

Northeast Nigeria Operational Update

February 2022

UNHCR distributed 2,000 tarpaulins and core relief items such as jerry cans to support some 500 families that survived a fire at Muna IDP camp Maiduguri, which killed 3 people and destroyed nearly 1,300 shelters.

UNHCR and partners recorded over 3,400 individuals who moved across the borders between Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, and Chad, either fleeing from attacks or in search of better services in camps.

Nearly 4,200 IDPs and returnees accessed UNHCR's 30 Protection Desks in Borno State to complain about their health conditions, lack of access to basic services, and forced marriages.



She is one of the survivors of a fire that raged through Muna IDP camp Maiduguri killing three people and destroying nearly 1,300 shelters. She benefitted from UNHCR's core relief items such as tarpaulins, blankets, jerry cans, kitchen sets as well as dignity kits which were distributed soon after the fire. @UNHCR/Ibrahim Mahamat.

Operational Highlights

- Gun battles continued between non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and the military, **forcing people, especially from inaccessible areas, to escape into IDP camps** in local council headquarters in North-East Nigeria. NSAG members also continued to surrender to government forces. Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States (BAY States) were characterised by armed attacks, person-borne Improvised Explosive Device (IED), abductions, illegal vehicle checkpoints, and other crimes. The situation was compounded by rampant fire outbreaks that led to loss of lives and properties, exacerbated with the food crisis, COVID-19, and general hardships faced by IDPs and refugee returnees.
- In Borno State, NSAGs mounted roadside IEDs, set ambushes, and illegal vehicle checkpoints on some major highways abducting passengers and depriving them of their money, mobile phones, identification cards, and other valuables causing fear among people and affecting their freedom of movement. **Killing and abduction of IDPs and refugee returnees were reported** as they were searching for firewood in the bush or trying to reach their farm land. NSAG members forced farmers and fishermen in some villages with threats to vacate their communities which prompted people to flee to nearby villages and be dependent on the limited assistance provided by humanitarian actors.
- In Adamawa State, organised criminal gangs perpetrated armed robbery, abduction, rape, and sexual assault in Yola South, Michika, Guyuk, and Girei Local Government Areas (LGAs). Meanwhile, **IDPs and returnees continued to face challenges with house rental payments**. Many already received notice by their landowners to evacuate. UNHCR has intensified its advocacy with the authorities and is currently discussing durable solutions projects involving construction of permanent shelters and urgent scale-up of livelihood and re-integration programmes, especially in return areas, with humanitarian and development actors. They would aim at empowering affected families and further their self-sustenance.
- In Yobe State, NSAG members mounted illegal vehicle checkpoints in some communities in the South-East of Damaturu town where they reportedly intercepted two commercial vehicles and **abducted six IDPs**. Meanwhile, **four staff members of an international non-governmental organisation**, on mission to Yobe State, **died** and others sustained injuries in a **car crash**. The injured people and corpses were evacuated to a medical facility in Damaturu town.
- On 19 February 2022, **fire** raged through Muna IDP camp in Borno State killing three people and burning some 1,300 shelters. UNHCR and partners assessed the loss, and subsequently **distributed 2,000 tarpaulins to survivors**, as well as blankets, jerrycans, plastic kettles, kitchen sets, dignity kits, and other core relief items to support about 500 families. The community was mobilised to rebuild their shelters with support from the humanitarian community and the Borno State Government. Similar fires affected camps in other LGAs in Adamawa State, they were attributed to fire for cooking under poor shelter conditions (straws) in crowded areas during the dry season.

POPULATION MOVEMENTS

- In the BAY States, UNHCR and partners recorded **3,425 individuals** (699 households) who **moved across the borders** between Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, and Chad, giving an **increase** from the 2,027 people in January. Nigerians constituted 99 per cent of this population, the rest were Chadians. They crossed mainly at entry points near the towns of Damasak, Banki, Gamboru Ngala, and Pulka. Most were **fleeing from attacks** in their respective areas, **searching for better services in camps** in Nigeria, or to visit their families.
- In the BAY States, **internal movements** were caused by fear of attack by NSAGs, on-going military operations, or gun battles between NSAGs and security forces. People fled their villages for camps and host communities in LGA headquarters due to **killings, forceful**

recruitment of men and young boys, and abduction or forceful marriage of young girls, and lack of medical facilities, schools, and freedom of movement. Consequently this has caused overcrowding and limited access to food and livelihoods, exposing them to protection risks such as sexual and child exploitation, overstretching the humanitarian response.

- In February, UNHCR and its partner Nigeria Immigration Services recorded **2,210 spontaneous refugee returnees** (797 households) from **Niger**. Among them, 93 per cent had not been registered in the country of asylum. The majority used entry points in the border towns of Damasak and Banki in Borno State, as well as Machina, Geidam, and Gashua in Yobe. However, these spontaneous refugee returnees were **pushed into secondary displacement due to their inability to access their ancestral homes** which are currently under the control of NSAGs.



PROTECTION

Protection Sector Coordination

Under UNHCR lead, Protection Sector Working Group held camp-based coordination meetings in the Maiduguri Metropolitan Council and Damboa, Gwoza, Monguno, Bama, Pulka, Damasak, Jere, and Banki LGAs, among other locations where UNHCR leads the coordination of protection activities in Borno State. The meetings sought to strengthen communication, coordination, and collaboration among actors on protection and assistance-related issues, to discuss gaps and map solution-oriented actions.

PROTECTION BY PRESENCE, PROTECTION MONITORING

- Despite the challenges of COVID-19, UNHCR and its partners **provided life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection services** to reduce risks and address the needs of IDPs and refugee returnees. UNHCR also continued to play its lead role in coordinating the Camp Coordination/Camp Management (CCCM)/Shelter/Non-Food Items (NFI) sectors in the BAY States.
- Through the analysis of 488 key informant interviews, vulnerability screening, and focus group discussions, UNHCR developed **a direct strategic approach for advocacy and real-time response on protection issues** in the BAY States.
- UNHCR and partners visited 64,394 IDPs, refugee returnees, and host community members **to monitor cross-border issues related to protection and human rights** in the BAY States.
- The organisation screened **16,485 women, men and children** in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe States and identified 3,282 vulnerable individuals, most being adult women. Registration and **vulnerability screening** of people with specific needs are critical to ensure vulnerable households are captured in timely advocacy and response. The data generated from vulnerability screening allowed for early identification and **referral of people with specific needs** or vulnerabilities for appropriate services and support.
- In February, 4,153 IDPs and returnees (1,021 households) accessed UNHCR's 30 **Protection Desks** in ten LGAs in Borno State. Most reports were based on **medical conditions** of the individual complainants, **lack of access to basic services**, specific needs, denial of resources and opportunities, and **forced marriages**. Other complaints were on child recruitment by NSAGs, gender-based violence (GBV), access to justice, and physical assault. While the Protection Desks resolved some of these issues, others were referred to local level dispute resolution mechanisms. Most IDPs and returnees continued to trust the services they receive at the Protection Desks, including

information, education, and communication materials. UNHCR also received complaints through its **toll-free protection helpline**.

- UNHCR human rights monitors visited 102 corrective and detention facilities in the BAY States, ensuring strict adherence to COVID-19 guidelines. After the visits, UNHCR, through its **Access to Justice** project, intervened to **mitigate cases of misdemeanour, rights violation, and abuse by IDPs**. UNHCR also supported the Nigerian Police with toiletries such as germicide, toilet soap, sweeping brushes, mopping sticks, and detergent to enhance **hygiene in police detention facilities**.

Protection Response

- UNHCR and partners sensitized **41,222 IDPs**, returnees, and host community members in the BAY States on **child protection, GBV**, referral pathways, human rights, and peaceful coexistence. These **awareness sessions** helped beneficiaries to make informed decisions about their displacement situation and understand the referral pathways and access services at the Protection Desks.
- UNHCR's child protection partner Caritas carried out recreational activities, such as promoting inter-school and inter-class competitions in child-friendly spaces supported by the Muslim World League in Borno. The activities aimed at **identifying talents and promoting participation among IDP children** in Gubio and Dalori I and II camps and some primary and secondary schools in Monguno, Bama and Banki where mentoring sessions took place. Staff were equipped with the skills to identify children at risk and report protection concerns to UNHCR and its partner for follow-up and response.
- On behalf of IDPs, returnees, and new arrivals in camps in some of Borno's LGAs, UNHCR and its legal partner Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) advocated to the Registrar and Chief Judge in the border town of Damasak to strengthen the referral pathways and coordinate legal assistance for displaced people. They also discussed with community leaders in the BAY States how the **800 community and women leaders could get participate in the resolution of gender-sensitive and community-based protection issues** such as water/sanitation/hygiene, shelter, CCCM, NFIs, food security, livelihoods, and early recovery.
- In Adamawa State, NBA obtained 18 letters of administration for IDPs and returnees whose parents or relatives had died without writing any will. The letters of administration shall grant them access to the property of the deceased. UNHCR and NBA also signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Population Commission in Yobe to **register and issue birth certificates for IDP and refugee returnee children**.
- NBA represented some 29 IDPs and refugee returnees in court in the BAY States, relating to rape, land disputes, matrimonial crises, domestic violence, and divorce. During one of the court sessions, NBA challenged the jailing of an IDP from Bama LGA for 20 years and life imprisonment for another one from Marte by the High Court in Borno, and prayed the Court of Appeal, Gombe Division, **to reverse the decision of the trial court and set the IDPs free**.
- UNHCR, its partners, and other humanitarian actors **sensitized 2,345 IDPs**, refugee returnees, and locals **on COVID-19** in the BAY States, and **stressed the need for behavioural change** in compliance with Government and WHO preventive measures.



CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT, SHELTER AND NFIs

- UNHCR and its partner INTERSOS maintained presence in camps, camp-like settings, and designated out-of-camp areas in Borno and Adamawa States, carrying out CCCM activities. During camp coordination sittings, they **sensitized more than 3,700**

individuals on COVID-19, **GBV**, prevention of **sexual exploitation and abuse** (PSEA), **environmental preservation, hygiene, and peaceful coexistence**.

- UNHCR and INTERSOS continued to strengthen **accountability to affected populations** through existing complaints and feedback mechanism structures, registering 2,418 cases on food, shelter and NFIs that were referred to the sectors.
- To strengthen prevention, response, and mitigation on **fire outbreaks**, UNHCR created more **awareness** through door-to-door outreach, community gatherings, distribution of materials in local languages, and the use of community volunteers, community leaders, and other community outreach systems. Together with INTERSOS, the organisation continued to build partnership and **collaboration with local authorities, service providers**, and other interlocutors to enhance communication and increase coordination of response, especially in the BAY States.
- UNHCR and its partner Caritas **distributed blankets to 117 vulnerable individuals** such as elderly people in different communities of Adamawa to address NFI gaps.



LIVELIHOOD AND PROTECTION SAFETY NETS

- As part of its readiness and capability assessment, UNHCR's livelihoods partner American University of Nigeria **enlisted around 370 vulnerable IDPs, the majority women, for training in different livelihoods areas** in Maiduguri, Bama, and Ngala (Borno) as well as Damaturu and Gujba (Yobe) in March.
- In February, UNHCR and its partner Caritas sensitized displaced community members on **PSEA and GBV**. As gatekeepers, **community leaders** appreciated the initiative.

External/Donors Relations

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