

North-East Nigeria Operational Update

October 2021

UNHCR and partners **reached 83,230** IDPs, returnees and locals in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States with **protection monitoring** missions and **site visits**.

5,420 birth certificates and **1,600 indigene certificates** were issued to facilitate freedom of movement and school enrolment, and to **prevent arbitrary detention** and statelessness.

Registration and vulnerability screenings reached **10,650** displaced people, capturing **2,000** of the **most vulnerable families** which will ensure appropriate response and advocacy on gaps and needs.



Displaced girls in Banki, Borno State, North-East Nigeria pictured when having a chat. UNHCR and partners are providing humanitarian assistance and other support to the community. © UNHCR/Mahamat Alhadi

Operational Highlights

- The **security situation** in the Lake Chad Basin remained volatile, despite the announcement by the Nigerian Ministry of Defence that 13,000 non-state armed group (NSAG) members had repented and surrendered in North-East Nigeria. Boko Haram and the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) remained active across Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) States, where attacks targeting security forces and civilians continued, including in some of the areas where internally displaced people (IDPs) have relocated after camp closures. Reports received indicate that abductions continue unabated as well as killings in locations of recent returns. In Kukawa local government area (LGA), the insurgents caused further economic hardship to the local population by imposing taxes on the communities. Civilians get caught in the middle of fights between NSAG and the Nigerian military. For instance, it is reported that civilians have been **killed** after being hit **by stray bullets** in Gwoza, Pulka, Damboa, Dikwa and Ngala areas. In Rann, Bama, Banki, and Monguno, many IDPs and host community members continue to live in perpetual fear after NSAGs attacked, killed, and abducted farmers. NSAGs continue to ambush motorists and mount illegal checkpoints along major highways, robbing passengers in their attempts to access areas secured by the Nigerian military.

POPULATION MOVEMENTS

- People continued to move across borders between Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad into the BAY States. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and partners recorded about 1,110 individuals moving across the borders this month. The increase in movements (990 people in September) of exclusively Nigerian nationals, mainly in Banki, Ngala, Damasak, and Pulka, has been attributed to an ease in movement coming with the **end of the rainy season**. More people are now reported to be able to move easily to reunite with family members or search for jobs. Movements also include newly displaced people and those returning from asylum countries.
- The trend of continuous surrender of NSAG members has resulted in **new internal displacements** to relatively secure locations in various the LGAs. For instance, Bama town alone received over 15,000 people from some insecure villages such as Gwoza, Dikwa, Pulka, and Monguno LGAs. Due to these internal movements, UNHCR and partners have reported overcrowding at reception centres and shelters, thus affecting humanitarian assistance. Such movements have strained the already scarce humanitarian resources, exacerbating a resort to **negative coping mechanisms** of survival such as child exploitation and labour.
- Continuous spontaneous **refugee returns** from neighbouring Niger, Cameroon, and Chad were observed during the month. UNHCR and the Nigeria Immigration Services (NIS) recorded a total of 1,430 returnees. About 70 per cent of these spontaneous refugee returnees had not been registered in countries of asylum. The highest number of spontaneous returns was recorded at the Geidam entry point in Yobe State, with more than 440 people. Others were reported from Machina, Damask, Gashua, Ngala, Gwoza, and Pulka.
- Displaced people at the Bakasi camp in the Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC) continued to receive tokens from government officials as evidence that the Borno State Government Return Plan is on course. **The Government is determined to return IDPs to their places of origin**. The authorities have stated that arrangements have been concluded to ensure closure of all IDP camps in the MMC by 31 December 2021. Consequently, many people are being returned to various locations of origin. **UNHCR and partners remain concerned** about the minimum conditions on the ground that would be necessary to foster sustainable returns. In many areas, those conditions have not yet been assessed as many returnees cannot return to their area of origin in **safety and dignity**. This has resulted in grave protection implications such as family separation and **exposed children to crime and exploitation**.

- Despite the challenges of **security and COVID-19**, UNHCR and partners continued to monitor the situation in all accessible locations to reduce risks, address needs and deliver life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection services.



PROTECTION

Protection Sector Coordination

Protection Sector Working Group (PSWG) meetings were led by UNHCR in camps of Gwoza, Monguno, Bama, Jere, MMC, host communities of Banki, Pulka, Damboa, and other locations. The camp-based coordination meetings aimed at strengthening communication, coordination, and collaboration among actors on protection and assistance-related issues in the field, discuss gaps and recommend solution-oriented actions for implementation.

In Adamawa State, participants in the PSWG discussed key operational realities such as harassment of female humanitarian workers by security forces in Madagali LGA, new emergencies and multiple displacements caused by NSAG attacks, flooding, and other protection challenges such as lack of access to justice by people in detention.

Chaired by Adamawa State Emergency Management Agency (ADSEMA) and co-chaired by UNHCR and IOM, a Camp Coordination Camp Management/Non-food Item/Shelter Sector Coordination Forum meeting raised concern about an eviction notice issued to IDPs by landlords in Yola South to vacate their rented apartments on or before 31 December 2021. ADSEMA officials plan to visit the landlords and community leaders to find possible ways of resolving the issue and address other challenges on water and shelter.

PROTECTION BY PRESENCE, PROTECTION MONITORING

- UNHCR conducted more than 2,175 Key Informants Interviews. Findings have been instrumental to key decision-making and response, thereby providing guidance in **strategic direction for advocacy** and real-time lifesaving response in the BAY States.
- UNHCR and partners reached 83,230 IDPs, returnees and host community members with about 1,390 **protection monitoring** missions and site visits conducted in the BAY States. 635 protection monitoring activities took place in Borno, 540 in Adamawa, and 215 in Yobe.
- To inform real-time response and advocacy to stakeholders on gaps and needs for beneficiaries, UNHCR conducted **registration and vulnerability screening** to capture the most vulnerable families, reaching a total of 10,650 displaced individuals in 16 LGAs of the BAY States, of which more than 2,000 were screened as vulnerable, such as the elderly and children.
- More than 3,300 IDPs, returnees and locals accessed UNHCR's 28 **protection desks** in Borno State, with major complaints including health, lack of access to basic services, vulnerability screening services, legal issues, access to justice, shelters and non-food items (NFIs), child protection services, and mediation needs. Other issues include denial of resources or opportunities, gender-based violence, lack of access to livelihood, domestic violence, forced marriage, physical assault, psychosocial and emotional abuse, survival sex, arbitrary and unlawful detention, missing family members and violation of human rights. Some of these complaints were referred to appropriate service providers and partners for assessment, intervention and management, while others were handled through the **Community Mechanism for Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice** tools. UNHCR also used the protection desks to distribute information, education and communication materials on protection services such as education, mitigation measures for floods, safety and COVID-19.

- Human rights monitors undertook more than 100 **corrective and detention facility monitoring** visits in the BAY States, under strict adherence to the COVID-19 protocol. Although the monitoring revealed that the police occasionally grant bail to displaced people who commit minor offenses and allow them access to justice, most of the detention facilities fall short of international standards, lacking basic amenities such as electricity, water, sanitation and hygiene services. The absence of civil authorities and judicial officials to serve in the courts of hard-to-reach areas remains a concern. Consequently, there is rampant apathy in the justice system, failure of the rule of law, and **impunity** by perpetrators of crimes, which undermines the confidence in the justice system among the affected population. The need for a sustained advocacy and support by UNHCR and other humanitarian actors for the return of civil authorities to the LGAs remains crucial.
- As part of the COVID-19 risk reduction activities, UNHCR and partners reached more than 12,130 IDPs, returnees and locals with **risk communication and community engagement** activities in the BAY States, which helped to ensure compliance with the preventive measures put in place by WHO and the government.
- UNHCR and partners, including community-based Protection Action Groups, reached some 48,310 IDPs, returnees and locals with more than 1,860 **awareness raising activities** in the BAY States. The activities focused on the importance of education for girls, prevention from sexual exploitation and abuse, implication of early or force marriages on the health and wellbeing of girls, referral pathways and the importance of peaceful co-existence. UNHCR through INTERSOS also conducted **community awareness sessions** on flood prevention, response and mitigation measures in Monguno, Banki, Ngala, Damasak and out of camps in Adamawa State. In Yobe State, CARITAS and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) carried out similar activities to empower beneficiaries to make rights-based decisions in their displacement situation, while learning the referral pathways to report abuses and exploitation, protection concerns and access to available services.
- UNHCR held more than 20 advocacy and community sessions in the BAY States, reaching almost 210 individuals, including intervention visits to the new Commissioner of Police and Chief Judge of Adamawa State, to seek closer collaboration with Police and to engage the judiciary to ensure **access to justice** by the most vulnerable displaced populations in Adamawa State. Other outreach activities include advocacy on food security, livelihoods and early recovery in camps of Bama, Gwoza, Pulka as well as in other locations. Community stakeholder meetings and consultations were also held for 570 community and women leaders, with the objective of ensuring greater involvement and participation in **community-based protection**, including prevention and response to GBV in their communities of the BAY States.
- The Nigeria Bar Association issued 5,420 birth certificates to returnee and IDP children in Bade and Damaturu LGAs of Yobe State, under the UNHCR **Access to Justice and Legal Documentation** project, in collaboration with local government authorities. Similarly, in Adamawa State, more than 1,600 indigene certificates were issued to returnees in areas such as Mubi, Michika and Madagali. The certificates serve as a documentary proof that one is an indigene of the local government area issuing it. It also helps with school enrolment, facilitation of freedom of movement, reduction of cases of arbitrary detention and contribution to the prevention of statelessness. Yet, the need for legal and civil documents remains high among affected populations in the BAY States.



CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT, SHELTER AND CRIS

- The Protection Sector (PS) North-East organised a two-day training and capacity building titled **“Protection in Action”** for 80 PS working group members from Bama, Banki, Gwoza, Pulka, Monguno, Ngala, MMC, and Jere in Borno State as well as from Mubi, Madagali, Michika, Maiha, Hong, Girei, Fufore, and Yola in Adamawa State, apart from participants from Yobe State. The training sought to strengthen the capacity of NHRC and INTERSOS community

volunteers on camp coordination and camp management, basic security and protection mainstreaming for improved services.



LIVELIHOOD AND PROTECTION SAFETY NETS

- The American University of Nigeria trained and provided business starter packs to 60 IDPs and returnees in carpentry, tailoring, information and communication technology and pillow and bedsheet making in Maiduguri. Meanwhile, 600 beneficiaries trained earlier on crop farming were given a cash grants of NGN 5,000 (some 10 US\$) each to enable them to prepare for the harvesting season in Ngala. In Damaturu, animal feeds were distributed to some 60 individuals, meanwhile the distribution of pesticide to crop farming beneficiaries was ongoing in Damaturu. The distribution of material assistance, provision of protection safety-nets and support to **sustainable livelihoods** has empowered families to become self-reliant. Many families managed to enrol their children in schools.

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