



Newsletter



IOM Director General concludes visit to Nigeria, emphasises support for displaced communities

The Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Amy Pope, has concluded an important trip to Maiduguri in northeastern Nigeria. The visit aimed to reinforce IOM commitment to supporting the Lake Chad Basin Region in finding durable solutions to the protracted displacement situation, particularly in the conflict-affected states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe.

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During the visit, the IOM Chief engaged in high-level discussions with the Governor of Borno State, Professor Babagana Umara Zulum, and local communities, reaffirming the organization's commitment to supporting the state in finding lasting solutions to the ongoing displacement challenges.

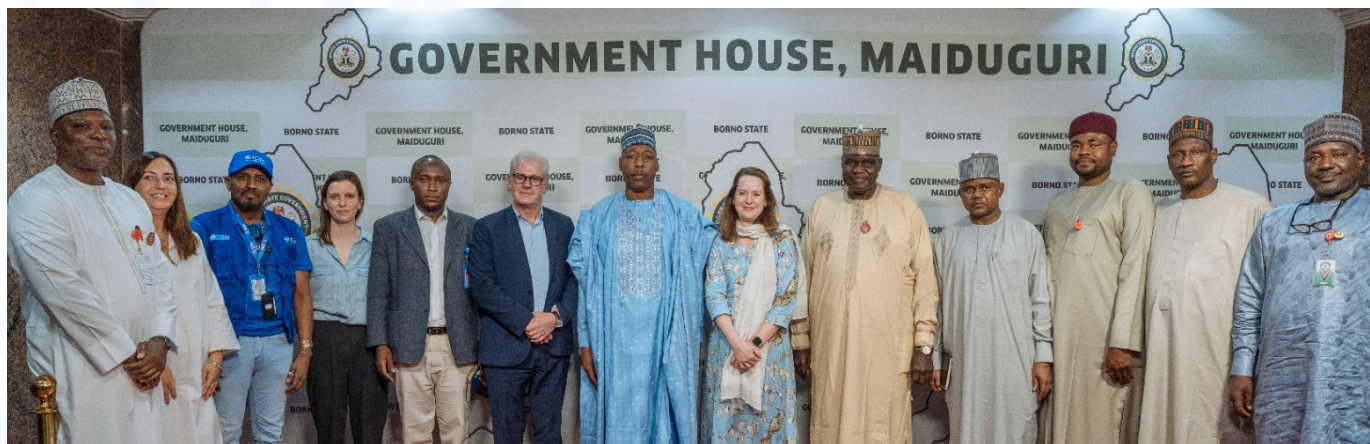
Borno is recognised as home to the largest population of displaced people in the Lake Chad Basin region. With an estimated 1.7 million

individuals in need of shelter and essential services, the situation demands urgent attention and collective action.

In her meeting, Amy Pope emphasised the need for a collaborative effort towards the full recovery and stabilisation of the region. She stressed the importance of acting today to address the immediate needs of displaced populations while also working towards long-term, sustainable solutions.



The IOM Chief Amy Pope with children in Borno State, Nigeria.



The IOM Chief Amy Pope with H.E. Prof Zulum, Governor of Borno during a visit to Nigeria

Stand up against forces of hate and division, Guterres urges as Embassy of Israel, UN, British High Commission host holocaust remembrance



The Ambassador of Israel to Nigeria, H.E Mr. Michael Freeman

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called on everyone to stand up against the forces of hate and division. “We must resolve to stand up against the forces of hate and division.

We must condemn unequivocally whenever and wherever we encounter antisemitism just as we must condemn all forms of racism, prejudice and religious bigotry, including anti-Muslim hatred and violence against minority Christian communities.” He said in a statement delivered by the UN Resident Coordinator (a.i.) in Nigeria and WHO Country Representative, Dr Walter Kazadi Mulombo, at the observance of the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, organised by the Embassy of Israel, UN in Nigeria, the British High Commission, and Zikaron Basalon.

Guterres said the UN mourned the six million Jewish children, women, and men systematically murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators and pledged never to forget – nor let others forget the truth of what happened. “We honour their memory. We stand with the survivors, their families and descendants.” He added.

Holocaust survivor, Mala Tribich, bravely shared her personal testimony, shedding light on the darkest chapter of humanity. She spoke of the unspeakable crimes committed against the young, old, and innocent—over 6 million Jews murdered, including 1.5 million children. Israeli Ambassador to Nigeria, Michael Freeman called for adequate investment in education, to address the dangers of hate speech and hatred and to ward off any recurrence of Holocaust.

“79 years ago, millions of Jews were murdered. Holocaust began with words, hate speech, singling out and dehumanising of Jewish people; which many people looked the other way.

British High Commissioner, Dr Richard Montgomery, represented by the Development Director, FCDO, of British High Commission in Nigeria, Cynthia Rowe reiterated the UK government’s commitment to creating education and research about the Holocaust.

Montgomery said; “We are building new Holocaust-memorial in London expected to be completed in 2027; UK will take on the precedence on International Day in remembrance of the victims of Holocaust in March, 2024.



Dr Walter Kazadi Mulombo, UN Resident Coordinator (a.i.) in Nigeria and WHO Country Representative addresses the audience at the event.

UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review: Nigeria committed to rule of law, obedience to court decisions – Attorney General



The Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Nigeria, Prince Lateef Fagbemi (Middle) in Geneva for the realization of human rights at the 45th session of the Universal Periodic Review of Nigeria's human rights record

As the human rights record of the Federal Republic of Nigeria came under scrutiny by the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group, Nigeria’s Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Lateef Fagbemi, reiterated the commitment of the government of Nigeria to promoting the rule of law and obedience to court decisions.

“Nigeria remains committed to the promotion of the rule of law and obedience to court decisions. Nigeria has designated the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) as the independent National Preventive Mechanism against torture,” the Attorney General said, while presenting Nigeria’s report at the 45th session of the #UniversalPeriodicReview of on Tuesday, 23 January 2024, in Geneva.

He highlighted the different policies, laws and mechanism in place for the promotion and protection of human rights in Nigeria. Fagbemi added that the Child Rights Act had been domesticated across the 36 states of Nigeria, while the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act was already adopted in many States across the country. Senior Human Rights Adviser, UN in Nigeria, said in Abuja that the organisation would collaborate with the Nigerian government in meeting its obligations in terms of human rights protection. Nigeria was one of 14 States reviewed by the UPR Working Group during its session from 22 January to 2 February 2024. The first, second and third UPR reviews of the Nigeria took place in February 2009, October 2013, and November 2018, respectively.

The UPR Working Group is comprised of the 47 Member States of the Human Rights Council. However, each of the 193 UN Member States can participate in a country review.



Watch party consisting of media organizations, CSOs and UN Nigeria staff convene at the UN House, Abuja, to follow the live webcast of the 45th session of the Universal Periodic Review #UPR45 of Nigeria's human rights report at the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

UN, FG, ECOWAS, USA, others validate Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP)



The ILO Country Director, Dr Vanesa Phala, addressing members of the National Steering Committee on the Elimination of Child Labour

ILO Action against Child Labour in West Africa (ACLAWA): FG, ECOWAS, USA, others validate Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP).

Representatives from the ECOWAS, the US government, the National Steering Committee on the Elimination of Child Labour - led by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, Workers and Employers associations and the International Labor Organization have validated the Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (CMEP) for the ILO Action against Child Labour in West Africa (ACLAWA) project.

CMEP remains the cornerstone for executing the ACLAWA project in the ECOWAS region. The endorsed CMEP is a critical tool ensuring the impactful execution of the project according to accepted standard.

Beyond combatting child labor, ACLAWA hopes to champion other ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. This includes the promotion of occupational safety and health, Collective Bargaining, and the elimination of forced labor and non-discrimination.



(L-R) Vanessa Phala (ILO Country Director), Makee Cross (Representative US-DOL-ILAB) and Agatha Kolawole (Project Director, ACLAWA)



Participants at the validation workshop including representatives from ECOWAS, FMLE, US Government and the NSSCL

UN to strengthen time-sensitive agricultural interventions in northeastern Nigeria

FAO Director of Emergencies visits Nigeria and engages with stakeholders on sustained support to vulnerable communities.



(L-R) Deputy Director OER Maxwell Sibhensana, Dominique Kouacou FAOR a.i.; Rein Paulsen Director OER; Minister of State Agriculture and Food Security Sen Abubakar Kyari; Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security Ernest Umekhihe at the Minister's conference room in Abuja.

For more than a decade, violent incidents linked to the Boko Haram insurgency, kidnappings and banditry have adversely affected the livelihoods of vulnerable households in Nigeria, while record high inflation rates have hindered households' access to food and coping capacities. Compounding the situation is the impact of climate extremes such as dry spells and localized flooding in various parts of the country. This has resulted in reduced agricultural production and productivity, leading to increased levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, particularly in northeastern and northwestern Nigeria.

United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator ad interim, Mr Matthias Schmale, met with Director, Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Mr Rein Paulsen, during his visit to Nigeria in late November 2023, highlighting how the UN is working closely with officials of relevant ministries to ensure the implementation of the food systems transformation agenda led by the Government of Nigeria.

During his visit to the country, FAO OER Director, Mr Paulsen, also paid a courtesy visit to the Minister of State Agriculture and Food Security Senator Abubakar Kyari, stated that, in line with the global decision to increase funding for agricultural livelihoods support, FAO emergency interventions in Nigeria will align in this direction, to support the return of vulnerable families to their farms and resume food production.

Mr Paulsen stressed the critical role of emergency agricultural support to vulnerable Nigerian farmers, herders and fishers to address food insecurity and malnutrition across the Sahel. Nearly half of the number of people in Cadre Harmonisé (CH) Phase 3 and above in the region are in Nigeria according to the latest CH analysis (November 2023), with 26.5 million people projected to be acutely food insecure during this year's lean season (June - August), if appropriate assistance isn't provided.

Honorable Minister Kyari commended the work of FAO confirming that agriculture is a priority of the government's agenda, aiming to improve food production, transform food systems and enhance value chain development, particularly among women and youths who make up the majority of Nigeria's population.

Highpoint of FAO OER Director's visit was travelling to the northeast to see FAO's emergency interventions. The mission was joined by FAO OER Deputy Director, the FAO Representative ad interim, FAO's Head of Suboffice in Maiduguri, and other FAO colleagues, the Norwegian Ambassador to Nigeria, the Deputy Head of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Maiduguri, the Head of Office of the World Food Programme in Maiduguri and the Director of Nutrition and Food Safety from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security.

Upon arrival in Maiduguri, Borno state - the epicentre of the insurgency in northeastern Nigeria - Mr Paulsen met with Secretary to Borno State Government, Mr Bukar Tijjani, and discussed the importance of scaling up time-sensitive agricultural assistance to affected communities to boost food production and increase their self-reliance.

The delegation then travelled to Bama to visit vulnerable communities in the largest internal displacement camp in the area, where they were able to exchange with people who had benefited from FAO's support and take part in the distribution of Tom Brown – a nutritious food supplement made from fish powder mixed with locally sourced grains and spices that is prepared as porridge. Mr Paulsen stressed the importance of this activity as a key nutritional intervention benefiting women and children that it is changing lives.

Other areas visited included Mainari where FAO provided vulnerable families with livestock support and Old Maiduguri to see FAO's integrated aquaculture and vegetable production activities as well as Tom Brown processing by women. Finally, an exhibition was held at FAO's Suboffice in Maiduguri whereby people who had benefited from FAO's emergencies support showcased samples of their production.



Mr Rein Paulsen, FAO Director OER in the field during his visit to Nigeria.

Countering human trafficking office unveiled in Lagos State



Dignitaries including the US Consul General, Will Steven; Attorney General of Lagos State, Mr. Lawal Pedro (SAN); DG of NAPTIP, Prof Fatima Waziri-Azi; Deputy Country Representative of UNODC, Danilo Campisi; GM Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Agency (LNSA) Prince Ifalade Ajasa Oyekan; and others at the commissioning of the Countering Human Trafficking Office in Lagos State

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), in another important step towards combating human trafficking, unveiled the Countering Human Trafficking Office in Lagos State. The new office will be utilized by the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Lagos State Neighbourhood Safety Agency (LNSA) as a member of the Lagos State Task Force (STF) on Human Trafficking to coordinate state wide action against trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants and to provide access to victims, their families and friends as well as concerned citizens in support of a whole-of-society effort to tackle this heinous crime.

This initiative is being supported through two UNODC projects, namely [on Improved-response-to-trafficking-in-persons \(IRTIP\)](#) and [on Strengthening-Nigeria's criminal justice response to TIP and SOM \(PROMIS\)](#), funded by the governments of the USA and the Netherlands.

Prof Fatima Waziri-Azi, Director General of NAPTIP highlighted the importance of the projects to Lagos which serves as a transit and destination for internal and trans-border trafficking in persons. She also added, "Prevention is a key pillar in the fight against human trafficking and raising public awareness and educating communities about the tactics employed by traffickers can serve as a powerful deterrent."

Mr. Lawal Pedro (SAN), Attorney General/Commissioner for Justice and Chairperson of the Lagos STF stated in his keynote address that the structure aims to intensify collaborative efforts between the state government and key stakeholders on the rescue, reform, and referral of human trafficking victims.

Notably, the establishment of the State Task Forces (STFs) on Human Trafficking was premised on the need to enhance State and non-State multi sectoral response towards combating Human Trafficking in Nigeria, especially to enhance comprehensive prevention and coordinated services for the protection and assistance of trafficked victims in Nigeria under the overall coordination of NAPTIP. According to the [Compendium of STF Good Practices \(2017-2022\) in Nigeria](#), between 2021 and 2022, STFs as first line responders have rescued and referred over 545 trafficked victims to NAPTIP.

"The five-room container office has become a solid structure to complement NAPTIP in community intelligence gathering, rescue, referral and reporting," said Mr. Danilo Campisi, deputy representative of UNODC as he appreciated the support of the US and Netherlands governments in funding the project.

In his remarks, U.S. Consul General Will Stevens noted that the U.S. government is fully committed to its partnership with Nigeria to support a whole of society approach in combatting trafficking that in-

volves local authorities and civil society organizations. He explained that between 2021 and 2023, the U.S. government through the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs provided \$1.3 million to UNODC to support the Nigerian government's efforts to protect those vulnerable to trafficking.

Ms. Eva de Witt, representative of the Kingdom of Netherlands stressed the importance of keeping efforts aligned and the need to achieve optimal results through a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

The event was also attended by IOM and NACTAL.

Painting the canvas of a drug free Nigeria with a top-notch forensic lab in Lagos

Behind every illicit drug interception, is a dedicated team leveraging technology, intelligence gathering and strategic collaborations.

With thanks to the generous funding from the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, UNODC successfully completed the refurbishment of an NDLEA forensic lab and handed over to the agency in Lagos.

This lab empowers Nigeria to meet the benchmarks for international standards on analysis of drugs and psychotropic substances.



(L-R) Danilo Campisi, UNODC Deputy Country Representative; Femi Babafemi, Director, Media and Advocacy, NDLEA; Margaret Olayinka Ogundipe, Director, Forensic and Chemical Monitoring Directorate, NDLEA; and Will Steven, US Consul General, US Consulate Lagos at the commissioning and handover of forensic lab to NDLEA



Dignitaries cutting the ribbon at the commissioning and handover of forensic lab to NDLEA in Lagos

UN, FG, NITDA Partner to Scale-up ICT4D For Smallholder Farmers in Nigeria



L-R Director General/CEO, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, Deputy Director planning and Policy Coordination Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Mrs. Kothum Ibrahim, the Senior Special Assistant to the President on Agribusiness and Productivity enhancement Dr. Kingsley Uzoma, Country Director, IFAD, Mrs Dede Ekoue and Global Senior Technical Specialist ICT4D, IFAD, Mrs Brenda Gunde at a policy dialogue to scale-up ICT4D for smallholder farmers in Nigeria held recently in Abuja.

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Partnership with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (FMAFS) has organized a policy dialogue to boost partnerships for the scale-up of ICT4D for smallholder farmers in Nigeria.

Speaking during her opening remark at the event held recently in Abuja, the Country Director, IFAD, Mrs Dede Ekoue said that the policy dialogue aimed at strengthening our partnership for enhanced access of small holder farmers to digital solutions to enhance their livelihoods, their contribution to food security nutrition, poverty reduction, economy growth and job creation.

According to her, IFAD is committed to promoting the empowerment of small holder farmers globally through several solutions and is scaling up its support in digital solutions. “The evidence has shown ICT4D in Agriculture could contribute to increasing farmers’ productivity and incomes, strengthen resilience to climate change and improve access to and participation in markets – particularly for most marginalized groups such as youth and women. E-marketing solutions can increase smallholder farmers’ income by 37% and their productivity by 73%. E-extension services can increase their productivity up to 75%. Digital financial services can increase their income by 18% on average, and their productivity typically receives a boost between 25 and 50%.

“Based on this evidence we have successfully helped under the leadership of FMAFS organised a dialogue on increasing access of smallholders to digital solutions. One of the recommendations of this dialogue was the urgency of fostering partnerships for scaling digital solutions for farmers. The Deputy Director planning and Policy Coordination Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Mrs. Kothum Ibrahim stated that ICTs are

key to enable poverty reduction, address inequalities and propel the country towards Food security adding that evidence has shown that growth of the agriculture sector is two to three times more effective at reducing poverty than an equivalent amount of growth generated in other sectors. On his part, the Director General/CEO, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, said “the strategic role of ICT in agriculture development by IFAD is highly commendable and it is only through strategic partnership and collaboration between agric and ICT ecosystems that we can exponentially increase the productivity and income of smallholder farmers in Nigeria with a positive impact on our agrifood systems and the entire economy.

“We remain committed to continuing to build strategic partnerships, connect the innovation ecosystem to the agriculture sector and facilitate new business and economic models that will accelerate the achievement of Mr President’s Renewed Hope Agenda for the agriculture sector.”

The Senior Special Assistant to the President on Agribusiness and Productivity enhancement Dr. Kingsley Uzoma in his remarks at the event stressed that a sustained efforts in improving digital literacy in partnership with key agencies such as NITDA as well as the private sector, will be critical in achieving greater technology adoption by smallholder farmers which can translate to improved productivity, extensive technical upscaling best practices, increase trade competitiveness and market access.

He stressed the need for a centrally coordinated agricultural data hub which aggregates, analyses and provides insights on open and targeted data that is relevant for planning, policy direction and essential decision making.

Restoring hope to displaced Plateau State communities through coordinated humanitarian response



The Plateau state Governor, Bar Caleb Caleb Mutfwang, (middle) received the United Nations Coordination Team (UNTC) and its partners supporting the humanitarian response at the government house in Jos.

While the world was celebrating Christmas on 25 December 2023, the people of Bokkos, Barkin Ladi and Mangu Local Government Areas (LGA) of Plateau State, North-central Nigeria, suffered a gruesome attack that left many maimed, displaced and some dead.

“It was midnight when the attack started in my village Mbar (in Bokkos LGA). They came with guns and machetes, burnt our houses and killed many people. I am grateful I escaped with my family. Some families were not lucky”, said 45-year-old Jumai Bulus, now residing at one of the Internal Displaced Persons Camps (IDPs).

Fleeing her home in Jing Mangu LGA, on that fateful night, 35-year-old Regina Besan delivered her baby at a primary school compound where she and her family now take shelter.

Regina said “I am grateful to be alive, although I am not happy I gave birth at the camp. My feeding and taking care of the newborn baby has been a challenge as we rely on the donations and goodwill of people to survive.”

In the case of Tiput Emmanuel, his left leg was amputated as a result of a gunshot he sustained while fleeing from his home in Bungha, Mangu LGA with his family.

Despite his misfortune and disability, Emmanuel who is a professional driver is eager to return to driving or get another job. “I can drive, if I get an automatic car”, he said.

During the attack, more than 160 Villages (44 in Bokkos, 11 in Barkin Ladi and 109 in Mangu LGA respectively) were overrun by unknown attackers, resulting in over 409 houses burnt down, 335 deaths 171



UN support to Plateau State humanitarian crisis

injured with an estimated 18,275 people fleeing from their homes to seek refuge in other parts of the state and neighbouring environs. Currently, 16 IDP camps are active in the three LGAs. Restoring hope

At the outset, WHO, the UN Specialized Agency for Health, donated two trauma kits to the State government to support the treatment of 100 injured victims and performed 200 procedures. WHO experts were also deployed to provide technical support in assessing the health situations and needs of the displaced population.

The message of WHO Country Representative Dr Walter Kazadi Mulombo was conveyed to the government of Plateau state reiterating WHO’s commitment to providing the desired technical support and a

strong presence in the state to combat all forms of public health emergencies.

Furthermore, the United Nations Coordination Team (UNTC) led by the WHO is collaborating with the Plateau State Government in spearheading partner coordination for a comprehensive assessment of the humanitarian situation to develop sector-specific response plans and provide aid to the affected population.

As part of the humanitarian response, WHO-led different agencies and partners to conduct a Multi-cluster/sector Initial Rapid Needs Assessment (MIRA) to identify the critical humanitarian needs to aid response to the escalating health and humanitarian crisis.

The WHO in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), has been working around the clock with local and international stakeholders, including Médecins Sans Frontières, (MSF), Nigeria Red Cross (NRC), CLEEN Foundation, and Chigari Foundation among others to support the government in providing emergency assistance to victims and displaced populations on the ground which remains volatile.

Supportive Response

The mass displacement has resulted in appalling living conditions as many of the displaced persons are unable to farm and have no goods/produce to sell.

“We are providing temporary shelter for over 400 people in our compound, but the place is not conducive. Many of them require water and sanitation (WASH), medical service, food and good shelter, said Reverend Ezekiel Dachomo, a religious leader in Barkin-Ladi, LGA Likewise, those residing at the IDPs require essential relief items, medication, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), food, shelter, health

services, mental health and psychosocial support as many have run out of medications.

At the Pilot IDP camp in Mangu, the assessment team found 49 people with disabilities listed and organized by the president and secretary of the National Association for Persons with Disability – Mangu branch, both living in the camp.

In the meantime, emergency health services with additional workforce are being offered at various IDP camps, and mobile clinics set up by UNICEF and partners, emergency drug supplies, medical supplies, and WASH kits donated to support the victims, displaced persons, and affected communities.

In parallel, UNFPA is working with the Ministry of Women's Affairs to improve the protection of women and girls and IOM by providing shelters. The Plateau State Governor, Barrister Caleb Mutfwang, appreciated the support from the UN and partners, especially WHO, in spearheading the government/partners’ coordination to provide interventions that will be beneficial to the affected victims.

The Governor emphasized that WHO's presence in the state supports the repositioning of the health service delivery in the state.

He assured his availability for close monitoring of the humanitarian response activities while noting that the state is committed to strengthening the capacity of the health workforce and health facilities from the primary to the tertiary level.

Also, the district head in Mangu, one of the towns hosting some of the displaced persons, Daa Moses Dawop, said “We are grateful for the support given to our families and relatives who fled their homes due to the attack. However, we still require more assistance as many of our people are still homeless with families scattered and unable to afford essential items such as food, clothing, and medicine.”.



WHO and IOM officials conducting field assessment at IDP camp in Mangu

Journey Back to Plateau State, Northern Nigeria's Bloody Battlefields



Background

On December 24th, 2023, many people, including several children and women, were mercilessly hacked to death in what is unfolding as a conflict between farmers and herders. According to the latest figures by the government, over 200,000 people are affected; 331 people have been killed, including children, and 153 have been injured. Of this number, over 34,000 are displaced, living in temporary shelters, including religious structures and schools, with thousands in host communities. Their once peaceful and stable lives were overturned in the blink of an eye. Children lost their parents, and mothers saw their children being dragged and then killed while they stood there, helpless and in shock.

Soon after the incident, I undertook a mission on behalf of UNICEF to assess the gravity of the situation and make recommendations on urgent support for those displaced. Here are some of my impressions.

Here is my travelogue.

Day 1: An Emotional Journey Begins

Under the sombre skies of an early morning, I found myself setting out from Abuja to Jos, the capital of Plateau State in northern Nigeria. The journey was a mixture of trepidation and resolve, fueled by the unsettling reports of hundreds killed and hundreds of thousands displaced in a horrific incident that had gripped the region. Accompanied by a security escort, I couldn't help but recall the days when such precautions were unnecessary.

Driving through the towns and communities, I was struck by the juxtaposing images of the serene, lonely forests and the vigilant eyes of our security team—a poignant reminder of the region's troubling transformation. Upon arriving in Jos, my heart sank as I met with my colleague, Margaret. Her briefing painted a grim picture of the crisis, particularly its impact on children, and the urgency of UNICEF's response. Settling into my hotel room, I was engulfed by waves of nostalgia for a Jos I once knew—peaceful and thriving.

Day 2: Uniting for a Cause

The chilly morning of January 10th saw us convene a critical coordination meeting. Jos's 12-degree weather seemed unusual for Nigeria, and I noted the improved roads, a small beacon of development amidst the chaos. The meeting with Margaret, the UNICEF health specialist, and government representatives was sobering. The stark figures of casualties and displaced persons in Barkin Ladi, Bokkos, and Mangu LGAs were heartbreaking.

That night, in the solitude of my room, my thoughts were consumed by the plight of the children, igniting a fierce determination to see the reality on the ground.

Day 3: Confronting the Stark Reality

Accompanied by Margaret and teams from WHO and national and state emergency management agencies, we embarked on a field visit that would deeply impact me. Our first stop was at COCIN Church in Barkin Ladi, witnessing the government's aid distribution. It became painfully apparent that the needs far exceeded the help being provided.

The visit to various camps revealed the grim conditions of the displaced. The scarcity of water and the looming threat of cholera added to the urgency of the situation. The sight of hundreds of children in a shelter in Bokkos was particularly heartbreaking. Initially mistaken for a school, the harsh reality unfolded before us. These were displaced children, many orphaned or separated from their parents, sheltered by the selfless compassion of three local women: Fati, Mariam, and Ladi. Their stories, marked by loss and hope, compelled us to immediately mobilise support for the sick and hungry children, linking them to government food sources and healthcare.

As we drove back to Jos, a reflective silence filled the vehicle. It was clear that Margaret and I shared a renewed commitment to intensify UNICEF's efforts in this dire situation.

Day 4: Reflections and Resolve

The return journey to Abuja was a time of introspection and profound dialogue with Rajat, the Chief of Communication. He encouraged me to document and share this experience to bring the human side of this crisis to light. As we passed the picturesque hills of the Plateau, a place I once knew as a haven of peace and tourism, the stark contrast to the current conflict was overwhelming.

Driving past the verdant landscapes, now tinged with the scars of conflict, and the waterfall where I once shared joyful picnics with friends, I was reminded of the region's lost tranquility. These memories, both sweet and sorrowful, inspired me to write this travelogue.

Despite the heartache, I left with a sense of purpose and urgency. The faces of those children in Bokkos and their resilience amidst despair have instilled in me an unwavering commitment to return and support UNICEF's mission to bring hope and healing to this beleaguered land.

UNICEF in Action

UNICEF is providing support to displaced families through the government, specifically in the areas of health and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene). This support includes health care kits, vaccination items, and delivery kits for medical needs. In terms of WASH, UNICEF is focusing on ensuring access to safe water and promoting hygiene. Additionally, UNICEF is offering technical support and coordination assistance for the overall response in Plateau.

From regret to resolve: Kano mother's plea ignites vaccine movement



The sun bore down heavily on Kano, its harsh rays amplifying the dust and heat. As I navigated my way through narrow pathways of a suburb in the outskirts of one of Nigeria's largest cities, I was met with sights of children playing around heaps of garbage, literally at their doorsteps. The community was alive with chatter and activity, but the underpinning reality of the diphtheria outbreak hung heavy in the air.

I was here to meet Maryam Suleiman, a mother of six. Her modest shanty stood in stark contrast to the sprawling metropolis a few miles away. As I approached, I noticed animals drinking water from contaminated gutters with children playing alongside them. The environment was far from hygienic.

Maryam greeted me with a warm, yet reserved smile. She ushered me into her humble abode, where every corner spoke of years gone by and tales untold. As I settled down, her youngest, a 14-year-old boy, emerged from one of the small rooms. I was told that till a few days ago, her son Ahmad Abubaker lay frail and tired in a corner, a silent testament to the havoc diphtheria had wreaked on his body.

Maryam's voice trembled as she began her tale. "Five of my children were vaccinated. But my youngest... we didn't protect him."

Her eyes welled up as she continued, "My husband often said, why vaccinate when even the vaccinated fall ill? We believed him. But now, we realize the price of that belief."

Her anguish is palpable. The community around Maryam is a hotspot, the epicenter of the worst Diphtheria outbreak the country has seen in recent times. Over 10,000 cases of suspected Diphtheria have been reported as of September 2023 across the country, with most of the victims being children. A staggering 60% of these children have never having received a single dose of life saving vaccines. Additionally, 10%

of the total cases who received partial vaccines were a testament to the lack of follow-through, making them just as vulnerable.

I questioned Maryam about the hesitancy and resistance towards vaccination. "There are many reasons," she admitted. "For some, it's cultural or religious beliefs, for others, it's purely economic. But whatever the reason, it's our children who pay the price."

Outside, a group of Volunteer Community Mobilisers supported by UNICEF moved about, engaging with families and educating them about the importance of vaccines. Their persistence and dedication were admirable, reaching out to every family, hoping to change mindsets and behaviors. The echoes of their message were clear - Vaccinate your children. Protect them against deadly diseases.

Maryam's gaze shifted back to her son. The room was thick with emotion. "Every child," she whispered, her voice firm with resolve, "must be vaccinated. There are no excuses. I will ensure all my grandchildren are vaccinated".

It was a powerful moment. Maryam's story was not just her own. It was the story of many mothers in Kano, mothers who were slowly recognizing the perilous game they had been playing with their children's lives. It was a story of regret, but also of hope - hope that with awareness and collective action, the narrative could change.

As I left Maryam's shanty, the weight of the day settled heavily on my shoulders. The sights, sounds, and stories would remain etched in my memory, a reminder of the work that still lay ahead. As the sun began to dip below the horizon, casting long shadows over Kano, the battle against diphtheria was far from over, but with every Maryam that stood up and shared her story, the tide was slowly turning. It was a start, and in that, there was hope.

Promoting Tertiary Education for Refugees - Peter-King's inspiring journey in becoming a change maker.



Cameroonian refugee and DAFI scholarship recipient, Peter-Kings, supports a university applicant in Adagom refugee settlement, Cross River State. © UNHCR/Lucy Agiende.

Currently, only seven per cent of refugees worldwide can pursue higher education, a slight improvement from the mere one per cent in 2019, yet still significantly lower than the global higher education enrollment rate of over 40 per cent among non-refugees. In Nigeria, the situation for Cameroonian refugees is even more dire, with just 1.4 percent having access to tertiary education. Despite these challenges, UNHCR is steadfast in its goal to increase refugee enrollment in higher education to 15 per cent by 2030, viewing it as a crucial complementary pathway towards offering refugees durable solutions.

Cameroonian refugee Peter-Kings Ayuk has taken a giant stride in supporting efforts to achieve these targets by promoting and advocating for the attainment of tertiary education opportunities for Cameroonian refugees.

“I have always viewed education as the door that opens opportunities for any individual. In 2019, there was no access to tertiary education for Cameroonian refugees, and I was devastated because most youths were idle and engaged in negative vices like drug abuse and transactional sex”, Peter-Kings recalls.

In December 2017, Peter-Kings was forced to leave behind civil unrest in his hometown in the Southwest Region of Cameroon, seeking ref-

uge in Nigeria. His aspirations seemed uncertain until he arrived at the Adagom refugee settlement in Cross River State and was registered by UNHCR.

It was here that his dream of becoming a public administrator found new hope in 2020, thanks to the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship program that enabled him to study Public Administration. This opportunity not only promised a continuation of his education but also set him on a path to significant personal and professional growth.

His motivation to establish a refugee-led Community-Based Organization that champions tertiary education sparked when Peter-King was selected for a six-month online leadership and public speaking training organised by UNHCR. After that, he attended the World Higher Education Conference held in Barcelona, Spain, representing Nigeria. Following the summit, he felt inspired to arrange a workshop for 120 refugees and local residents to raise awareness about various scholarship opportunities and educational pathways, including formal, non-formal, technical, and vocational education. This initiative marked the beginning of his newfound calling as a human rights activist dedicated to empowering his community through education.



Peter-Kings participated at the 2022 UNESCO World Higher Education Conference in Spain. © UNESCO

Forcibly displaced people, including refugee scholars and graduates, have been able to utilize their education and skills to establish organizations/companies, secure employment, and advance innovation and research. This has resulted in a significant positive impact on people's lives globally, highlighting the importance and benefits of educating those who have been forced to flee their homes.

“The outcome of my activities propels me to do more. So far, I have assisted 11 students in gaining admission into various tertiary education, most of them DAFI scholars,” Peter-Kings adds. As a result of the organisation’s advocacies, the Global Refugee Youth network donated school items for 120 refugee children in preschool at the Adagom settlement.

Access to tertiary education and scholarships constitutes a significant challenge for refugee youths in Nigeria. “My target is to support the vision of UNHCR in ensuring that by 2030, at least 15 per cent of refugees, including Cameroonians, have access to tertiary education”, he adds.

UNHCR’s 2019 education strategy, *Refugee Education 2030: A strategy for refugee inclusion*, aims to foster the conditions, partnerships, collaboration and approaches that lead to all refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, internally displaced persons and stateless children and youth and their hosting communities to access inclusive and equitable quality education, including at the tertiary level.

The healing journey of forcibly displaced children through art



After several years of the humanitarian crisis in North-East Nigeria, most children have been healed from their trauma through UNHCR's Child Protection programme. @UNHCR/Francis Garriba.

Imagine a future where every child uprooted by conflict finds sanctuary and hope—this is the vision propelling UNHCR and its partners, like Caritas Nigeria, as they weave a safety net of protection around the youngest victims of forced displacement in Borno State. These young lives have witnessed unspeakable horrors: families torn apart, homes abandoned in terror, and childhoods interrupted by the violence of non-state armed groups (NSAGs). Left with deep psychological wounds, many of these children exhibit signs of trauma—aggression, withdrawal, and a profound loss of self-esteem—testaments to their harrowing experiences yet also silent pleas for protection and healing. Recognising the need for intensive child protection initiative in the State, UNHCR launched a Child Protection project that spans the Maiduguri Metropolitan Council, Bama, Banki, and Monguno Local Government Areas. The project, supported by the Muslim World League, is primarily focused on protecting children who have been separated from their families or caregivers, as well as other vulnerable young ones. The program aims to provide these children with a safe and engaging environment through activities in Kids Clubs and Child-Friendly Spaces, with a particular emphasis on the therapeutic art of drawing, to promote their overall well-being.

Working with Caritas Nigeria, the project has taken a hands-on approach in the Kids Clubs, helping children to process their experiences and find empowerment in creativity. These clubs provide a safe and supportive environment, allowing children to delve into their creative instincts and self-expression. The initiative is committed to nurturing healing and resilience among children affected by the violence and disruptions caused by NSAGs in their communities.

“During profiling by humanitarian actors, these women and children were emaciated, hungry, sickly, shaken, hopeless, and confused about

the next phase of their lives,” says Godswill Uche Peters, Caritas Nigeria Information Management/Reporting Officer.

Journey to recovery

UNHCR and Caritas Nigeria initially struggled to engage traumatised children in Kids Club and Child-Friendly Space activities. However, they discovered that art activities, such as drawing on bare floors, had a calming effect on the children, many of whom expressed their experiences with conflict through their artwork. This observation led to the targeted enrolment of talented children in an arts and creativity club as part of their healing journey. Recognising their drawings as silent calls for help, the initiative focused on providing special attention and care, facilitating both engagement and emotional recovery through creative expression.

Through regular engagements in Arts and Creativity Club activities, the healing process unfolded and progressed. These clubs became safe spaces for emotional expression and healing, where children could paint their experiences on paper and slowly detach themselves from the harrowing memories that haunted them. The clubs facilitated a therapeutic environment, fostering trust and providing an outlet for the suppressed emotions often lingering beneath the children's minds. “The inception of Arts and Creativity Clubs in various locations was more than a response to the need for art. It was a profound initiative rooted in the belief that creative arts could be a powerful tool for healing and provide an outlet to mend children's emotional wounds,” states Daniel Bisu, UNHCR Assistant Protection Officer in Bama.

Through persistent effort, empathy, and creative interventions, the narrative within the children's artwork shifted from conflict to hope.

Symbols of war in their drawings gradually gave way to positive images of houses, schools, and animals, reflecting a significant internal transformation. This change not only highlighted the therapeutic power of creativity but also marked the Kids Clubs as pivotal in helping these children envision a world beyond conflict, thereby facilitating their emotional and psychological healing.

“As we reflect on the healing journey of these young minds across the Child Protection project locations in Borno State, we ascribe these great strides to our donor Muslim World League for their continuous support of the project, our partner Caritas Nigeria for their relentless sacrifice in moulding the children, and UNHCR staff for ensuring the smooth functioning of the programme,” says Mr. Mahamadou Guindo, UNHCR Head of Sub Office Maiduguri.

The transformation of children burdened with conflict into symbols of resilience and hope demonstrates the profound impact of creative therapy on personal and societal healing. The success of the Kids Clubs and the entire Child Protection project is not the end but a continuation of a journey that requires ongoing support and collaboration to ensure that conflict-affected children's futures are free from past traumas. This story celebrates their recovery and serves as a beacon of hope for global efforts to heal communities affected by conflict, demonstrating the indomitable spirit of creativity in overcoming adversity.



Images were drawn by kids at the child-friendly space in Bama. @Caritas Nigeria

Photo News



Photo news captions,

1. Nigeria's Minister of Women Affairs, Barr. Uju Kennedy-Ohaneye (5th from the left), recently announced a multi-million naira biogas project to combat energy poverty faced by women in rural communities. With her is the UN Women Representative to Nigeria and ECOWAS, Ms Beatrice Eyong (4th from the left).
2. UN Congratulates new DG/CEO of NiMet: (L-R) Wasiu Ibrahim (NiMet), Haruna Zakari (TA to DG/CEO NiMet), Professor Charles Anosike (DG/CEO NiMet), Bernard Gomez (WMO Representative), Roland Abah (WMO National Officer), and Oluwaseun Idowu (NiMet)
3. (R-L) Mr Abdourahamane Daillo, the Head of UNESCO office and Rep. of UNESCO to Nigeria, Mrs. Hannatu Musawa the Honorable Minister of Art, Culture, and Creative Economy minister, Nigeria, and Mr. Faiz Imam during a courtesy visit to the UN House to discuss issues bordering on the promotion of culture and the creative industry in Nigeria

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