

North-East Nigeria Operational Update

August 2021

UNHCR reached over **80,700** IDPs, IDP returnees, and host community members during over **1,000** protection monitoring missions and site visits in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States.

UNHCR donated **3,000** sandbags to people affected by heavy rains and deadly **flooding** in Damasak, Borno State to prevent further devastation after farmlands had been flooded and shelters damaged.

13,000 IDPs and IDP returnees were reached by UNHCR through **registration and vulnerability screening** in Borno Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) States, to identify **the most vulnerable families** and prioritise them for lifesaving assistance.



His family has been affected by violence and now lives in this camp in Maiduguri. UNHCR as the lead of the Protection Sector is monitoring protection in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States on a daily basis. [@UNHCR/Roland Schönbauer](#).

Operational Highlights

- Attacks by non-state armed groups (NSAG) and the **ongoing conflict** with the military forced civilians to flee, including in the town of Rann, Kala Balge Local Government Area (LGA), Borno State. Some international and local humanitarian workers stationed in the town taken by the insurgents were trapped. Others found their way through the bushes and moved towards the Cameroonian border. Abductions for ransom at illegal road checkpoints, too, were spreading fear among civilians in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) States. Humanitarian activities have resumed in troubled LGAs like Damasak, after a temporary halt over insecurity and in Monguno, where there is a gradual return to normalcy.
- The ongoing **unconditional surrender of some NSAG members** has called for an immediate review of humanitarian engagement with authorities as following some screening some ex-combatants apparently are to be released to their communities. While this may be the beginning of the deescalation of the conflict and open opportunities for area-based durable solutions, it has also created some level of anxiety within some of affected communities in the absence of a systematised disarmament demobilization reintegration and repatriation process.
- The humanitarian situation was further compounded by **flash floods**, which damaged houses, food, and core-relief items (CRIs). UNHCR donated **3,000 sandbags** to flood victims in Damasak together with INTERSOS. Because of the overflowing of the river Yobe, an unidentified number of people died, including children who drowned. Five communities - Kadauri, Masakale, Bulama Alhaji Fulatari, Bulama Gashe, and Bulama Saje - remain at risk of total submersion. Most farmlands have already been submerged, leaving many IDPs, particularly from Government Girls Secondary School (GGSS) camp, in dire need of CRIs, food, and hygiene items. The sandbags are expected to protect families from further devastation.
- **COVID-19** infections continued to be recorded among most communities.

POPULATION MOVEMENTS

- Despite the official closure of international borders for COVID-19 prevention, cross-border movements continued, mainly at the official entry points between Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger Republic, and Chad. In Banki, Damasak, Ngala and Pulka LGAs, Borno, close to 850 individuals crossed borders to visit their families, in search for jobs or due to the insurgency. **No refoulement** was recorded.
- Almost **4,570 internal displacements** were observed in different locations, including about 2,470 people in Askira/Uba, Bama, Gwoza, Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC), Monguno, and Ngala LGAs, Borno, and some 1,550 individuals in Fufore, Girei, Gombi, Hong, Lamurde, Maiha, Michika, Mubi North, Mubi South, Song, Yola North, and Yola South LGAs of Adamawa State. These displacements were triggered by poor living conditions, improved security, voluntary relocation, military operations, and seasonal farming.
- UNHCR and the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) recorded **250 spontaneous refugee returns**: 228 from Cameroon, 22 from Chad.
- Under its return plan, the **Borno State Government unilaterally relocated an estimated 5,530 IDPs** - some 1,000 families - from different camps and host communities in Maiduguri and Monguno to Baga, on 7 August, and to Cross Kukawa and Doron Baga, on 8/9 August, providing transportation, food, and cash assistance to the returnees. Humanitarians were not involved as on previous occasions. The current relocations leave them in places **without the minimum return conditions** and where humanitarians do not have access due to insecurity.

- **Concerns on the voluntary nature** of the relocations remain given they are taking place in communities that have often been targeted by NSAG fighters. For instance, on 28 August, insurgents attacked Ajiri community in Mafa LGA, one of the government-identified return locations, reportedly killing seven returnees and injuring 13 others. Some 47 individuals reportedly returned to Monguno from Cross-Kukawa, shortly after the government-organized returns, because of lack of proper shelter, adequate healthcare, and access to land.
- Meanwhile, 13,975 **spontaneous refugee returns** from Cameroon continued in an unsecured environment, through the Wuro Alhaji of Maiha unofficial entry point in Adamawa State where there do not seem to be plans for their adequate reintegration. In Borno State, the spontaneous refugee returnees often end up in the IDP camps and camp-like settings, straining the scarce humanitarian assistance further. Other concerns raised by the returnees include their poor treatment by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and family separation.
- The porous and long border between Nigeria and Cameroon is making it difficult for protection monitors of UNHCR and NIS to effectively screen sporadic returnees into Adamawa State. Many refugees enter Adamawa through irregular entry points, so **not all returnees can be documented**. In areas such as Toungo, Ganye, and Madagali, monitors depend on NIS officers and community leaders for current returnee data and information.

PROTECTION BY PRESENCE, PROTECTION MONITORING

- UNHCR conducted Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) using the protection monitoring tool and compared them with the vulnerability screening and observations. The key findings have informed decision on advocacy and real-time lifesaving response, especially in BAY States.
- No fewer than **80,730** IDPs, IDP returnees, and community members were reached through more than 1,000 **protection monitoring** missions and site visits by UNHCR staff and partners: 38,925 (51%) in Borno, 24,500 in Yobe (32%), and 12,270 in Adamawa (16%).
- UNHCR reached some 13,965 IDPs and IDP returnees with registration and **vulnerability screening** in nine LGAs in Borno, eight in Adamawa, and two in Yobe. 2,430 of the screened individuals (17%) were identified as most vulnerable, with specific needs. The findings showed **continued need for lifesaving assistance** for the most vulnerable women, men and children.
- More than 4,290 IDPs, returnees, and host community members accessed UNHCR's 28 **protection desks** in ten LGAs in Borno State. Major complaints referred to health/medical conditions, specific needs, forced marriage, legal issues/access to justice, and denial of resources or opportunities. There were also **complaints** about disputes between neighbours, domestic violence, child labour, hawking, and begging, as well as human rights violations. Most complaints were referred to specialised service providers and partners for intervention and management, while disputes between neighbours were addressed through the organisation's community mechanism for dispute resolution and access to justice project. According to 22 per cent of UNHCR's 3,165 KIIs conducted in August, the protection desks today remain among the most preferred places for lodging complaints and are highly **recognised by the affected population** and stakeholders. In addition, information, education, and communication materials on protection services, including UNHCR's toll-free line, flood safety mechanisms, and COVID-19 programmes in English, Hausa, and Kanuri languages were distributed.
- UNHCR's human rights monitors conducted about **145 monitoring visits to police detention facilities** in the BAY States under strict adherence to the COVID-19 preventive guidelines, including 118 visits in Borno, 23 in Adamawa, and 3 in Yobe. Offences identified in Borno included arbitrary and prolonged detention over misdemeanours such as phone theft and fracas between neighbours over indebtedness. In their interventions, the human rights monitors gave options for bail and solicited for prompt access to justice, particularly for detained female suspects. The Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) monitored and followed up human rights issues like prolonged detention for resolution in Borno and visited 23 police detention facilities in

Adamawa State to prevent further violations. UNHCR found that most detention facilities fall short of international standards because of inadequate electricity, water and sanitation facilities.



PROTECTION

Protection Sector Coordination

In Borno State, UNHCR participated in a camp closure consultative forum in Maiduguri, on 24 and 25 August, where participants discussed issues related to planning and lessons learned from the return plan and strategy of the Borno State Government. The global camp coordination and camp management (CCCM) camp closure guidelines were used as reference, while an action plan was documented for onward presentation to the Borno State Resettlement Committee appointed by the Governor. However, senior State authorities with decision-making authority were absent from the meeting. UNHCR recommended that OCHA advocates with the government for a planned camp closure process that observes the human rights and dignity of people.

Protection Monitoring

- Amid security challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic, and devastating floods caused by torrential rains, UNHCR, Grassroot Initiative for Strengthening Community resilience (GISCOR), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), INTERSOS, NBA, Caritas, American University of Nigeria (AUN), and the Borno Women Development Initiative, as well as general protection actors have maintained presence to reduce risks and address needs of beneficiaries by delivering life-saving humanitarian assistance and protection services. UNHCR also continued to coordinate the Protection, CCCM, Shelter, and Non-food-item (NFI) sectors in the BAY states.
- UNHCR documented an estimated **102,445 victims of abduction, deadly attacks, gender-based violence (GBV)**, and other incidents across the BAY States. It was found that 32.93 per cent of the incidents were related to floods, 15.85 per cent of GBV cases attributed to family members, and 2.44 per cent of the incidents caused by civilians. Meanwhile, some humanitarian actors were responsible for 2.44 per cent of the overcrowding of the camps in Gwoza LGA and the army accounted for one per cent of incidents such as collective punishment for violation of safety restrictions. For prevention and risk mitigation, UNHCR and other humanitarian actors continued to engage stakeholders to provide responses and support to survivors while ensuring that perpetrators are brought to justice through **access to justice**.

Protection Response

- In the BAY States UNHCR, partners and community-based protection action groups (PAGs) **reached over 39,745 IDPs**, returnees and host community members with **720 awareness activities** on the right to live free from violence, slavery, the right to health and dignity, building sustainable livelihoods, socio-economic opportunities, the importance of education for girls, early or forced marriages as well as prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. In Adamawa and Yobe States, Caritas, INTERSOS and NHRC organized community awareness sessions on flood prevention, response, and mitigation measures, aimed at empowering the affected population to make informed choices about remaining in camps or getting relocated by the government. They also learned about referral pathways and reporting of abuse, exploitation, and protection concerns. Separately, UNHCR's CCCM partner INTERSOS conducted community awareness sessions on flood prevention, response, and mitigation in Monguno, Banki, Ngala, and Damasak.
- In Ngala, INTERSOS built the capacity of ten CCCM community volunteers to strengthen their monitoring activities in the communities. GISCOR also organised various capacity building trainings for PAG members in all the locations where UNHCR is present in Borno. Also, NHRC and the Ministry of Women Affairs trained women and girls on skills acquisition in Damaturu, Yobe State. From 23 to 27 August, UNHCR was a master trainer in a government led joint

CCCM training of trainers for Nigeria Emergency Management Agency, State Emergency Management Agency and the Nigerian Red Cross in Abuja with 16 participants from all Nigerian States affected by displacement.

- Over **5,225 vulnerable IDPs and returnees** received **material assistance** in the form of blankets from GISCOR in response to identified needs in Damboa, Jere, MMC/Konduga and Ngala. The North-East protection sector provided blankets to meet the needs of those rendered most vulnerable by floods and hardships. Also, UNHCR targeted over 325 refugee returnee families for distribution of **fuel-efficient cooking stoves** in Banki, as part of GBV risk reduction activity. Some 6000 CRIs were also distributed, with Mungono receiving 2,400, Gwoza 1000, Banki 500, Bama 700, Jere 400, and Gujba and Damaturu 1000. These were all in response to needs arising from floods, fires, and new displacement and prioritized female heads of households, women and girls at risk, the elderly, and survivors of GBV.
- UNHCR reached more than 1,550 community leaders, government officials, service providers, frontline responders, organisations, youth leaders, IDPs, returnees, and community members with 110 **advocacy and community engagement** sessions in the BAY States.
- Under UNHCR's access to justice and issuance of legal documentation project, the NBA, in collaboration with local authorities, issued **indigene certificates to 3,500 refugee returnees** in Mubi North LGA, Madagali, and Michika. As an important proof of recognition in the LGA, the certificates are very important to facilitate freedom of movement, reduce cases of arbitrary detention for lack of identity documents, they also help prevent statelessness. UNHCR's KIIs revealed a high need for legal and civil documents among displaced people. In addition, NBA issued probate/letters of administration to beneficiaries and reached more than 70 others with legal counselling in Lukwa II camp Mubi North, Adamawa, while radio discussions and jingles in Hausa and Fulani languages raised **legal awareness** as part of the Access to Justice Project.
- NBA represented 30 affected people in court across the BAY States. The cases involved land dispute, custody of children and maintenance, misappropriation of property and criminal breach of trust, matrimonial issues, domestic violence, and dissolution of marriages.
- In Borno State, UNHCR and FAO started a **micro-gardening** project targeting refugee returnees in Bama and Banki to enhance their food security and self-reliance. UNHCR implored the World Food Programme to extend the food assistance for refugee returnees to three months, pending when they would be self-reliant through the micro-gardening project.
- In Abuja, UNHCR supported a **legal taskforce** of the Government of Nigeria that initiated the review of a draft document that would inform the finalisation of a Tripartite Agreement between Nigeria, Niger Republic and UNHCR on voluntary repatriation of Nigerian refugees.
- Protection Sector Working Group (PSWG) and CCCM **coordination meetings** were held in

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