene materials and temperature screening at the entry points. Nigerians accounted for 73 per cent while the rest were Cameroonians. **No cases of refolement were reported.**
- As the ongoing conflict persists, **internal displacement continues to be recorded** in the BAY States. Available displacement tracking data indicates that **6,130 individuals were displaced**—4,155 in Borno and 1,975 in Adamawa. In Borno State, the displacements were recorded in Askira/Uba, Bama, Biu, Damboa, Dikwa, Gwoza, Hawul, Mobbar, Monguno and Ngala. In Adamawa State, the displacements were recorded in Demsa, Fufore, Girei, Gombi and Hong. Other locations are Lamurde, Madagali, Maiha, Michika, Mubi North, Mubi South, Numan, Song, Yola North, and Yola South. In Yobe State however an estimated 1,250 individuals were displaced to Damaturu from Gujba and parts of Magumeri LGA, Borno State, due to the resurgence of active threats by NSAG.
- **Refugee returnees:** Spontaneous refugee returnees continued to be observed in January, as 25 refugee returnee families comprising of 75 individuals were captured by the Nigeria Immigration Services in partnership with UNHCR. All were from Niger Republic and came through Damasak.

- The internally displaced people were increasingly facing **limited access to food, NFIs and crowded reception centres**. This was particularly concerning in Bama in January, where over 500 women and children from the community massed up at the camp entrance hoping to gain access to the camp where they would benefit from services. The women were particularly vulnerable as they became exposed to the risk of SGBV.
- Returning IDPs, too, faced insecurity in January. The challenge of NSAG **attacking newly returned communities** remained a major concern as evidenced by the attack on Ajiri.



PROTECTION

Protection sector coordination:

In January, protection meetings continued to take place at the LGAs and the State levels. At the LGA level, protection sector working group meetings were held in Damasak, Bama, Banki, Gwoza, Pulka, Ngala, Monguno and Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC). Meetings were chaired by UNHCR and/or its protection partners on the ground. Ongoing protection concerns were raised and security implications on the access by humanitarian community to address needed interventions have been foremost and the impact of the proposed solution-oriented actions recommended for implementation. At State level, Protection Sector North East (PSNE) meetings continue to be held virtually due to the COVID-19. UNHCR and WFP specifically held meetings to review required urgent actions to mitigate risks associated with access to food.

Protection monitoring

- UNHCR partners and protection actors (Grass Root Initiative for Strengthening Community Resilience, Borno Women Development Initiative, National Human Rights Commission, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), CARITAS) continued to maintain presence in the BAY States amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and insecurity, providing protection monitoring, life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection services to mitigate risks and address needs of the affected populations.

COVID-19 prevention and response

- Nigeria is witnessing a **second wave of coronavirus infections**. Protection partners continue to adapt to this reality by putting in place robust preventive measures, enhanced risk communication, including during border monitoring with temperature screening and community engagement for IDPs to ensure compliance with preventive measures which continued by humanitarian actors to curb the spread of COVID-19 amidst skepticism by the internally displaced people, returnees and host community members of its existence.
- In January, 2,104 key informant interviews were held and analysed using the **site level protection monitoring tool** for prioritization of intervention and referrals for specialized services. Protection monitors also carried out **focus group discussions** and observations employed for in-depth analysis of protection, human rights violations, and associated risks. This helped to provide direct strategic approach, advocacy, and real-time response to protection issues in the BAY States.
- In January, UNHCR and partners conducted over 1,962 monitoring and site visits in camps and host communities in the BAY States, reaching a total of 33,013 people. About 67% of the population reached were in Borno State while 17 per cent and 16 per cent were in Adamawa and Yobe States. A total of 696 families comprised of **9,581 individuals were reached through vulnerability screening**, out of which 1,820 were vulnerable individuals with specific needs. Of the 101 vulnerable children screened, 68 per cent were orphans, 16 per cent UASC, nine percent cases of child marriage and six percent child-headed households. Pre-existing **child vulnerabilities** continue to be exacerbated by the over decade long conflict. General protection actors continued to refer all the reported child protection concerns but the response by existing actors remains insufficient, especially in Monguno, parts of MMC and Rann.
- Out of the **1,073 vulnerable women screened**, 44 per cent were female heads of households, 41 per cent lactating and 15 per cent pregnant. While female heads of households continued to face insufficient services such as access to livelihood, which should increase their self-esteem and increase the overall household incomes, pregnant women continue to freely access antenatal care

services, where they exist without any hinderances. A total of 304 vulnerable elderly were screened, out of which 48 per cent were elderly heads of households, 29 per cent were single elderly and 21 per cent were elderly without care. The **persistent gap in response to the needs of the elderly** include the absence of specialized agencies to provide geriatric care at the field level. Other vulnerabilities and specific needs screened include people living with disabilities and individuals released from abduction and trafficking.

Complaint and feedback mechanisms

- About 432 people accessed the **protection desks** for services and information in Borno State (MMC, Jere, Damboa, Gamboru Ngala, Dikwa, Monguno, Bama, Konduga, Gwoza and Mobbar LGAs). The top three reasons include **complaints about health** (31 per cent), vulnerability screening (14 per cent) and **lack of services** (12 per cent). Other concerns raised include minor disputes, theft/robbery, legal issues/access to justice, missing family members, arbitrary or unlawful detention and forced eviction. Complaints were referred to service providers and partners for management, while others were managed through community mechanisms for dispute resolution. 68 per cent were previously **aware of the UNHCR toll-free line**. Information, education and communication materials on protection services available included preventive measures on COVID-19 in English, Hausa, and Kanuri.
- Human rights monitors conducted 69 **detention facility monitoring visits** in the Borno (59) and Adamawa (ten) States, where human rights issues were followed up. A total of **19 cases of prolonged detention beyond the legal limit** for minor offences were identified, but after interventions by the monitors, the individuals were released on bail. In general, most of the detention facilities fall short of international standards with concerns over access to food, water, electricity, challenges with reports about issues with water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities and overcrowding.
- The resurgence of attacks by NSAG in various villages in Yobe and Magumeri in Borno State triggered a **relapse to displacement to Yobe State** of communities which have hitherto stabilized. The displaced communities from Magumeri in Borno State reported harassments and seizure of their food and farm produces, livestock and **forced recruitment of their children by NSAG**, in complete violation of their human rights. The situation caused the reestablishment of temporary camps which had been closed for some years now in Yobe State. Women and adolescent girls experienced GBV such as denial of resources, **forced marriage**, and physical violence. Pre-existing conditions which have been exacerbated by the ongoing conflict, camp life and COVID-19 engendered the prevalence of GBV incidents. Dwindling humanitarian assistance and food shortages have continued to push women to negative coping behaviour such as sex for cash. With the onset of the Harmattan (dry/windy) season, emergency and **make-shift shelter became more vulnerable to fires** which destroyed food, NFI and livestock in Fulatari camp, Monguno. The presence of **Unexploded Ordnances (UXOs)** continues to expose people, especially children, to risks of loss of lives. Unfortunately, two teenage boys from International Secondary School Camp in Ngala were affected when they picked an UXO on the farmland behind the camp. It detonated and killed one of them.

Protection Response

- 22,753 individuals comprising of internally displaced people, refugee returnees and host community members were reached through 374 **awareness sessions** organised by UNHCR and partners in the BAY States. Thematic areas covered include the promotion of peaceful coexistence, human rights, the referral pathways, **SGBV risk mitigation**, COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement. All awareness activities were conducted strictly in compliance with the COVID-19 measures set by the government. Yobe State accounted for most of the beneficiary reach (45 per cent), followed by Borno (28 per cent) and Adamawa (27 per cent).
- As part of **NFI distributions**, a total of 2,000 households received two blankets each, provided by PSNE in Borno State in Banki and Pulka. The distribution was done in both, camps and host communities, targeting the most vulnerable individuals from the vulnerable households register. In Adamawa State, UNHCR distributed assorted clothes targeting 378 children in Yola, Mubi, Michika and Madagali.
- A total of 62 sessions of **advocacy** and community meetings were organized at the State, LGA and field levels reaching 731 individuals. In Borno State, sessions with response organizations in Ngala, MMC, and Dikwa, addressed observed gaps in services such as food, WASH, and overcrowding of

reception centres. In Bama, Rann, Damasak and Gwoza, sessions were held each with the local government authorities for the improvement of government response to issues identified by the humanitarian actors including to **improve school enrolment**, the situation of displaced individuals without response and to improve working relations. At the community level, meetings were held with the community leaders comprising of women, youth, and the elderly to address the concerns over perceived biases in the community. In Yobe State, meetings were held between the protection action group members and community leaders to promote peaceful coexistence among the various ethnic and religious groups.

- As part of UNHCR's support to **access to justice**, 20 internally displaced women were represented in the courts by NBA in Maiduguri, for cases which include ten women seeking for the dissolution of marriage as a result desertion/disappearance of their husband beyond three years, three seeking for divorce by way of Khul'IKhul'I divorce where the bride will refund the bride price, while four cases were for domestic violence as well as three seeking for maintenance. In Adamawa State, 39 probate cases identified by the International Federation of Women Lawyers were referred to NBA. Letters of Administration have been issued to them at the High Court Probate Registry Yola, Adamawa State.
- 1,994 individuals in need of assistance were referred to access specialized services such as medical care, **psychosocial support**, food and GBV case management. 59 per cent of the referred individuals were people with medical conditions, 11 per cent needed shelter support and seven percent food. Others were referred for legal services and child protection.
- As part of UNHCR's work for **durable solutions**, in Adamawa State, quick impact projects in Mubi and Madagali were ongoing with the construction of skills acquisition centres, drilling of boreholes and reticulation of water points. The procurement process for the furnishing and equipping of the centres have started by CARITAS for the two LGAs.

Challenges

- In Bama, **delays in biometric registration** for new arrivals including individuals that underwent deradicalization were reported.
- In Monguno and Rann, the absence of health actors since the withdrawal of services by ALIMA has created additional **gaps in health and nutrition response**.
- **Seasonal fire outbreaks** remained an issue of concern and a challenge in a number of camps and informal sites.

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