



©UNHCR/Rahima Gambo

Abuja Action Statement

Reaffirmation of the Commitments of
the Abuja Action Statement and their Implementation

28-29 January, 2019
Abuja, Nigeria



Second Regional Protection Dialogue on the Lake Chad Basin

Reaffirmation of the Commitments of the Abuja Action Statement and their Implementation

Recalling the common purpose and objectives of the Abuja Action Statement of 8 June 2016, the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, with the participation of a broad range of partners engaged in the response to forced displacement, convened a second Regional Protection Dialogue (RPD 2), on 28-29 January 2019.

Hosted by the Federal Government of Nigeria, with the technical facilitation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the RPD 2 was an opportunity to review the protection situation in all four countries, taking stock of progress and examining current challenges with a view to enhancing the response to the urgent needs of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and host communities.

United in their intention to address the root causes of displacement and realize sustainable solutions for those affected by conflict, the Governments of Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria:

Reaffirmed the importance of unwavering support to addressing the issues highlighted by the Abuja Action Statement;

Noted the continued volatility of the security situation in the Lake Chad Basin, the persistently high numbers of forcibly displaced and the extent of ongoing protection challenges;

Commended progress on strengthened legislative frameworks, reinforced coordination and dedicated attention to building capacity for meaningful and effective action;

Acknowledged the continued centrality of protection, access to asylum and the principle of non-refoulement, in line with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and its 1967 Protocol, relevant international and regional instruments, as well as national laws and policies.

Reiterated the importance of regional efforts to seek solutions to forced displacement, in particular in the context of the momentum created by the African Union's Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons, marking the 50-year anniversary of the 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (OAU Refugee Convention) and the 10-year anniversary of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention);



Recommended continued joint efforts by political, humanitarian, development and peace actors to address the protection and development needs of affected populations in the Lake Chad Basin and prepare the ground for solutions including sustainable reintegration upon voluntary return.

Recognized the relevance of broad initiatives geared towards the economic and development capacity of the wider region, including the Lake Chad Basin Commission Strategy, the Oslo I and Oslo II Conferences, and other related fora and their potential to alleviate the impact of forced displacement and contribute to the attainment of solutions;

Applauded the significant global developments towards reinforced international burden- and responsibility sharing and the operationalization of comprehensive responses, as set out in the 2018 *Global Compact on Refugees*, and the practical application of the *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework*, as an integral part of the Compact, building on the 2016 *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*.

Noted that the broad range of arrangements to support comprehensive responses in specific situations, including through regional and sub-regional collaboration, and responses in support of refugees and local communities, articulated by the Global Compact on Refugees, can also address the plight of IDPs and returnees.

Welcomed the advances made by development actors in support of government-led comprehensive responses and, committed to explore further opportunities to include refugees, IDPs and other affected populations into national and local service delivery;

Underlined the importance of credible data across all areas of action to support evidence-based responses;

Recognized the importance of continuous efforts and opportunities to further expand comprehensive responses, building on whole-of-government, multi-stakeholder engagement at national and local levels, and seeking opportunities for inclusive support to displaced and local populations through well aligned national and local development plans;

Noted the specific role and contribution of Ministries of Budget and Planning of the four countries, to effective planning and budgeting in support of the implementation of the Abuja Action Statement;

Affirmed the importance of feedback and accountability mechanisms to establish transparent linkages between interventions and the benefits resulting for affected populations;

Encouraged the preparation of an updated regional action plan based on national action plans to maximize opportunities for further progress in the five areas outlined in the 2016 Abuja Action Statement, keeping these under active and regular review, with



the possibility to inform pledges for announcement at the first *Global Refugee Forum* to be held in Geneva in December 2019.

Thematically framed Working Group discussions generated reflections and observations, in the form of recommendations, to encourage continued collaboration within and between the four countries across the key areas of the Abuja Action Statement. Particular emphasis was placed on the importance of improved coordination across all areas, including through the role and relevance of existing entities, as well as strengthened coordination capacity of civil society and non-governmental organizations.

Regarding Forced Displacement, Access to Asylum and Protection

Access to asylum and protection from refoulement are critical elements of the success of measures to enhance meaningful security standards in the context of ongoing instability and the presence of non-state armed groups. The primacy of human rights in the implementation of security measures is recognized throughout.

1. Ensure that refugees have effective access to asylum and protection from refoulement;
2. Expedite domestication and effective implementation of the Kampala Convention, and ensure application of national legislation related to refugees and IDPs;
3. Accelerate re-establishment of civil authorities and basic services in conflict affected areas;
4. Reinforce coordination and information sharing between humanitarian actors and national and local authorities;

Regarding Civil-Military Coordination and the Civilian Character of Refugee and IDP Hosting Areas

Full understanding of the specific protection challenges in country is key to good practices for civil-military coordination, which in turn help reduce protection risks faced by refugees, IDPs, returnees and host communities. Maintaining full respect for the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee and IDP sites/hosting areas is of central importance, including through close collaboration between administrative authorities, security and police forces, humanitarian actors and the affected populations.

1. Increase, streamline and coordinate capacity building on international human rights and humanitarian law, and civil-military guidelines;
2. Enhance regional analysis and information exchange on security and population movements, including through regular cross border civil-military meetings;
3. Increase accountability for human rights violations against affected populations, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).



4. Address impunity including by ensuring access to justice, detention monitoring and building synergies between the protocols of humanitarian and military actors for the investigation of these violations.
5. Ensure security screening complies with international standards and the respect of the right to access asylum;
6. Support the civilian management of IDP and refugee sites, to guarantee their civilian and humanitarian character;
7. Foster information exchange between administrative authorities, security forces, traditional leaders, humanitarian actors and affected populations;
8. Strengthen civil-military coordination at all levels in support of increased access to affected populations, incorporating the presence of female officers and child protection officers.

Regarding Persons with Specific Protection Needs

Renewed commitment to the highest standards of response to persons with specific protection needs requires that they be adequately identified and prioritized by the humanitarian response, particularly in areas where humanitarian actors have limited access. A common purpose is to ensure that persons with specific protection needs can access protection and services, allowing for the prioritization of attention to survivors of violence, protection of children at risk of recruitment and, strengthened demobilization and reintegration of children associated with armed groups.

1. Facilitate access, protection and accountability to persons and groups with specific needs, including accessibility to essential services for those in hard to reach areas;
2. Include persons with specific needs in national initiatives, social protection programmes and safety net mechanisms, including local communities' participation in the planning and implementation of projects in accordance with age, gender and diversity principles;
3. Strengthen accountability to affected populations, including opportunities for participation and complaint mechanisms;
4. Ensure specific provisions for the demobilization and reintegration of individuals, in particular children, leaving armed groups and support to cross-border tracing and reunification mechanisms for all separated and unaccompanied children;
5. Pursue a standard and harmonized procedure across the 4 countries for multi-sectoral needs assessments and improved registration and profiling that ensures adequate data protection.

Regarding Comprehensive Solutions Approaches:

The protracted nature of displacement calls for greater leveraging of opportunities to implement comprehensive solutions approaches, including by strengthening the resilience of affected populations and preparing them for solutions through increased self-reliance and access to services on par with local populations. The humanitarian-development nexus, and the support offered by UNDAF, is critical, including to ensure



that economic growth and structural investments benefit displacement affected areas as a whole in line with national and local development plans.

1. Pursue viable opportunities to realize sustainable voluntary return in conditions of safety and dignity, proactive approaches to local resettlement and local integration, and implementation of alternatives to camps;
2. Reinforce the inclusion of conflict affected populations, including refugees, in national and local service delivery and advance their socio-economic well-being by enabling access to markets and employment;
3. Increase engagement and expertise on Cash-Based-Initiatives and related activities along with the re-establishment of financial institutions in areas affected by conflict;
4. Foster partnerships, information sharing, and programming, in line with national and local development plans, and the *Regional Strategy for Stabilization, Recovery and the Development of the Boko Haram Affected Areas of the Lake Chad Basin*;
5. Seek complementary funding and other forms of assistance from a broad range of stakeholders, including bilateral and multilateral development actors, in support of strategies and comprehensive solutions approaches.

Regarding Nationality and Documentation

Civil registration and documentation are tools for both protection and solutions, including for persons with specific needs, and also enhance State capacity for accurate information on persons on their territory. Alongside the strengthening of national policies, procedures and capacity, continued attention is required to raise awareness of the importance of civil registration and documentation, especially to ensure that every child is registered immediately after birth and that late birth registration is available without discrimination.

1. Collaborate with civil society organizations on a broad range of information campaigns and the provision of legal and practical assistance to access documentation;
2. Proactive attention to birth registration in programming and operation procedures in the health and education sectors;
3. Reinforce government-led registration processes and the application of resulting data in the best interests of the needs of affected populations;
4. Provide access to civil documentation, including for children born in countries of asylum;
5. Establish registration systems for IDPs to support timely protection, assistance and identification of solutions;
6. Pursue national plans to eradicate statelessness, including the adoption or amendment of relevant legislation or policies to prevent and reduce statelessness.