

Cameroonian Refugees in Nigeria

October 2021

In October, some **69,000** **Cameroonian refugee** women, men and children were **registered** in Akwa Ibom, Benue, Cross River and Taraba States.

About **17,000 refugees** out of the 35,000 in **Benue and Cross River States** received **cash** this month to purchase the **food** items of they prefer for their families.

UNHCR helped **establish** an **infectious disease laboratory** to improve **research**, including on the **COVID-19 virus**, at the University of Calabar, Cross River State.



This Cameroonian refugee mother buys vegetables for her family with cash for food provided by UNHCR in Adagom refugee settlement, Cross River State. ©UNHCR/Lucy Agiende.

Operational Highlights

- UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, helped establish and equip an **infectious disease laboratory** to improve research on **COVID-19** and other infectious diseases at the University of Calabar, Cross River State. The facility was handed over to the Vice Chancellor of the University on 25 October, who committed to support ten Cameroonian refugees with tuition-**free scholarships** at the University. UNHCR equipped the laboratory with **solar panels**, refrigerators and a freezer (for temperatures of up to minus 80 degree C) to improve sample storage, but also with air condition, furniture, and an incinerator to improve waste management.
- In Taraba State, some 60 Cameroonian soldiers reportedly **invaded** Mairogo and Tosso communities and harassed locals in their search of separatist fighters. The National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) met with the relevant security agencies including the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Immigration Service and National Emergency Management Agency, to advocate for the protection and rights of refugees.



PROTECTION

Protection Monitoring

- UNHCR collaborated with twelve government agencies, national and international partners to systematically identify **protection incidents**, analyse **protection risks** and refer cases to partners providing protection and multisectoral assistance.
- In Akwa Ibom, Benue, Cross River and Taraba (ABCT) States, UNHCR and partners undertook at least 30 **joint border monitoring** visits, to advocate for the protection of refugees from abuse and exploitation, assess the presence and needs of new arrivals and ensure that refugees have access to territory. **No case of refoulement** was reported.
- Over 350 additional refugees, mostly women and children, arrived in ABCT States, following **renewed violence** in their communities in the South Western region of Cameroon. Urgent needs include food, health care and non-food items such as blankets.

Protection Response

- UNHCR and NCFRMI registered and provided **proof of documentation** to more than 900 new refugees and new births, in Benue and Cross River States (CRS).
- 360 refugee children born in Nigeria received **birth certificates** at the refugee settlements and host communities, issued by the National Population Commission in Benue and CRS.
- Over 200 refugees received **ID cards** issued by NCFRMI and UNHCR, to help them move freely and access basic social services in CRS.
- In ABCT States, UNHCR and partners undertook a **participatory assessment**, to inform UNHCR programme planning, in ABCT States, for 2022. Multifunctional teams employed an **age-gender-diversity approach** in **focus group discussions**, which covered thematic areas under registration and civil documentation, prospects for **durable solutions**, education, child protection, water, sanitation and hygiene, health, shelter, cash-based interventions, and community participation.

- About 50 Gender-Based Violence (GBV) survivors received multisectoral assistance including medical, psychosocial, legal, and material assistance, through **established referral pathways**, to enhance their coping skills in ABCT States.
- In ABCT States, **sensitization** by UNHCR and partners Caritas, Foundation for Justice Development and Peace and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) on birth registration, prevention of GBV, teenage pregnancy, child marriage, sexual exploitation and abuse, death registration, child rights and reporting channels, reached **over 3,000 refugees**, including students and new arrivals.
- UNHCR and partner JRS held a capacity building session on **GBV case management** and prevention of **sexual exploitation and abuse** for seven Police officers who are gender desk officers, to improve **GBV response** for refugees and locals, in Takum, Ussa, Kurmi and Sardauna local government areas, Taraba State.
- The UNHCR **protection desks** established in all refugee settlements addressed over 100 protection concerns and issued authorizations to representatives of sick, deceased, and detained heads of households during the distribution of cash for food to refugees in Adagom, Ukende and Ikyogen settlements, Benue, and CRS.
- UNHCR and partner staff undertook **best interest assessments**, for more than 15 children at risk, in Akwa Ibom and Benue States, and placed four unaccompanied and separated children under care givers and foster care in Akwa Ibom State.

Challenges

- In all refugee hosting locations, due to limited food and livelihood support, harmful coping mechanisms among youth and women-headed households have been reported, including **sale and exchange of sex** leading to increase in **teenage pregnancy** and **alcohol abuse**.
- Due to reduction in **cash for food**, potential caregivers are now reluctant to provide care for unaccompanied and separated children in their custody.
- Under-reporting of **GBV incidences** remains a major concern, as most survivors tend to endure with their abusers, for fear of reprisal attacks and stigma.



WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

- UNHCR installed a solar borehole in Adagom settlement and upgraded a manual borehole to solar in Adagom Primary Health Centre (PHC) in CRS, to improve **water supply** for refugees and locals. Other ongoing installations in Benue and CRS include upgrade from manual to solar borehole at Ukende host community, reticulation of solar borehole from Ikyogen community to Ikyogen refugee settlement and construction of a solar borehole in PHC Bausha, Boki. Also, UNHCR installed 25 blocks of improved emergency latrines and rehabilitated almost 40 bathing shelters in Ikyogen, Adagom 1&3 and Ukende settlements, to improve **sanitation** and **hygiene** for refugees in Benue and CRS.
- **Hygiene volunteers** created awareness on personal and environmental hygiene, menstrual hygiene, hand washing, safe water chain and vector control, reaching at least 1,000 refugees, in Benue, Cross River and Taraba States.
- Over 600 refugee women in reproductive age received **dignity kits**, provided by UNHCR, in Benue and Cross River States.

Challenges

- The main gap in the **WASH sector** remains inadequate water supply, latrines and bathing facilities in the refugee settlements and most communities where refugees are hosted.

**HEALTH:**

- At least 170 refugees received **COVID-19 vaccination**, administered by health care workers, in Benue and Cross River States.
- Across ABCT States, UNHCR is providing support to over 20 **health facilities**, through the provision of medical equipment, incinerators, laboratory consumables, COVID-19 prevention items, and capacity-building for staff.
- UNHCR and its partner, the Nigerian Red Cross Society, sensitized at least 200 refugees on the effect of **substance abuse** and **mental health**, while at least 20 refugees and locals received **mental health services**, supported by UNHCR, in Benue and CRS.
- More than 100 refugees and locals, mainly children of less than 5 years of age and pregnant women, received mosquito nets, to help prevent **malaria**.
- At least 65 **malnourished** refugee children received **supplementary feeding**, after undergoing nutritional assessment in Benue and Cross River States.

Challenges

- Most refugees engage in **self-medication** due to unavailability of medications at the health facilities in ABCT States.

**EDUCATION:**

- In Benue and Taraba States, UNHCR provided **educational materials** to 300 refugee students including books, uniforms, shoes/sandals, pens, and school bags, while three schools received textbooks and **recreational items** such as skipping ropes, building blocks for early childhood education, registers, and chalks.
- UNHCR enrolled some 800 refugee children into **primary education** in Benue and Taraba States, reaching some 7,300 enrolled children at a rate of 75 per cent in pre-primary, 51 per cent at primary and 20 per cent at secondary level.

Challenges

- Levels of school and university enrolment remain **critically low** for refugee children and youths, because of **limited funding** and support.

**LIVELIHOODS**

- UNHCR and partners Mediatrix Foundation and CUSO International completed **vocational training** for 850 refugees across Benue, Cross River and Taraba States, who are being provided with **business starter kits**, to support the establishment of livelihood opportunities, which will also indirectly benefit some 2,500 individuals.
- UNHCR facilitated the **certification** of almost ten refugees with Trade Test Grade II, by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, in Cross River State, through Mediatrix. This will enhance their **employability** and increase the critical pool of technical trainers in tailoring, hairdressing/barbing, and catering.

Challenges

- Inadequate access to land for refugees limits livelihood options, especially for crop farming. Refugees continue crossing back and forth to Cameroon in **search of food and livelihood opportunities** to sustain their families.



FOOD SECURITY

- Some 17,000 refugees from almost 3,900 families, received **cash** for three months, to purchase **the food of their choice** in Benue and Cross River States, since the beginning of the food distribution that started in the last week of October 2021.
- UNHCR undertook a **Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM)** and **Market Assessment (MA)** for **cash-based intervention** in Benue and CRS. The PDM and MA targeted almost 860 surveys, including 885 refugee respondents for the PDM and close to 180 respondents for the MA, targeting local markets.

Challenges

- Because of COVID-19, prices of basic food commodities in refugee hosting areas have increased significantly. The cash assistance for food provided to refugees has been inconsistent due to funding constraint. **Food** remains one of the **critical needs** of refugees in settlements and host communities.



SETTLEMENT COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT, SHELTER AND NFIS

- In Benue State, about 300 new refugees from 87 families received **food and non-food items** including rice, beans, maize, cassava flour, groundnut oil, palm oil, spaghetti, mattresses, and pillows from NCFRMI.
- Some 800 refugees including new arrivals and individuals with specific needs received **non-food items** including blankets, solar lamps, towels, and buckets provided by UNHCR in Benue and CRS.
- 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, providing security for refugees, and resolving over 20 potential crises through **community engagement and negotiations**.

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 Nigeria Red Cross. Operational partners include UNFPA, FAO, ICRC and WHO.

External/Donors Relations

UNHCR is grateful for the following support:

Direct contributions to UNHCR in Nigeria: UN Cerf | European Union | Foundation Probitas | France | Japan | Muslim World League| Nigeria | Private donors Nigeria | Other private donors | Spain | United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security | United States of America.

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Softly earmarked contributions: Germany 37 million | United States of America 33 million | Private donors Australia 8.7 million | Canada 5.6 million | Private donors Germany 2.6 million.

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