Northeast Nigeria Operational Update
July 2021

Almost 64,500 IDPs, returnees and other Nigerians reached with over 1,540 protection monitoring missions in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States.

UNHCR reached more than 2,200 people with over 70 awareness sessions on COVID-19 and general security, at border entry points in Borno and Yobe States.

The UNHAS started flight operations between Maiduguri and Damaturu, which may ease the difficulties faced by humanitarian organizations in delivering humanitarian programmes.

Sixty-year-old, Mukhtar Ibrahim, has been displaced from Baga, Borno State, for three year now. He cultivates rice in front of his UNHCR-given shelter in Stadium camp, which helps in providing for his wife and ten children. Rice farming used to be Ibrahim’s main occupation back in Baga before displacement. © UNHCR /Francis Gambia.
Operational Highlights

- In July, the Northeast Nigeria and Lake Chad Basin areas witnessed intensified security and political activities, which greatly hampered general humanitarian response. The non-state armed groups (NSAGs) continued to terrorise communities in different UNHCR operational locations in Northeast Nigeria, causing fear, panic, and inability to go to farms. They also attacked and killed Cameroonian soldiers several times at the Nigeria-Cameroon borders within a very short period. This forced the UN to temporarily suspend humanitarian activities in the area.

- On 14 July, unidentified persons broke into the UNHCR protection desk at Agric camp of Dikwa local government area and stole solar batteries. Partners quickly reported the incident to the community elders, the civilian joint task force and the police. The police arrested two suspects and instituted investigations. The stolen items were recovered two days later. Solar panels and batteries are some of the most valuable and expensive items, particularly in Maiduguri and its vicinities where there is lack of electricity.

- Economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to take its toll on the vulnerable civilian and displaced populations in Northeast Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin region. Most people still run the risk of getting infected because of non-compliance to prevention protocols, but prices of basic commodities continue to skyrocket, leaving many at the mercy of humanitarian assistance. The situation is worsened by the reluctance or refusal of most people to receive the COVID-19 vaccines as part of misconceptions. However, in its COVID-19 vaccination campaign, the Government in the Northeast have continued to target frontline workers in the region as a measure of curbing the spread of the virus.

- UNHCR and GISCOR border protection monitors in Banki conducted 6 border visits, organized close to 10 awareness sessions on COVID-19 preventive and personal hygiene measures, reaching more than 50 people. Similarly, UNHCR and partners conducted awareness sessions on COVID-19 for more than 80 people at the Chunguliski border entry point. In Pulka, the border monitors reached more than 150 people with 5 awareness sessions on COVID-19 and peaceful co-existence.

- Adamawa State was relatively calm and peaceful during most parts of July. However, NSAG members attacked Dabna community in Hong local government area, considered the food basket of the State, killing 18 people and injuring several others, who were referred for medical attention. The rate of kidnapping also reduced during the period under review, with 2 kidnapping cases recorded in Madanya community of Mubi South local government area and Yadium ward in Fufore local government area. NSAG also attacked Midul Primary Centre in Madagali local government area, carting away mattresses, solar panels, and medical supplies. To curtail these common criminal activities, the Adamawa State Government imposed a night curfew for tricycle riders from 2200hrs to 800hrs. The insecurity in the State was also reportedly compromised by cases of Cholera in Yola North and Girei local government areas. However, UNHCR partners and government actors have continued to intensify response to the outbreak.

- In Yobe State, NSAG members attacked Gujba local government area and looted a large quantity of food items and fuel before retreating. Security forces drafted a reinforcement from Buni-Yadi to the scene, but the insurgents left before they arrive. Meanwhile, fighters also raided the residence of a local vigilante leader in Ngirbuwa village, killing 2 of his children and 5 other members of the community. The vigilante leader was not at home at the time of the raid. The fighters also raided a newly reconstructed health facility in the village but found no drugs, so, they retreated. These constant attacks have continued to
instill constant fear and tension in most return communities and villages within Gujba local government area.

- On 14 July, the **UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS)** started flight operations between Maiduguri and Damaturu, flying for about 40 minutes. The helicopter took off from the Maiduguri International Airport at around 1145hrs and arrived Damaturu, the Yobe State capital, at 1225hrs. The start of UNHAS operations on this new route comes as a welcome relief to many because it will reduce the risk of exposure to NSAG attacks, abductions, for those commuters taking this important highway, and will ease the logistical difficulties faced by humanitarian organizations in programme delivery to Yobe State. In the immediate past, due to the risk associated with road movements on the Maiduguri-Damaturu highway, commuters were constrained to access Damaturu through alternative routes and by flights via Abuja, which was very costly, long and inconvenient.

- **Cross Border Movements**: In July, UNHCR and partners continued to record movements across the borders between Nigeria and its neighbors. For instance, between the Niger-Nigeria border in the Damasak local government area, the movements were not as frequent when compared to previous months before the onset of the rains. There was a rise in the water level in the Ali Shuwa river, situated between Damasak and Niger, which made crossing difficult for many. However, GISCOR recorded the movement of more than 60 refugee returnees into Damasak from various locations in Niger Republic, including Awaridi, Tournour, Garin Wanzam, and Diffa. Reasons for their return to Nigeria included insecurity and poor living conditions in Niger. Although they were allocated shelters at Government Secondary School camp, where they are currently residing, most of the returnees urgently need food and none-food items (NFIs).

- **Internal Displacements**: Internal movements leading to secondary displacements continued to be observed in the Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) States as insecurity persistently forced newly displaced people, especially from inaccessible areas, into camps. The trend was observed in some villages and localities in Bama, Gwoza, Dikwa, and Pulka local government areas, among others. The movements in these areas were mainly linked to lack of access to basic amenities like food, shelters, and NFIs in the camps or areas of return. For instance, people recently returned by the Borno State Government from Muna Garage camp to Mafa were seen returning to Jere and the Maiduguri Metropolitan Centre (MMC) due to attacks in Mafa, particularly in Ajiri ward. On 17-18 July, almost 75 families arrived at Farm Centre camp in Maiduguri.

- **Refugee returnees**: There was a sustained trend of spontaneous refugee returns at the borders across the BAY States in Northeast Nigeria, during July. For instance, UNHCR in partnership with the Nigeria Immigration Service captured close to 500 individual refugee returnees, from Cameroon and Niger, through Banki, Damasak, Gwoza and Pulka entry points.

- **The Borno State Government Return Plan**: The Government continued to return internally displaced people (IDPs) to their places of origin. During July, the Borno State Government relocated more than 830 families of over 4,400 individuals from Muna and Farm centre camps to Ajiri, Majigine, Abbari, Maafa and Mafa wards in Mafa local government area. These movements happened amid security challenges and absence of assessment to determine the minimum standards to inform the return. To this end, there is need to continue to advocate on the implementation of the minimum standards outlined in the Borno State Government Return Strategy 2019. The implementation of these standards will ensure that returns are informed, planned, safe, dignified, and sustainable.

- **The Borno State Government** continued to relocate internally displaced people to their original areas. According to INTERSOS, the government relocated almost 1,845 families from different camps and host communities in Monguno local government areas to various
return locations in Kukawa local government area of the State, including Doro, which UNHCR fears remain insecure for beneficiaries, and out of the reach of any humanitarian response/assistance due to deadly activities by NSAG. The government has also announced it would continue the exercise in the weeks ahead, as per reports by UNHCR protection monitors in the field.

- **Consequences of population movements**: During the return exercise, the government distributed food and gave out money to individual beneficiaries as well as families upon arrival at the return locations. But the humanitarian community, including the government’s protection agencies, the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) remained shut out of any coordination or full involvement in the return process, despite the risks involved following a resurgence of attacks by NSAG in the Northeast. However, UNHCR and other protection actors continue to advocate for a principled return by the Borno Government in respect of its own return strategy and other international best practices in the face of the ongoing security risks.

- **Key Informant Interviews (KII) s** and observations equally revealed serious protection concerns such as limited access to food, livelihoods, protection safety nets, and NFIs among the returned people (IDPs and IDP returnees), especially in their return locations. Such limited access to basic services continued to negatively impact many families. Also, heavy rainfalls and windstorms caused disastrous flooding of camps and host communities, thereby destroying shelters, food and NFIs exacerbating further hardship on beneficiaries, amid the COVID-19 pandemic in places like Bama, Banki, Monguno, Pulka, Damasak, Damboa, Rann, and camps in the MMC and Jere local government areas in Borno State, as well as Gujba and Damaturu in Yobe State. The IDP returnees also faced limited access to cooking fuel, a concern that UNHCR resolved by advocating for fuel efficiency stove and briquettes as alternative sources of cooking fuel in the return areas. The connection between safe sources of energy and gender-based violence (GBV) unfortunately continues to be registered especially for women and girls as they go about fetching firewood for domestic purposes. After the return exercise, GBV cases were reported, including denial of resources, physical assaults, and sexual exploitation, some of which resulted in family separations in return locations, such as Bama, Gwoza, Monguno, and Ngala.

### Protection Sector Coordination

During a visit to the military in Gwoza, members of the Protection Sector Working Group followed up with an advocacy on the humanitarian and civilian character of camps, while also decrying the frequent presence of IDP children at military structures during school hours. The military promised to address the issues raised to ensure the safety of IDPs, IDP returnees, refugee returnees, and host community members in the camps. The military equally requested the sector to report every negative issue involving any military officer to the knowledge of the military hierarchy within 24 hours for real-time response.

### Protection Monitoring

- **Presence**: Amid security challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic and devastating floods caused by torrential rains, UNHCR, GISCOR, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), INTERSOS, Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), Caritas, American University in Nigeria (AUN), and Borno Women Development Initiative (BOWDI), as well as general protection actors have maintained presence to reduce risks and address needs of beneficiaries by delivering
UNHCR conducted close to 2,145 **Key Informants Interviews (KII)** through the protection monitoring tool, while analysing them alongside its vulnerability screening, focus group discussions (FGD) and observations. This analysis has helped to provide direct strategic approach, for advocacy, and real-time response on protection issues in the BAY States.

Close to 64,500 IDPs, returnees and other local Nigerians were reached with over 1,540 **protection monitoring missions/site visits** (protection, human rights, and border monitoring) conducted in the BAY States, by UNHCR staff and partners. Almost 700 protection monitoring exercises, were conducted in Borno, more than 555 in Adamawa, and 290 in Yobe. This shows that Borno has the highest percentage of protection monitoring exercises/site visits because of multiple partners and geographic coverage/number of local government areas.

**Registration and Vulnerability Screening**: Vulnerability screening and registration of people with specific needs is critical to ensuring most vulnerable families are captured to inform real-time response and advocacy to stakeholders on gaps and needs. In July, UNHCR screened close to 7,000 displaced people from 1,164 families in 10 local government areas in Borno State, 4 local government areas in Adamawa State, and 2 local government areas in Yobe State.

**Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) - complaint and feedback mechanisms**: In July, some 4,030 IDPs, IDP returnees, and local Nigerians (835 families) accessed UNHCR’s 28 protection desks in the MMC, Jere, Damboa, Gamboru Ngala, Dikwa, Monguno, Bama, Kon Dougna, Gwoza, and Mobbar local government areas for information, education, and communication (IEC) materials on protection services, flood safety, and COVID-19, in English, Hausa and Kanuri languages. At these desks, they also tabled major complaints about their health/medical conditions, lack of access to basic services, specific needs, legal issues/access to justice, and denial of resources or opportunities. Others were perpetration of domestic violence, child labour/hawking/begging, GBV, theft/robbery, violation of human rights, intimidation/threat, out-of-school cases, and psychological and emotional abuse, among others. These complaints were referred to service providers and partners for intervention/management. Others were managed through UNHCR’s Community Mechanism for Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice project. Affected populations and relevant stakeholders continued to recognize and appreciate the significant role played by the protection desks in the various locations.

**Human rights and detention facility monitoring**: Human rights monitors conducted 82 correction and detention facility monitoring visits in the BAY States. This was done in strict adherence to the COVID-19 guidelines and protocols as 63 visits being undertaken in Borno, 15 in Adamawa, and 4 in Yobe. UNHCR’s partner NBA identified and intervened in cases of arbitrary or prolonged detention beyond the legal limit. The NBA established from these visits that all the detention facilities fall short of international standards, lack most basic amenities such as water, electricity and WASH facilities. However, the NBA followed up on human rights issues in facilities as observed. For an improvement in the situation of conditions in these centres, human rights monitors continue to monitor them at the State and divisional police structures in the local government areas. This is done as a mitigation measure against the violation of rights and abuse by duty bearers in these government correctional structures.

** Alleged perpetrators**: It was found that 28.41% of the alleged perpetrators included family members, especially for GBV cases; 23.86% unknown cases; 21.59% cases caused by NSAG; 11.36% cases by host community members; 10.28% cases by civilian populations; and 2.27% cases by the army and some humanitarian actors. However, most humanitarian actors, including UNHCR and partners, have continued to engage stakeholders to protect
those at risk and provide support to survivors/victims, while ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice through the organisation’s Access to Justice project, in coordination with other humanitarian bodies.

■ **Most affected areas**: Bama recorded the highest incidents of human rights violations with 27.27%, followed by Gwoza with 17.05%, Jere with 15.91%, Damboa with 11.36%, while Dikwa and Konduga recorded 5.68% each, and Mobbar (Damasak) and Monguno 4.55% each. Gujba recorded 3.41%, Mubi South 2.27%, and 1.14% each for Fufure and Kala/Balge.

■ **Impact of incidents on civilian populations**: Most of the incidents were recorded in GBV, attacks by NSAGs with attendant destruction of properties, physical assault and devastating floods/windstorms caused by heavy rains. These have exacerbated the pre-existing vulnerabilities of the people UNHCR is serving, leading to further hardship and negative coping mechanisms.

**Protection Response**

■ **Awareness raising and sensitization**: UNHCR and partners, including community-based Protection Action Groups (PAGs), conducted over 1,685 awareness activities for more than 49,840 IDPs, IDP returnees and host community members in the BAY States. UNHCR also reached over 9,440 people of the same category through door-to-door awareness on COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), girl child education, sexual exploitation, and abuse (SEA), implication of early/forced marriages, and peaceful co-existence.

UNHCR’s CCCM partner INTERSOS conducted **community awareness sessions** on flood prevention, response, and mitigation in Monguno, Banki, Ngala, and Damasak, Caritas carried out similar sessions for out-of-camps beneficiaries in Adamawa and Yobe States. The sessions empowered beneficiaries to make rights-based decisions under their displacement situations. They also learnt the referral pathways to report abuses, exploitation and protection concerns when accessing available services.

■ **Training and capacity building**: UNHCR, in collaboration with NEMA and IOM, conducted a 4-day **CCCM area-based approach training** in Yola, for 30 beneficiaries from Adamawa, Taraba and Yobe States. The training was aimed at building the capacity of frontline workers with the new CCCM approach that focuses on “out-of-camp support” for an all-inclusive support for displaced populations. Also, the CCCM/Shelter/NFIs protection sub sector co-led by UNHCR and IOM conducted a joint CCCM training in Abuja for civil servants across the Southwest, Northcentral and Northwest geo-political zones, which registered different forms of displacements, including flood, conflict, and man-induced displacements.

In **Adamawa State**, UNHCR organised field level capacity building activities in Mubi, Madagali, Yola North, and Yola South local government areas, while in Yobe State, a similar training was organised in Gujba local government areas. In preparation for the roll out of the harmonised Protection Monitoring Tool to ProGressV4, a Training of Trainers was launched for information management and protection staff in Ogoja. In other collaboration activity, UN Women and NHRC monitors organised training and support for 40 GBV survivors in Damaturu and Potiskum, targeting girls of reproductive age.

■ **Advocacy interventions**: Almost 220 women and men were reached through 23 advocacy and community sessions held in the BAY States, including visits to heads of some primary and secondary schools in Adamawa State. The advocacy objective was to raise awareness on the reported GBV incidents in the community and to conduct GBV training for teachers and adolescent girls and boys in the schools, as well as the host community members, including referral pathways.
Access to Justice and legal documentation: The NBA issued 1,300 certificates of indigene to 1,000 returnees in Mubi local government area and 300 in Madagali local government area under UNHCR’s project on the provision of civil documentation, in collaboration with local government authorities. The certificates serve as proof of documentary that one is an indigene of the local government area. It also helps to facilitate freedom of movement, reduce cases of arbitrary detention due to the absence of this vital document and contributes to prevent statelessness. Despite this assistance, the need for legal and civil documents remains high among affected populations in the BAY States. Besides the indigene certificates, 25 probates or letters of administration were processed and issued to beneficiaries at the High Court Probate Registry in Adamawa, to enable them process whatever is left behind by their Deceased Relatives. Some 18 legal counselling sessions were held by NBA in Borno and Adamawa States, reaching close to 400 people, out of which 84 were in Bama, El-Miskin Camp, El-Badawi Camp in Borno, and 314 in Michika local government area and Malkohi camp in Yola North local government area of Adamawa State.

Access to courts: More than 70 cases were referred or represented in court sessions in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States. These cases ranged from land dispute to custody and maintenance of children, misappropriation of assets, and breach of trust, matrimonial and domestic violence, and dissolution of marriages.

State-Level relocation of IDPs: In Borno State, the government organised and carried out the return of IDPs to their places of origin, some from Muna camp in Jere local government area to Mafa local government area. The government relocated more than 4,400 individuals from Muna and Farm Centre IDP camps to Ajiri, Majigine, Abbari, Mafa town and wards, all in Mafa local government area. It is noteworthy that the returns, solely carried out by the government, took place amid persisting insecurity in the areas of return, as well as insufficient or absence of minimum conditions of return, thereby underpinning the concerns and fears over the sustainability of the process. The humanitarian community has also expressed concerns over the unilateral action of the government. To confirm the fears of the humanitarian community, some returnees were reported to have returned to their former places of displacements soon after receiving government’s return incentives.

COVID-19 prevention and response: UNHCR, partners and other humanitarian actors continued to engage stakeholders, including IDPs and IDP returnees on COVID-19 risk communication and community engagement in the BAY States, with the objective of continuously influencing behavioural change by beneficiaries and community members in the event of a second and third waves of the pandemic. UNHCR partner border protection monitors continued to maintain protection by presence and deliver despite the COVID-19 challenges in the country. For instance, in Banki and Adamawa States, GISCOR and BOWDI conducted several awareness sessions on COVID-19, with emphasis on preventive, personal and environmental hygiene measures, reaching many beneficiaries, particularly women and children.

Coordination: Protection Sector Working Group and CCCM coordination meetings held in Gwoza, Monguno, Bama, Jere, Maiduguri, Banki, Pulka, and Damboa, among other locations, chaired by UNHCR and/or its partners. The meetings were aimed at strengthening communication, coordination, and collaboration among actors on protection and assistance-related issues in the field. They also discussed gaps and recommended solution-oriented actions for implementation. Meanwhile, CCCM meetings were also held with service providers, SEMA, and community leaders, where they identified and referred service gaps. During the meetings, food, shelter, and NFI provision, as well as the need for secondary healthcare, stood out as the main gaps, particularly in Monguno, Gwoza, Rann and Damasak. At the State level, meetings were continuously held via teleconference because of the COVID-19 social distancing and other measures.
In Adamawa, UNHCR attended the Adamawa State Humanitarian Coordination Forum, which was chaired by the State’s Commissioner for Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs, and co-chaired by NEMA, OCHA, and the Executive Secretary of SEMA. Attended by more than 30 participants representing various government and humanitarian agencies and ministries, the major challenge highlighted at the meeting was the limited number of partners responding to protection and general humanitarian concerns. Therefore, all coordination platforms were encouraged to resume physical meetings, while respecting all COVID-19 guidelines.

**CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT, SHELTER AND NFIS**

During food distribution near a camp in Monguno, a stampede led to the death of 7 people, including 6 women aged between 20 and 36 years and a 2-year-old boy. Many others also sustained varying degrees of injuries during the incident, which was blamed on poor crowd management and invasion by unregistered IDPs and host community members. UNHCR and its partners have since started massive advocacy to prevent any future similar occurrences.

UNHCR, IOM and NEMA conducted a joint training and capacity building on CCCM for staff members of NEMA, SEMA and other government agencies in Yola, Gombe and Abuja. The training was attended by 90 people from the three locations.

On 27 July, a massive flood either completely or partially damaged about 1,000 permanent and makeshift shelters, as well as latrines, among other losses, across 6 camps in Monguno. UNHCR has conducted an on the flooded areas and has triggered an advocacy process with the CCCM sector.

A CCCM team carried out campaign and awareness on the Delta variant of COVID-19 prevention across Ngala local government area, while advocating for face-mask support to the IDPs. A CCCM team in Ngala conducted a Bi-lateral meeting with Solidarites International with proposal of Rehabilitation of damaged latrines/showers in Arabic/Kaigama camps Ngala. The CCCM team in Ngala also carried out capacity building for 15 community volunteers on roles and responsibilities. Advocacy and coordinated engagement for improved shelter situation by CCCM team in Ngala is paying-off as Solidates International started site selection for the construction of 1,000 shelters in Ngala.

**LIVELIHOOD AND PROTECTION SAFETY NETS**

In Borno State, UNHCR distributed business start-up kits to almost 45 women and men who were trained in fish farming at Muna Garage camp of Maiduguri. Also, UNHCR concluded data collection for livelihoods 2021 monitoring activities (Baseline Survey) in the MMC, Ngala and Bama. In the MMC, Bama and Ngala, UNHCR continued to monitor beneficiaries who were empowered in vocational skills, micro-business, and livestock farming. In Ngala, UNHCR distributed farm inputs to 200 internally displaced women and men, who received training in different areas of farming. Despite difficulties in accessing some places due to security concerns, AUN distributed farm inputs to 200 women and men at Ngala, business start-up kits to over 40 beneficiaries, who were trained in fish farming at Muna Garage camp of Maiduguri.

In Yobe State, UNHCR distributed farm inputs to 200 internally displaced women and men in Buni Yadi and Buni Gari of Guja local government area, and monitored beneficiaries empowered in vocational skills, micro businesses, and livestock, in Damaturu.
In **Adamawa State**, UNHCR trained over 345 women and men on skills like tailoring, bead and bag making, soap making, shoe making/mending, and carpentry. The beneficiaries were drawn from Doubeli community in Yola North local government area, Sangere Bode in Yola South, and Ghenjawa, Muni and Musti in Michika.

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