



BRIEFING NOTE:

Latest Developments on Refugees' coordination and inclusion dynamics in Cameroon

Context

Cameroon has a long tradition of asylum and has generously provided safe shelter to hundreds of thousands of refugees for decades. As of 31 November 2022, Cameroon hosts 491,113 refugees and asylum seekers, including Nigerians (132,151) in the Far North, Central Africans (355,667) in the border areas of the East, Adamoua and North and other different nationalities in urban centers. In addition, according to IOM, OCHA Displacement Tracking Matrix there are approximately 983,281 internally displaced persons and 555,668 IDP returnees in Cameroon.

Cameroon has been suffering from recurrent regional crises that have increased the protection concerns on the displaced and host affected populations. Namely the influx of Central African refugees in the Adamaoua, North and East Regions, the Lake Chad Basin conflict leading to Nigerian refugees crossing into the Far North region and the continuous Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG) attacks in the North West and South West region. In addition, the country is challenged by climate change that

has caused floods, droughts, and by pandemics such as Covid19, cholera and polio.

Cameroon also faces socio-political crisis in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon affecting the population within the country.

This reality greatly impacts the 2.6 million women, men, girls, and boys living in crisis areas and vulnerable host communities that already struggle with scarce resources and increased protection risks (lack of access to services, early marriages, kidnappings, persecution or SGBV and other harmful practices).

UNHCR Focus is to enhance the protection environment to these vulnerable populations and find solutions for them. UNHCR is advocating for the inclusion of refugees in development plans in Cameroon, and in this respect is following up on the pledges made by the national authorities at the Global Forum on Refugees for the benefit of refugees and host communities and in the spirit of leaving no one behind.

Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue – 25th November 2022

Following a Presidential Accord on August 17, 2021, the multi-stakeholder dialogue was established as a biannual meeting under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordination.

The biannual multi-stakeholder dialogue on the management of refugees in Cameroon is a framework for regular exchanges between the Government of Cameroon (all Ministries concerned), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Cameroon and United Nations (UN) sisters' agencies, as well as donors.

The first annual ordinary meeting of the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on the management of refugees in Cameroon was held on Friday, November 25, 2022, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cameroon (MINREX). The guest list for the event included other UN agencies, namely UNDP, WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, UNESCO and ILO, as well as donors' countries and institutions such as United States of America, Japan, Belgium, Germany, France, Canada, World Bank, African Development Bank and European Union.

The meeting was co-chaired by the Secretary General of MINREX and the UNHCR Regional Director for West and Central Africa.

Main developments on refugee matters in Cameroon:

1. Domestication of the 1951 Convention on the status of refugees and its additional protocol of 1977, as well as the OAU Convention relating to refugees -Law No. 2005/006 of July 2005 on the status of refugees in Cameroon.
2. Creation of bodies for managing the refugee status of refugees in Cameroon (Eligibility and Appeals Commission), in charge of examining asylum applications - Decree No. 2021/389 of November 28, 2011.
3. Operationalization of the Technical Secretariat of Refugee Status Management Bodies in Cameroon.
4. Establishment of a structure in charge of monitoring UNHCR activities within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cameroon.
5. The development of initiatives aimed at improving the protection of refugees in Cameroon and ensuring their inclusion (health, education, employment, documentation, etc.) while contributing to promoting the conditions for their voluntary return. And,
6. Establishment of a Biannual Multi-stakeholder's dialogue under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for refugees matters – Presidential Accord No. A 597/SG/PR of 17 August 2021.

Main goals:

The meeting aimed at:

- Tackling the coordination needs related to the need to coordinate the response to refugees and the affected host communities.
- Monitoring and evaluation of ongoing or upcoming activities.
- Discuss the main issues faced by refugees and all other points of common interest.
- Evaluate and contribute to the strengthening of cooperation between Cameroon and UNHCR.
- Valorization of the actions undertaken by the State of Cameroon in the management of refugees.



Four main points were discussed: need to ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum, the lack of funding for an adequate protection response to refugees in Cameroon, the acknowledgement and follow-up to the Inter-ministerial Conference on solutions for displaced persons in the Central African Republic held

in April 2022, and finally the need to continue fostering the commitments of the Cameroonian Government during of the first Global Refugees Forum held in December 2019.

Main Recommendations

- Strengthen support to host populations while developing the activities to include and benefit both host populations and refugees.
- Ensure a comprehensive use of available humanitarian and development financial resources and include refugees of the chosen areas of intervention to facilitate a sustainable response.
- Increased coordination with UNHCR, in line with the humanitarian and development Nexus, to facilitate the identification and inclusion of the targeted populations in humanitarian and development actions that may benefit refugees present at the area of implementation.
- Continue the efforts towards registration and verification of refugees in 2022 and 2023. The issuance of refugee cards is crucial to provide basic human rights to refugees (access to civil documentation, education, and livelihoods). It facilitates the information and identification (name, age, vulnerabilities) of people' movements within Cameroonian territory.
- Move towards the total transfer of competencies on the refugee status determination to the government while ensuring that the Cameroonian asylum procedures comply with international standards.
- Strengthen livelihood programs rather than assistance programs to foster the self-reliance of refugees.

UNHCR in Action - Advancing the agenda

UNHCR is grateful for the efforts made by the Government of Cameroon and close collaboration throughout the years at all levels for the support and socio-economic inclusion of refugees. As an example, in July 2022, a major stride forward was reached with the issuance of 5,164 identity cards to refugees by the *Direction Générale de la Sûreté Nationale* (DGSN), out of the 6,000 planed figure that attests not only to their identity but also that their presence in the country is lawful.

UNHCR continues advocating to ensure that adequate data on refugees are considered and that coordination is reinforced between all governmental, humanitarian and development actors to allow a more substantial impact in the lives of the people we serve. The Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue represents a milestone towards a comprehensive approach on the refugee response which includes the needs of host communities, in order to ensure a necessary social cohesion for a protective environment for refugees and their hosts. Protection is a **system-wide responsibility** which calls for **collective outcome** to prevent, mitigate or end risks and violations that harm the affected people.

UNHCR Cameroon remains one of the main regional underfunded operations with only 29 per cent of funds received out of a total 154 million USD requirement, while the protection needs continue increasing as well as the number of internally displaced persons and refugees. This challenging funding scenario requires a more coherent and enhanced collaboration between the various actors to ensure that the prioritization of funding in Cameroon will allow a better coordination of projects in areas where there are refugees, in camps or outside camps.

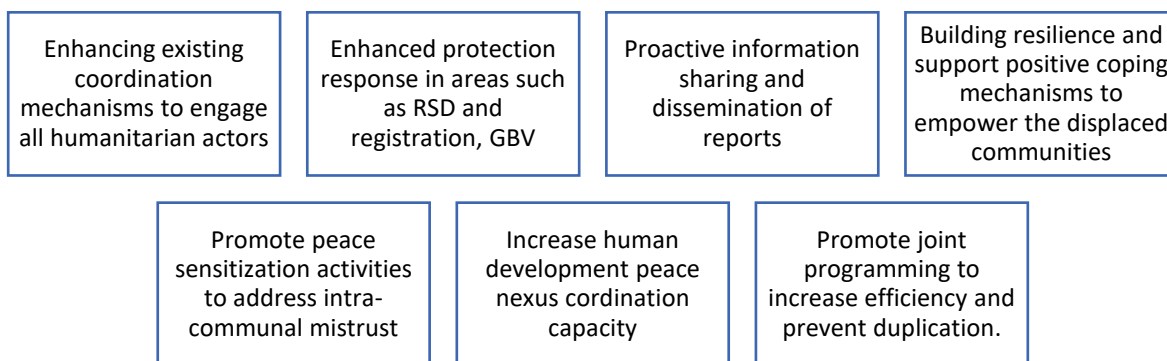
While there are various ongoing development projects that envisage refugees' inclusion, UNHCR reiterates the call to all national and international actors to reinforce the work together on sharing of data, information, and responsibilities in line with the Global Compact of Refugees.

There is still a lot to be done. UNHCR continues advocating for the creation of a **single refugee management structure** in Cameroon. This structure would provide stronger and more systematic financial, technical, and programmatic support to national and sub-national levels, for the inclusion of refugees in programmes and

facilitate a reinforced engagement of all (government, donors, UN agencies and development actors). The synergies created from such structure efforts would also facilitate the necessary follow up on the outcomes of breakthroughs like the Yaounde Declaration from the Regional Ministerial Conference on Central African Refugees held last April 2022.

In this spirit of partnership and in harmony with Cameroon's development policies and national priorities, it is imperative to effectively support coherent humanitarian and development actions, through the sustained and timely commitment of development actors to the support from host communities and refugees.

UNHCR prioritizes the following key areas common, considering existing frameworks and multi-stakeholder collaboration:



FOR MORE INFORMATION

MCO Cameroon Data Portal - <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/cmr>

UNHCR Cameroon Global Focus - <https://reporting.unhcr.org/cameroon>

Mr. Maurice Moussouravi, Interagency Officer, moussour@unhcr.org

Ms. Daena Costa Neto, External Relations Officer, neto@unhcr.org