

1. General Security Situation Outlook

The security situation in return areas and IDP settlements in the North-east remains conditionally volatile and largely unpredictable following the 40-day ultimatum by government in July to capture or kill the leader of the main Boko Haram faction. On 27 July, 48 people including the military and university researchers were found dead when their convoy was ambushed while returning from an oil exploration mission to the Lake Chad Basin. The tragic incident took place 90 kilometres north of Maiduguri, Borno State capital. About 8 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were also killed when their camps were attacked by suicide bombers on 23 and 28 July in Maiduguri and Dikwa in Borno. Several other attacks by the insurgents targeting humanitarian convoys and villages also killed nearly 15 people in the state in the last two weeks alone. The wave of increased attacks further underscores the potentially explosive nature of the insurgency and its humanitarian consequences. Consequently, as multiple Boko Haram factions step up their attacks in Maiduguri and other places, there is some anxiety as residents including humanitarian workers have been advised to exercise extra vigilance and caution.

2. Population Movements

On 26 July, 4 people (3 children and 1 adult) returned to Banki from the border town of Amchide in Cameroon. The returnees said they travelled from Minawao on their own but were assisted by the military with transport from the border town to Banki. They told UNHCR in Banki that more refugees were planning to return but they lack the means to do so. However, the UNHCR team in Cameroon and their Nigerian counterparts are advising Nigerians in Cameroon and other neighbouring countries to exercise patience while efforts are being made to ensure that they return in safety and dignity.

Meanwhile, preparations for the upcoming Tripartite Commission meeting took place on 25 July in Abuja. Nigeria will host a meeting of the Tripartite Commission from 10-12 August in Abuja to discuss the formation of the Tripartite Technical Committee that will spearhead the practical implementation of the Tripartite Agreement signed between UNHCR and the Governments of Nigeria and Cameroon in March this year for voluntary repatriation of Nigerians from Cameroon.

3. Situation Analysis

As the military intensifies its efforts to reoccupy areas currently under the control of the insurgents coupled with sporadic Boko Haram attacks on villages, internal population movements have increased pressure on population centers which are deemed to be safer. Security restrictions are hindering efforts to decongest Ngala IDP Camp and Banki. The military says the measures are prompted by concerns of infiltrations and possible attacks by insurgents as well as road side bombs and other unexploded ordinances. However, UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies are concerned by the protracted restrictions, which also limit the capacity to expand services such as shelter and access to firewood and ability of returnees and IDPs to engage in farming and other productive activities. The reality on the ground in these areas is that the general conditions are becoming increasingly dire as the population remains overly dependent on humanitarian assistance. The situation under the current circumstances continues to have negative protection consequences for women and children who sometimes are objects of abuse in order to access the inadequate available services provided by aid agencies.

On 28 July, the UNHCR Representative in Nigeria met in Abuja, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Chairman of the House Committee on IDPs and refugees to further discuss challenges facing IDPs and refugee returnees in order to facilitate durable solutions. The discussions mainly covered issues of protection, the need for the restoration of civil authority and the proper management of returns from neighbouring Cameroon that ensures that the return process is conducted in conditions of safety and dignity, and in line with the provisions of the Tripartite Agreement

4. Gaps and Response Efforts

Shelter, water and sanitation, health and education services remain inadequate in newly liberated areas. In Banki for example, schools have not resumed since the area was recaptured nearly 2 years ago. WFP supplies food to every household twice a month, and the government recently distributed food to the affected population, but firewood remains a challenge. In addition to other interventions including shelter, non-food items, wet feeding, and registration and profiling, UNHCR is also providing charcoal to families in Banki, Bama, Pulka and Ngala where access to firewood continues to be a challenge. UNHCR is working with other humanitarian agencies including OCHA, UNICEF, IOM, ICRC and OXFAM for a coordinated response approach to ensure that IDPs and refugee returnees receive the necessary life-saving support in the face of all the difficulties. As a result of these collaborated efforts, the agencies have largely succeeded in mitigating the possibility of any outbreak in camps and communities so far.

5. Key Operational Challenges

Lack of road access to IDP and return areas outside Maiduguri is significantly affecting response including movement of items. Boko Haram is also targeting relief convoys, stealing items and taking occupants hostage in exchange for ransom. UN helicopters remain the only means of transport for humanitarian workers. In Maiduguri, attacks on the town and IDP camps are also making interventions and service delivery operationally challenging.

