

North-East Situation Update

March 2021

UNHCR supported the **voluntary repatriation of 667 households** comprising of **2,436 individuals** to Banki and Bama towns in Borno State.

UNHCR's **Protection, Human Rights and Border Monitoring** site visits reached **over 76,000** IDPs, IDP and refugee returnees in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states.

UNHCR supported issuing **8,894** pieces of **civil documentation** for IDPs, returnees and locals to prevent risk of statelessness.



Refugee returnee verification by UNHCR and WFP for service access in Banki during the voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees from Cameroon. © UNHCR/ Iliya Ishara

Operational Highlights

- The ongoing **armed conflict** between the government forces and non-state armed groups (NSAG) and general security situation in the Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) States continued unabated including killings, abductions, destruction of properties and illegal vehicle check points (IVCP) along major roads. This situation impacted the lives of affected populations in search for secure living conditions amidst the restrictions of movement and humanitarian access coupled with the socio-economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic. Humanitarian access to Damasak and Mobbar Local Government Area (LGA) was further compounded when the UN Humanitarian Air Services suspended their flight on 11 November, following small arms fire between security forces and NSAG.
- In **Borno State**, the month of March witnessed intense attacks by NSAG, particularly in Dikwa and Damasak, where humanitarian and hub essential staff were forced to hibernate in the Humanitarian Hub. In Dikwa, seven humanitarian staff were abducted and several aid facilities including hospitals were directly targeted. The Dikwa incident led to a message of condemnation by the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria, on 2 March, emphasising on “the protection of civilians, humanitarian property and personnel”. The constant attacks in Dikwa and Damasak as well as several attempts on Monguno led to the temporarily withdraw of humanitarian staff from these LGAs. Other incidents recorded include cases of IVCP along Damasak-Maiduguri road, Maiduguri-Monguno Road, Maiduguri-Gwoza road and Mafa-Dikwa road, where NSAG demanded identifications of travellers, searched passengers’ luggage, looted food, robbed passengers of their money and other personal belongings, and in some cases, abducted passengers, which has impacted on freedom of movement along these roads. Also, cases of fire incidents were witnessed in some e-shelters and makeshift shelters in Bakasi, Monguno, Dikwa, Ngala, Farm Centre and El-Miskin camps, resulting in the destruction of properties of people and exposing victims to associated protection risks with the urgent need for the replacement of these shelters including food and NFIs. Further, the Borno State capital, Maiduguri, continues without electricity, after suspected militants damaged two transmission towers just days after power was restored following a previous attack that kept the city dark for over two months. More than 40 families of 46 individuals detained at Giwa barracks in Maiduguri were returned to Banki for family reunification after their clearance by the Military.
- On 19-22 March, the **Humanitarian Coordinator** visited Damboa and Banki, and held a session with the internally displaced, stakeholders and humanitarian actors.
- **The Borno State Government** deployed and commenced the vaccination of oxford AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to front-line workers, health workers including humanitarian actors and the elderly and internally displaced people (IDPs) that are above 50 years of age in Gwoza, including Pulka, Bama, Banki and Damasak.
- In **Adamawa State**, a group of gunmen suspected to be kidnappers continue to terrorize some communities including returnees across the State. The situation has continued to instil fear on host community members and returnees on weekly basis. NSAG attacks were also recorded in Madagali LGA. Security forces mobilized reinforcement from Gulak LGA to the scene and engaged the attackers forcing them to retreat. In Michika LGA, the 6:00pm curfew imposed by the government has been relaxed to 7:30pm.
- In **Yobe State**, NSAG attacked residents of Bukarti town in Yunusari LGA with many residents fleeing for their safety as the attackers broke into houses and looted valuable items. NSAG also attacked residents of Katarko return community in Gujba LGA forcing residents to

flee while the makeshift camp was burnt down. They further looted drugs and burnt the hospital as well as the Primary/Junior Secondary School in the community. A fire incident was also reported at Gashua market in Bade LGA, though the cause of the fire was not known, burning many sheds in which beans, animal feeds and timber processing machines were stored. On 22-23 March 2021, a group of gunmen stormed the communities of Abbari Dawayya, Gonisaleri and Tattukuttu of Geidam LGA and subjected members of these communities and returnees to pay compulsory levy.

- **Cross-border movements:** Despite official closure of borders due to COVID-19, irregular cross-border movements continued, mainly from Cameroon, Niger Republic and Chad, through both official and unofficial entry points. More than 1,035 families of almost 2,970 individuals were captured by border monitors including Nigerien, Cameroonian and Chadian nationals. The majority accessed Banki, Damasak, Pulka and Ngala. Their returns were triggered by insecurity in the country of asylum as a result of either NSAG attacks, fear of attacks or due to military operations.
- **Internal Displacement:** Internal movement continued to be observed in the BAY States. The pendular movement is characterised by attacks, fear of attacks, search for better living conditions, safety and family reunification. For instance, on the 7 March, Farm Centre camp recorded the arrival of 35 families of 105 individuals from Dikwa because of constant armed attacks by NSAG and counter attacks by security forces. On 3-17 March, close to 145 families of more than 990 IDPs at Bakasi camp returned to their original area of first displacement, due to these constant attacks. This movement was also observed in Muna camp, where close to ten families of more than 25 individuals were recorded. This pendular movement was also observed in Bama, Pulka, Rann, Monguno among locations in Borno State. However, other push factors include absence of local integration programmes in these return areas and limited access to livelihood.
- **Refugee returnees:** A voluntary repatriation by the Nigerian and Cameroonian Governments, supported by UNHCR, was organised for more than 665 families of close to 2,440 individuals into Banki and in Bama towns. The Borno State government and humanitarian actors, including UNHCR, provided the returnees with various services for effective re-integration, including NFIs, fuel-efficient stoves and dry food rations.
- **Consequences of population movement:** This population movement continued to be observed with associated protection risks of abductions, attacks, or killings on the roads, which led to family separations among the IDPs. Continued anxiety and trauma have also been recorded among IDPs involved in these cycles of pendular movement, with the urgent need for mental health, advocacy and peer support services, which is hardly available in some of these locations. The new arrivals continue to put pressure on already limited resources in Banki, Bama, Damasak, Bakasi and Muna camps. It has also led to crowded reception centres amidst COVID-19 in Banki, Bama and Damasak, exposing people to protection risks, including negative coping mechanisms like transactional sex leading to sexual exploitation and children forced to beg or hawk for their families due to limited access to food, livelihood and non-food items (NFIs).
- In **some return areas and camps**, access to farm and cooking fuel or firewood have continued to expose IDPs to constant attacks, abductions and killings in areas such as Damboa, Bama, Gwoza, Monguno and Damasak. There is urgent need to establish integration programmes in return areas including operationalizing the humanitarian development nexus to respond to acute socio-economic needs and inability of returnees to access their farmlands as a result of violence.

**PROTECTION****Protection Sector Coordination:**

In March 2021, protection meetings continued to take place at the LGAs and the State levels. At the LGA level, protection sector working groups meetings were held in Gwoza, Monguno, Bama, Jere, Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC), Banki, Pulka among other locations. These meetings were chaired by UNHCR and/or its protection partners on ground, to continue to strengthen communication, coordination and collaboration among actors on protection related issues at the field, while gaps were discussed and solution-oriented actions recommended for implementation, in addition to sharing minutes of these meetings with the Protection Sector North-East. Because of COVID-19, meetings continue to be held through virtual platforms.

Protection Monitoring

- **Presence:** UNHCR worked with **10** partners, in the North-East, to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection services, reduce protection risks and address needs of IDPs amidst the second wave of COVID-19 and security challenges. In addition, UNHCR continued to play its leading role in coordinating protection and CCCM/ Shelter/ NFI sectors in the BAY States.
- A total of **76,635** IDPs were reached through more than **1,500** protection monitoring missions and site visits, including protection, human rights and border monitoring in the BAY States, by UNHCR staff and partners.
- **Registration and Vulnerability Screening:** UNHCR through its partners, GISCOR and Caritas, continued to conduct vulnerability screening and registration of persons with specific needs. More than **3,430** displaced families of close to **20,480** people were captured. The findings of the vulnerability screening during the reporting period covers the LGAs of Bama, Gwoza, Monguno, Gamboru Ngala, Dikwa, Kalabalge , Konduga, Damboa, Mobbar, Jere and MMC in Borno State; Madagali, Michika, Mubi South, Mubi North, Fufore and Yola North in Adamawa; and Damaturu and Gujba in Yobe State.
- **Accountability to Affected Population (AAP):** The Protection desk continue to serve as complaint and feedback mechanisms for IDPs, returnees and locals. In March, almost **700** families of more than **6,860** IDPs accessed the **28** protection desks in **10** locations including MMC, Jere, Damboa, Gamboru Ngala, Dikwa, Monguno, Bama, Konduga, Gwoza and Mobbar LGAs. Major complaints received include health/medical conditions, lack of access to basic services, child labour, domestic violence, denial of resources, needs for shelter and NFIs, forced marriage, physical assault, mediation needs, out of school children, Gender-Based Violence (GBV), vulnerability screening, access to justice and child protection services. These complaints were analysed, referred to service providers and partners for management or provided with support through community-based structures, including mechanisms for dispute resolution and legal remedies.
- **Human rights and detention facility monitoring:** The national human right commission (NHRC) through human rights monitors continued to monitor detention facilities and other human rights related violations in the BAY States. In March, close to **60** detention facility monitoring were conducted in the BAY States, to follow-up on arbitrary detention cases such as prolonged detention beyond the legal limit in these facilities as well as advocating on best practices in line with international standards to duty bearers. Most of the facilities visited were empty though short of basic amenities such as water, electricity and WASH. In Banki, Rann and Pulka, absence of civil authority especially conventional police to manage civil cases were noted. It is therefore urgent to advocate for government deployment of conventional police to these locations.

- In March, more than 2,700 key informants were interviewed using community protection monitoring tools. Also, vulnerability screening was conducted while focus group discussions and observations were employed for in-depth analysis on protection and human rights

violations. The data analysed helped to provide direct strategic approach, advocacy and real-time response to protection issues in the BAY States.

- **Impact of protection incidents on civilian populations:** The continuous attacks by NSAG and constant attempts to infiltrate the camps resulted to heighten fears and panic among IDPs in areas such as Dikwa, Damasak, Monguno Ngala, Rann and Banki of Borno State. Attacks on IDPs in their farms or when accessing firewood also continued to impact on durable solution in return areas. Other incidents recorded such as GBV are related to limited access to livelihood for women and girls and has manifest in various forms of negative coping mechanisms, including transactional sex leading to sexual exploitation and child/forced marriages. The month under review recorded incessant fire out-break in camps such as Bakasi, Ngala, Monguno, Pulka, Farm Centre and El-Miskin in Borno State and Gashua market in Bade LGA in Yobe State, which continue to expose IDPs to further risks.

Protection Response

- **Awareness-raising sessions and sensitization:** A total of **1,028** awareness sessions were conducted by UNHCR and partners including community-based protection action groups (PAGs) in the BAY States. More than **46,000** IDPs, refugee returnees and locals were reached with topics such as security and safety, referral pathway, peaceful co-existence, importance of education and documentation and implication of child/forced marriages. The team also engaged gate-keepers, stakeholders and IDPs on the prevention and response to child protection and GBV related issues in the camps and host community. In addition, joint awareness sessions on COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement on the second wave was continuously held in camps and host communities to IDPs, returnees and locals to mitigate against the spread of COVID-19.
- **Training and capacity building:** UNHCR and partners facilitated a one-day refresher training sessions for more than **50** protection monitors and protection action group members in Yobe and Borno States, to strengthen their capacity on issues such as community protection and GBV.
- **Advocacy interventions:** UNHCR and partners carried out almost **50** advocacy and community meeting sessions in the BAY States, reaching close to **500** individuals with topics such as violation of IDPs' rights, access to justice for IDPs, free legal services for IDPs and returnees and effective coordination and response to human right violations among State actors.
- **Access to Justice:** A total of **8,894** certificates of indigene were issued to IDPs and returnees by the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) of Borno State in Gwoza, and Marte, to facilitate freedom of movement and reduce cases of arbitrary detention and statelessness. In Adamawa, a live stream of radio discussion was held in FOMBINA Radio on GBV, with the support of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA). Four information sessions were held in local language with topics including legal counselling/ enlightenment, alternative dispute resolution, fundamental human rights, referral pathways and importance of vital documentation, reaching **100** IDPs.
- **Access to Courts:** A total of **55** cases in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe were referred or represented in court sessions, ranging from land dispute, custody of children and maintenance, misappropriation of property and breach of trust, matrimonial, domestic violence and dissolution of marriages.

- **Referrals:** In March, about **2,305** protection incidents were identified through protection monitoring and self-reporting. These cases were referred by UNHCR and partners to address various protection needs such as serious medical conditions, food, shelter, livelihoods, GBV, NFIs, legal assistance, documentation and enrolment, CCCM, nutrition, child protection, psychosocial support, education and specialized services for legal and physical needs.

DURABLE SOLUTIONS

- In **Borno State**, the State government facilitated return of Nigerian refugees to their areas of origin in Banki and Bama, with the assistance of Cameroonian government and support of UNHCR, based on the tripartite agreement signed by UNHCR, Nigeria and Cameroon. A total of **667** families of **2,436** individuals have voluntarily returned to Banki and Bama towns.

COVID-19 PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

- The Governments of **Borno and Yobe States** deployed and commenced the vaccination of Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine to front-line workers, health workers, humanitarian workers and elderly people above **50** years of age, including the IDPs in Gwoza, Pulka, Bama, Banki and Damasak in Borno and Fufore LGA in Adamawa. In addition, UNHCR, partners and humanitarian actors continue to engage stakeholders and IDPs on COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement in the BAY States.



CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT, SHELTER AND NFIS

- **Shelter and Non-Food Items:** In Borno State, the Borno Women Development Initiative distributed **4,050** dignity kits to recently arrived IDPs and refugees' returnees to mitigate their challenge of absence of basic hygiene items. About **500** NFI kits were also distributed to newly arrived vulnerable families in Damasak.
- More than **1,055** NFIs were distributed to families affected by the recent attack in Dikwa, while refugee returnees continue to return from Cameroon. More than **665** families received NFI kits in Banki and Bama. UNHCR rehabilitated and/or replaced **1,400** emergency shelters in Ngala that were originally constructed in 2017.



LIVELIHOOD AND PROTECTION SAFETY NETS

- UNHCR livelihoods partner, CARITAS, implemented a 3-day Training of Trainers (ToT) for **30** IDPs on best agronomic practices and livestock management, including practical sessions. The objective of the training was to provide identified participants with practical skills that they could be shared to other returnees and IDPs. Participants were drawn from the different communities across Yola North and South, Mubi North and South, Michika and Madagali LGAs.
- Additionally, a 3-day ToT on savings and internal lending communities (SILC) methodology was held for more than 10 IDPs in Yola. The training was designed to assist families manage their everyday income, as well as the operations of the SILC groups.

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