Cameroonian Refugees in Nigeria
August 2021

Some 67,000 Cameroonian refugees men, women and children are registered in the Nigerian States of Akwa-Ibom, Benue, Cross River and Taraba.

About 300 refugees received start-up kits to establish their business ventures, after undertaking vocational and entrepreneurship training in Benue and Cross River States.

Over 26,000 refugees received cash for food in the month of August. This assistance allows these families in Benue and Cross River States to purchase food of their choice for three months and address individual food needs.

Cameroonian refugees receive start-up kits for business such as sewing machines, ironing tables and irons provided by UNHCR, upon completion of vocational training in tailoring in Adagom settlement, Cross River State. © UNHCR /Gabriel Adeyemo
Operational Highlights

- UNHCR facilitated the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the department of psychiatry of the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital and the Cross River State (CRS) Ministry of Health, for mental health services for refugees and locals in CRS. The MOU will improve access to quality mental health services, given that most refugees experienced some trauma during conflict or flight.

PROTECTION

Protection Monitoring

- UNHCR worked with 12 government agencies, national and international partners to systematically identify protection incidents, analyse protection risks and refer individuals to partners for protection and multisectoral support, including material and legal assistance, registration/documentation, health and services related to Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

- In Benue, Cross River and Taraba (BCT) States, UNHCR and partners undertook at least 45 joint border monitoring visits to assess the presence and needs of new arrivals, advocate for the protection of refugees and ensure they have access to territory. No case of refoulement was recorded during the reporting period.

- Some 300 new arrivals were identified and profiled by UNHCR and partners in BCT States. They fled renewed violence in their communities in the South-West region of Cameroon, while came to reunite with their families. Urgent needs include food, healthcare, sleeping mats, and blankets.

- At least 50 detention monitoring visits were undertaken by UNHCR and partners to several police stations, correctional centres, and Nigerian security and civil defence corps, to provide legal support to refugees in detention and advocate against the arbitrary arrest and detention of refugees in BCT States.

Protection Response

- Some 120 refugee children born in Nigeria received birth certificates from the National Population Commission in refugee settlements and host communities in Benue and CRS.

- Over 50 refugees received ID cards provided by the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (NCFRMI) and UNHCR in Cross River State, to help them move freely and access basic social services, including healthcare and banking.

- UNHCR and partners established protection desks in refugee settlements and host communities, to provide support to refugees on GBV prevention/response, legal issues, and registration, in BCT States.

- The protection desks managed by UNHCR and partners identified nearly 500 refugees with various specific needs, including critically sick individuals, people with disabilities, unaccompanied/separated children, pregnant women and older individuals who were referred to specialized services, in BCT States.

- More than 50 Gender-Based Violence survivors received multisectoral assistance, in BCT States, including medical, psychosocial, legal, and material assistance through
established referral pathways to enhance their coping skills. Five refugees with disability received walking aids and six GBV survivors received dignity kits in Benue and CRS.

- In BCT States, UNHCR and partners undertook six best interest assessments for refugee children at risk, while over 35 child protection cases were identified and managed according to case management procedures.

- More than 25 awareness sessions on child protection, death registration, child rights, birth registrations, prevention of GBV, teenage pregnancy, child marriage, sexual exploitation and abuse response and reporting channels reached some 3,000 refugees and locals in BCT States.

- To mark the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, UNHCR in collaboration with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons held a one-day workshop for more than 65 government officials from the Ministries of Women Affairs, Social Welfare and Humanity, Immigration Service, Department of State Service, Police Force, NCFRMI, refugees and partners on the theme “Victims’ Voices Lead the Way” in Calabar, CRS.

- UNHCR held a 2-day workshop on Maintaining the Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Asylum for 30 government officials, security agencies and partner organizations in Calabar, CRS. It focused on the national framework on the protection of refugees, including effective security management of refugee hosting areas and strategies for identification, screening, disarmament, separation, and control of armed elements. A communique was issued with nine recommendations for consideration at federal level, including the extension of the refugee recognition period and ID validity to five years and enrollment of refugees for the National Identity Number.

- About 500 adolescent refugees received mentorship to help them achieve their full potential and acquire different skills in specific areas such as football, creative arts, gender advocacy, reading, and debate in the refugee settlements and host communities in CRS.

- UNHCR partner Caritas reached some 50 refugees including GBV survivors, child protection cases and suicide attempt survivors with mental health and psychosocial support services in Cross River State.

Challenges

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

- Under-reporting of GBV incidents remains a major concern as most survivors tend to endure with their abusers, due to fear of reprisal attacks and stigma.

WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH):

- About 2,000 refugee women and girls of reproductive age received dignity kits including soap, detergents, toothbrush, underwear, and towels provided by UNHCR in the refugee settlements and host communities in BCT States.

- UNHCR through Save the Children is undertaking installations to improve potable water supply to at least 50,000 refugees and locals in BCT States including upgrading of two manual boreholes to solar powered boreholes in Primary Health Centre (PHC) Adagom and host community Ukende; construction of two hybrid solar boreholes in Adagom and Ikyogen settlements and drilling of two manual boreholes at the Cameroon Quarters in Takum and Lissam PHC’s in Taraba State.
Door-to-door awareness sessions on COVID-19 prevention, personal and environmental hygiene, open defecation, and cholera prevention reached over 4,000 refugees, through hygiene volunteers in BCT States.

Challenges

- The main gap in the water – sanitation – hygiene sector remains inadequate water supply in the refugee settlements, despite the construction and rehabilitation of over 15 boreholes by UNHCR. The yield remains insufficient and merely meets about 40 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. Moreover, latrines and bathing facilities are inadequate in the refugee settlements.

HEALTH:

- UNHCR is providing support to more than 20 health facilities through the provision of medical equipment, incinerators, laboratory consumables, COVID-19 prevention items, and capacity-building for staff in Benue, Cross River, and Taraba states.
- In BCT States, over 3,500 refugees and locals received face masks, and more than 115 hand washing buckets with metal stands were distributed to schools, markets, and motor parks to help prevent COVID-19 in Benue State.
- The Wellbeing Foundation Africa donated 200 delivery kits to pregnant refugees in Adagom Settlement, CRS.
- Over 500 refugees and locals, mainly pregnant women and children under five years of age, received mosquito nets from UNHCR in Benue and CRS, to prevent malaria. A hemoglobin machine and strips were provided to Adagom and Ukende PHCs in CRS.
- The Nigerian Red Cross Society trained over 70 refugee and host community women, including pregnant and lactating mothers, on the production of complementary food, using locally available raw materials in Adagom settlement, CRS.

Challenges

- Lack of medications in the health facilities limits access to health care for most refugees who cannot pay for health services.
- There is no COVID-19 compliant ambulance for emergency evacuations in Adikpo, Ogoja and Takum (BCT States). Lack of transportation to facilitate emergency cases and other referrals in these locations remains a major challenge for refugees and locals.

EDUCATION:

- In Benue and CRS, UNHCR registered more than 105 refugee students for the West African Examination Council Exams, a prerequisite for university admission.
- A total of 20 refugee students in secondary school received school uniforms in CRS. Some 15 teachers’ tables and chairs were provided to primary and secondary schools hosting refugee students in Ikyogen, Benue State, with support from UNHCR.
Challenges

- Levels of school and university enrolment remain critically low for refugee children and youth because of limited funding and support.
- Refugee children with specific needs have limited access to education, given the long distance between the refugee settlements Adagom, Ukende and Ikyogen (Benue and CRS) and the schools.
- Poor quality of education for refugees and locals in public schools remains a major concern, due to shortage of teachers. The teacher/student ratio is over 1:100. UNHCR continues to advocate to the national education authorities for deployment of teachers.

LIVELIHOODS

- 305 refugees who had received vocational training in leather works, electrical works, tailoring, hair dressing, catering and trading with support from UNHCR, received start-up kits through partners to establish their businesses in Taraba and CRS.

Challenges

- Livelihood opportunities, especially crop farming, are limited which leads refugees to cross into Cameroon in search of food and livelihoods to sustain their families.

FOOD SECURITY

- More than 26,340 refugees from over 6,940 families received cash to purchase the food of their choice for three months, in Benue and Cross River States.
- Nearly 16,600 individuals (4,295 families), representing 57 per cent of the targeted households, have undergone a Multi-Sectoral Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment across Adagom, Ukende and Ikyogen settlements.
- The Wellbeing Foundation Africa donated 1,000 cartoons containing food items to vulnerable refugees including pregnant women in Adagom settlement, Cross River State.

Challenges

- Food remains one of the critical needs of refugees in settlements and host communities. Because of COVID-19, prices of basic food commodities in refugee hosting areas have increased significantly, on average by 30 per cent on core food commodities, compared to early 2020. Cash for food assistance has been inconsistent due to limited funding.

SETTLEMENT COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT, SHELTER AND NFIS

- UNHCR and the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) monitored and managed the four refugee settlements Adagom, Adagom 3, Ukende and Ikyogen, in Benue and CRS, ensuring integration with host communities and providing security to refugees. Over 40 potential crises between refugees and locals were resolved through community engagement and negotiations.
- At least 1,000 refugees received non-food items including blankets, solar lamps, towels, and buckets provided by UNHCR in Benue and CRS.
Over 60 refugee families of individuals with disabilities received energy saving stoves in Ikyogen settlement, Benue State.

Working in partnership


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