

Joint Statement: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Heartland Alliance International (HAI) on the occasion of the World Day against Trafficking in Persons.

In North-East Nigeria, Humanitarian Partners Take Steps to Tackle Trafficking in Conflict

Maiduguri - In north-east Nigeria, over 7.1 million people, including 4.2 million children, need humanitarian assistance as a result of a crisis that is now in its tenth year. 1.8 million internally displaced persons live in often overcrowded camps and host communities across Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States with little or no means of survival.

Insufficient food, shelter and other basic necessities increase the vulnerabilities of the affected populations to trafficking in persons (TiP). This heinous crime happens in homes and communities, either internally within the countries' borders, or externally, when victims of trafficking are exploited outside Nigeria. Sometimes, trafficking happens unbeknown to the victims, and at other times, fear and risks of stigmatization act as deterrents for people to report, making it difficult to estimate the number of victims.

Female and child-headed households as well as unaccompanied and separated children are particularly at risk of gender-based violence, child recruitment, abduction and TiP. In addition to stigmatization, victims of trafficking often face insufficient attention, care, and support. Protective community structures that cater for women and children are eroding fast due to conflict, social and economic pressure, thus giving further exposing them to trafficking.

The theme for this year's World Day Against Trafficking, "Call Your Government to Action" coincides with the establishment of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Task Force (ATiPTF), which was officially launched in Maiduguri, Borno State on 9 July. The Task Force seeks to integrate mitigation and prevention of TiP through awareness raising, and include anti-trafficking measures in the humanitarian response. For the victims of trafficking, the Task Force seek to strengthen the capacity of key stakeholders to identify victims, and to provide protection and direct assistance, promoting positive coping mechanisms and resilience skills.

As stated by the UNHCR Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Antonio Canhandula "Human trafficking is dehumanizing, and providing support to the affected persons helps them regain their human dignity. Our joint actions are a message that human beings are not a commodity to be monetized. We continue to bring global human solidarity to the survivors."

UNHCR, IOM, and HAI are coming together to support the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Task Force (ATiPTF) to achieve the abovementioned objectives in north-east Nigeria.

"IOM stands firmly with NAPTIP and its humanitarian partners in their efforts to eliminate trafficking, bringing perpetrators to face their crimes, and provide relief to victims all over the country," said Franz Celestin, IOM Nigeria Chief of Mission. "We will continue our pursuit to achieve common goals and would like to assure the government of Borno of our unwavering support today and in years to come."

As concluded by HAI Country Director, Ochonye Bartholomew, "Quality services should be provided to victims of trafficking to create resilience of individuals and conflict affected communities in the Northeast."

For more information, please contact

Jorge Galindo, IOM Nigeria, Tel: +234 803 645 2973, Email: jgalindo@iom.int

Bina Emanvel, UNHCR Nigeria, Tel: +234 8090161438, Email: emanvel@unhcr.org