

UNHCR COVID-19 Response - Cameroon refugee situation, Nigeria

11 April 2020, Cross River State: As of 09 April 2020, 288 COVID-19 cases have been reported in Nigeria, 51 persons discharged, and seven deaths recorded. As of 31 March 2020, 57,809 Cameroonian refugees have been registered in Akwa-Ibom, Benue, Cross River, Imo and Taraba States. Five cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Akwa-Ibom and one in Benue. So far, no case of COVID-19 has been confirmed among Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria.

In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, UNHCR is working with State local level government authorities to improve access to health, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in efforts to protect refugees and host communities from the spread of COVID-19.



The Cross River State Emergency Management Agency's office in Adagom refugee settlement, Ogoja LGA, has a handwashing station with water and soap for all refugees seeking assistance from the office. 08 April 2020. ©UNHCR/Tony Asch



Additional sanitation facilities (toilets, bathrooms) are being added to improve hygiene conditions in the refugee settlements. Handwash station and toilet in Ukende settlement, Ogoja LGA, Cross River State, 08 April 2020. ©UNHCR/Tony Aseh

Awareness-raising activities have been organized for Cameroonian refugee settlements and host communities – Adagom, Ukende (CRS) and Ikyogen (Benue State) – offering guidance and fact-based information on prevention measures, such as handwashing, social distancing, isolation from infected people and where to access healthcare services. UNHCR has built the capacity of refugee and host community volunteer-hygiene-promoters and WASH committees to actively contribute to the fight against COVID-19. They are raising COVID-19 awareness and making sure refugees and host communities are respecting hygiene guidelines. Meanwhile, UNHCR, through its partners, is distributing soap and providing additional handwashing stations and sanitation facilities in refugee settlements and host community locations.



This handwash station is strategically placed next to one of the main community roads in the Adagom host community, Ogoja LGA, CRS, 08 April 2020. ©UNHCR/Tony Aseh

Refugees and the host community in Adagom, Ogoja LGA, CRS, have created a community-based organization called Great Step Initiative (GSI). GSI has distributed hundreds of home-made face masks, soap and COVID-19 awareness-raising among refugees and the community at large. Refugees in Cross River are making home-made facemasks even as State and local government authorities enact stringent COVID-19 outbreak prevention measures.



Roland, 16, left, and Joseph, 14, were friends in Cameroon. They met in Adagom refugee settlement as refugees and continued their friendship. They don't go to school anymore because of COVID-19. Roland's older sister makes facemasks at home on her sewing machine. Roland and Joseph ride a bike around the refugee settlement selling the masks to other refugees. 08 April 2020
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UNHCR is rehabilitating the 60 patients' capacity pediatric ward and the infectious disease unit at the General Hospital, Ogoja LGA, CRS, to accommodate/isolate COVID patients. Also, plans are underway to build an incinerator at the hospital. The hospital has three doctors and is the only government public hospital providing secondary medical services for the Ogoja community which has a population of over 200,000 persons.



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Also, UNHCR is focusing on continuing, adapting and increasing delivery of protection, assistance and ensuring access to essential services, including the distribution of shelter material, core relief items such as jerry cans and kitchen sets, as well as materials for WASH support.



Cameroonian refugees fetch water from a borehole in Adagom-3 refugee settlement. UNHCR is working to increase water supply through expansion of reticulation works for refugees in response to COVID-19 outbreak. 08 April 2020. ©UNHCR/Tony Aseh

Furthermore, cash-based assistance is being used as a quick and efficient means of empowering refugee families to make the best decisions on how to care for themselves. The office began the distribution of cash assistance on 08 April 2020 with the aim to make cash distributions covering four months – March to June – to enable Cameroonian refugees make necessary purchases such as rent/food or other basic needs, thus mitigating some of the negative socio-economic impacts of COVID-19.



Cameroonian refugees and UNHCR staff respect COVID-19 prevention measures including handwashing and social distancing during cash assistance distributions in Ukende settlement, Ogoja LGA, Cross River State, Nigeria. 09 April 2020 ©UNHCR/Tony Aseh

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