

Cameroonian Refugees in Nigeria

March 2021

Over **65,000** Cameroonian refugee men, women and children are registered in Akwa-Ibom, Benue, Cross River and Taraba States in Nigeria.

Over **4,000** new refugee arrivals were reported in Taraba State, forced to flee **violence in Cameroon**. **Urgent needs** included food, sleeping mats, blankets, and health care.

Some **27,000** refugees received cash for food of their choice in Ikyogen, Adagom and Ukende Refugee Settlements in Benue and Cross River States this month.



Anna Eyele, 62-year-old Cameroon Refugee woman can now withdraw money using her ATM card provided by UNHCR in Ogoja. ©UNHCR/Lucy Agiende.

Operational Highlights

- **Over 4,000 new refugees**, mostly women and children **arrived in Taraba State**, following violent conflict in Nwa subdivision, North-West Region of Cameroon. UNHCR and the Nigerian government are **registering** them and providing proof of registration to facilitate **ID card** issuance, freedom of movement and access to basic social services. **Critical needs** include food, blankets, sleeping mats, health care and shelter. The new arrivals continued to trickle in as the affected areas in Cameroon remain insecure.
- The UNHCR Representative to Nigeria handed over the **newly built and equipped COVID-19 isolation center** at the General Hospital in Adikpo to the Government of Benue State on 24 March. The 10-bed center is expected to improve COVID-19 care for refugees and the local population.
- UNHCR through the First Bank of Nigeria processed **ATM cards** for some Cameroonian **refugee families** in Benue and Cross River States. **500 refugee families** received their cards to promote **financial inclusion** and facilitate transfer of **cash** assistance.



PROTECTION

Protection Monitoring

- UNHCR collaborated with twelve government agencies, national and international partners to systematically **identify protection incidents**, analyse the protection risk and refer cases to partners providing protection and multisectoral assistance, including **legal assistance**, advocacy, **capacity building**, awareness sessions, services related to gender-based violence and material assistance.
- UNHCR and its partners conducted over 100 visits to Immigration check points and border localities in Benue, Cross River, and Taraba (BCT) States to **monitor the borders** in order to ensure that refugees have access to territory, to assess the presence and needs of new arrivals and advocate for the protection of refugees. **No case of denial of access to territory or refoulement was reported.**
- This month, over 30 detention monitoring visits were undertaken to Police stations, Correctional Centres, and Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps, to advocate against arbitrary arrest/detention of refugees and provide **legal support to refugees in detention** in BCT States.

Protection Response

- In BCT States, protection desks have been established to provide information on legal issues, rights, and obligations of refugees and facilitate the registration process. The Protection team identified **over 800 refugees at heightened risk, including pregnant women, critically sick individuals**, people with disabilities, unaccompanied/separated children and older individuals and referred them to specialized services.
- UNHCR and the Government of Nigeria **registered 2,153 additional refugees** in Taraba and Cross River States while adhering to WHO's COVID-19 prevention protocols.
- In Akwa Ibom and Cross River State (CRS), at least **300 refugees** received **identity cards** issued by the National Commission for Refugee, Migrants, and IDPs (NCFRMI) in collaboration with UNHCR. The ID card is key to **freedom of movement** and access to basic social services including health care and banking.
- To commemorate the **International Women's Day** on 8 March, UNHCR and its partners **sensitized** refugee and host community men, women, students and government officials on **women empowerment, gender roles and leadership** in Benue, Cross River and Taraba States.
- UNHCR and partners undertook a joint **advocacy** visit to the Comptroller General of the Nigerian Immigration Service in Makurdi, Benue State, to advocate for **unhindered access to territory, free**

movement of refugees, freedom from arbitrary arrest/detention, and to strengthen collaboration and partnership.

- A multifunctional team of UNHCR and partners undertook an **assessment mission to Gembu in Taraba State**, to evaluate the **recent influx of over 4,000 new arrivals**. UNHCR held focus group discussions with men, women, girls, and host community members to assess **urgent needs**. Findings include limited access to health, food, blankets, mats, cooking utensils, water, sanitation/hygiene, and potential surge of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) incidence among women and girls.
- In Benue and CRS, UNHCR and partners trained over 80 government/security officials and border monitors on **International Refugee Law**, International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, GBV and **Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** and **child rights**. The training strengthened the capacity of state and non-state actors to provide improved services to refugees in the settlements and border localities.
- **Awareness sessions on birth/death registration, child rights, and child protection** reached over **1,000 refugees** in the settlements and host communities in BCT States.
- **52 GBV survivors** received multi-sectoral assistance, including **medical, legal, and psychosocial support** through established referral pathways in BCT States.
- More than **1,200 refugees** were reached through **sensitization and awareness on GBV prevention and response** in BCT States. The sensitization sessions focused on **prevention of teenage pregnancy, early marriage**, and education of the girl child.
- **Best Interest Assessments** were conducted for some **34 refugee children at risk**, with referrals to mental health and psychosocial support services in Ikyogen, Adagom and Ukende settlements (Benue and CRS).
- **82 refugee boys and girls** received **birth certificates** by the National Population Commission in Benue and Cross River States.

Challenges

- In all refugee hosting locations, negative coping mechanisms including **alcohol abuse** and **survival sex** have been reported among youth and women-headed households, due to limited food and livelihood support.



WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

- UNHCR built four shallow **hand pump boreholes** to help improve fresh water supply to at least 1,200 refugees in Ukende settlement, CRS. To the same aim, drilling of solar boreholes at Adagom 3 settlement in CRS and Ikyogen host community in Benue State continued this month.

Challenges

- The main gap in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sector remained **inadequate water supply** in refugee settlements, despite the construction and rehabilitation of over 15 boreholes and hand dug wells by UNHCR. The yield remains insufficient and merely meets about 20 percent of refugees' water need. UNHCR is currently operating a **water treatment plant** at a **very high cost** to supplement the water needs of refugees.
- Inadequate latrines and bathing facilities in refugee settlements.

**HEALTH**

- UNHCR is providing technical support to health facilities and workers through provision of medical equipment, on-site mentoring, capacity-building, and supply of **lifesaving medication to 22 health facilities** in Benue, CRS, and Taraba States.
- UNHCR continues to support national health systems at local level to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. **Access to healthcare ensures detection** and response to possible COVID-19 cases among refugees and host community members. In an environment with poor testing, **no refugee was found COVID-19 positive** to date.
- **UNHCR provided medical supplies/furniture** including delivery beds, hospital bed-side drawers, buckets, waste bins, curtains, laboratory desk/bench, laboratory shelf and pharmacy shelves to Primary Health Centres in Gembu and Yerimaru, (Taraba State), to improve health care services for refugees and locals.
- **Sensitization** on COVID-19 prevention, complementary feeding, immunization, exclusive breastfeeding, infant and young child feeding, child spacing, and personal/environmental hygiene reached over **300 pregnant women/lactating mothers** among refugee and host community in Benue and Cross River States.

Challenges

- There is **no COVID-19 compliant ambulance** for emergency evacuations in Adikpo, Ogoja and Takum (BCT States). Ikyogen settlement still lacks transportation for emergency cases and other referrals.

**EDUCATION**

- UNHCR registered 17 refugee students for the Junior and Senior West African Examination Council Examination and **enrolled some 128 students into primary and secondary schools** in Ikyogen, Benue State.
- To improve protection response for refugees and locals, UNHCR with its local partner trained **39 teachers and health personnel** in Ikyogen community on their role.
- UNHCR provided educational materials including **pens, pencils, notebooks, story books**, writing boards, rulers, and chalk to over **300 refugee and local children** attending **pre-school** in Adagom and Ukende settlements, through Save the Woman and Protect the Girl Child, a refugee-led community based organization.

Challenges

- In Adagom, Ukende and Ikyogen settlements, **refugee children** with **specific needs** have **limited access to education**, given the long distance from refugee settlements to schools.
- **Shortage of teachers** across public schools where refugees are enrolled, significantly affects the quality of education provided to refugees and locals. The teacher/student ratio is about 1:100. UNHCR continues to **advocate** to the national education authorities for **deployment of teachers**.

**LIVELIHOODS**

- To promote **food security** and **self-reliance** among refugees, 81 refugee families were allotted 100 by 50 sqms of land each for farming. **Benue State government** had generously made available a total of **180 hectares of land** in Ikyogen settlement for this purpose.

**FOOD SECURITY**

- In March 2021, some **27, 000** refugee families **received cash for food** in Ikyogen, Adagom and Ukende settlements (Benue and CRS), following WHO's COVID-19 prevention protocols. So far,

over **34,000 refugees** have **received the cash for food in 2021**. The protection desks supported the distribution of cash for food to critically sick refugees in Adagom and Ukende settlements, CRS.

Challenges

- Refugees continue to cross back and forth to Cameroon in **search of food and livelihood opportunities** to sustain their families.
- Despite the **significant rise of prices for food** commodities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the amount of cash for food for refugees is less than in the past due to funding constraints.



SETTLEMENT COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT, SHELTER AND NFIS

- UNHCR and its partner, the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), monitored and managed the four refugee settlements (Adagom, Adagom 3, Ukende and Ikyogen), in CRS and Benue, ensuring integration with host communities and providing security for refugees. Over 40 potential crises between refugees and locals were resolved through **community engagement or negotiations**.
- In BCT States, at least **750 refugees** with specific needs including pregnant women, lactating mothers, elderly, critically ill, widows and new arrivals received **food and non-food items (NFIs)** including rice, beans, palm oil, salt, onions, food seasoning, solar lanterns, soap, blankets, **mosquito nets**, kitchen sets, jerrycans and dignity kits.
- UNHCR provided **sport kits**, including jerseys, footballs, and boots to male and female adolescent football teams, comprising of both refugees and host community members to **promote integration** in Adagom settlement, CRS.

Working in partnership

Together with the Government of Nigeria, UNHCR ensures international protection and delivery of multi-sectoral assistance to Cameroonian refugees. The Agency holds regular coordination meetings at the State and Local Government levels with UN agencies, government, and humanitarian actors. The following partners implement specific sector activities: NCFRMI, SEMA, Save the Children International, CUSO International, Catholic Caritas Foundation Nigeria, Catholic Diocese of Makurdi Foundation for Justice Development and Peace, MEDATRIX Development Foundation, Rhema Care Integrated Development Centre, Jesuit Refugee Service, and the Nigerian Red Cross. Operational partners include the international Committee of the Red Cross, UNFPA, FAO and WHO.

External/Donors Relations

UNHCR is grateful for the following support:

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