



# Supporting Refugees and Host Communities

The Global Compact on Refugees in Nigeria

# Foreword



To put the refugee phenomenon in clear perspective, there has been steady rise in the influx of refugees to Nigeria Since 2017. This is due to the unabating conflict in the West African Sub-region, particularly the Republic of Cameroon axis. From December 2017 to May 2021, the figure of Refugees in Nigeria increased from about 57,000 to 71,400 and 1,600 asylum-seekers. About 73,000 refugees from various nationalities, were registered in Nigeria as at June, 2021.

Nigeria, as a party to the 1951 United Nations (Geneva) Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, joined the Global Community in December 2018, to adopt the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR).

In 2019, Nigeria pledged to the Global Refugees Forum to include matters of refugees, IDPs and their host communities in the national development plans; strengthen of the country's protection capacity, ensure availability and access to durable solutions for refugees and IDPs; and sustain Nigeria's role in regional and sub-regional efforts in addressing the root causes of displacement.

To operationalize the pledges, Nigeria produced an implementation Road map, which was validated by high –level Stakeholders on 30th November, 2021.

In summary, Nigeria has, among many, put in place favourable asylum policy, national IDP policy, free access to land for farming purposes and embedded in the Medium Term National Development Plan 2021-2025 many initiatives for the welfare of Persons of Concern. While readily providing positive protection environment to Persons of Concern, Nigeria is engaging in Tripartite Agreements with the UNHCR and Cameroon, Chad and Niger, respectively to facilitate voluntary repatriation of Nigerians.

We envisage that all the critical stakeholders to the welfare of Persons of Concern, in the spirit of responsibility sharing, will work together to further ensure the implementation of the pledges in line with the timelines indicated in the Road map.

## **Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim**

Honourable Federal Commissioner

National Commission for Refugees, Migrants & Internally Displaced Persons  
(NCFRMI)



Since 2018, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) is the international framework that articulates the commitments of governments and the international community to show solidarity with refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, internally displaced people, stateless individuals and affected host communities. It is geared towards easing pressure on hosting countries, promoting inclusion in national systems and investing in refugee's self-reliance as ways to increasingly complement humanitarian assistance cycles with sustainable national solutions to those affected by forced displacement.

Nigeria has already made significant progress in terms of localizing and operationalizing the GCR, starting from a favourable asylum policy, land provision to refugees/IDPs/returnees, and inclusion in strengthened national education, health and water systems to assist displaced women, men and children and affected host communities. Nigeria made broad and important pledges to the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, to further invest in inclusion, protection capacity and durable solutions, aligning with the national development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This booklet provides an overview of Nigeria's commendable approach and progress made so far, and it also explains some of the obstacles and opportunities towards implementation of the GCR. The realization of Nigeria's pledges requires concrete actions and contributions from each and every one of us, which the 'whole-of-society' approach demands.

In Nigeria, the objectives and aims of the GCR have a real chance of being fulfilled, to a large extent because of the favourable protection environment we have in Nigeria. In the spirit of responsibility-sharing, we hope to see more development investments, using multi-sectoral area-based approaches, in Nigeria's refugee hosting States.

## **Chansa Kapaya**

UNHCR Representative, Nigeria

# A LEGAL FRAMEWORK CHARACTERISED BY OPENNESS

The Government of Nigeria has shown steadfast commitment to the Principles of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)<sup>1</sup> of refugee inclusion, responsibility-sharing and solidarity with displaced persons and affected host communities even before the formal adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees in 2018.

Refugees in Nigeria, today numbering over 73,000 people, enjoy a favourable legal framework for realization of their wellbeing, living lives with respect and dignity. The

Nigerian Federal Government and host States within Nigeria (notably Cross River, Taraba, Benue, Akwa Ibom as well as a number of Nigerian cities) have taken an open approach fostering the inclusion of refugees in national services such as education. This is even more notable as they are also hosting some three million internally displaced people (IDPs).

Cameroonian refugees, who constitute some 95 per cent of the total refugee population in the country, are automatically given



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html>

temporary protection status (TPS). Upon registration, refugees and their families receive refugee identity cards. With this ID, they are legally given Freedom of Movement and the Right to Work in Nigeria. Those refugees who go through a formal Refugee Status Determination procedure, have the right to a Convention Travel Document, which is recognized internationally.

Within this remarkable legal environment, international partners have a

role to play in supporting vulnerable and marginalized populations and give increased attention to the communities that host refugees and IDPs. Significant work remains to strengthen national education, health, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), energy, employment and protection services to cater for vulnerable populations that still today experience daily trials of discrimination, access, availability and quality, and to realize the commitment of leaving no one behind.



# EDUCATION AS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT

In Nigeria, refugee children are enrolled in national schools at pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary level, giving them the ability to pursue their education under the same admission and teaching criteria as Nationals. Upon completion, refugees receive internationally recognized diplomas of study. This is a great achievement for the Nigerian government in GCR implementation.

In order to be registered in a Nigerian school, refugee girls and boys must show their refugee factsheets, which



gives evidence of refugee status. To a large extent, this gives equitable access to education and national exams

administered by the Education Ministry, a very important step towards SDG 4 'Quality Education' for all children.

The Ministry of Education at local levels supports the inclusion of Cameroonian refugee children and



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youth into the national education system throughout the school year by building additional classrooms, providing teaching and learning materials and ensuring adequate teacher training in schools located in host communities near to the refugee settlements. Refugee children in urban areas are also supported for their access to education.

Of approximately 69,000 Cameroonian refugees, about 51 per cent<sup>6</sup> are school-age children and youth (5-24 years). In 2021, net enrolment rate among Cameroonian refugee children is 45 per cent for primary school and 21 per cent for secondary. National net enrolment rates at primary and secondary levels stand at 67 and 40 per cent respectively<sup>7</sup>. This means

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It's good to understand how Nigerian people see refugees as equal as Nigerian people, in areas such as health, education, and security. We are grateful to both Nigeria and UNHCR. We alone cannot make it, but they can make our children's future better. We are very grateful.

”

– REFUGEE

from D.R.C in Ogun State

that refugee enrolment in the host- ing States of Cross River, Taraba and Benue is significantly below national average. Many refugee children did not go to school since the crisis

## GCR Principles

### ▲ Humanity

▲ International solidarity

▲ Burden and responsibility-sharing

▲ The centrality of protection

▲ National ownership and leadership

▲ A whole of society approach

▲ Inclusion (in national services)



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in Cameroon started. Currently, over 12,000 refugee children continue to be out of school.

Notably, school fees are waived for refugee children in Cross River and Taraba States due to their vulnerable status, based on initiative of State authorities. There are nevertheless costs, such as for practical classes, examination, uniforms and textbooks, which negatively affects attendance. Some refugees also experience a certain level of discrimination due to their foreign status. Food insecurity also remains a threat to school attendance and academic performance due to economic difficulties that parents experience. The distance between the homes of

children and the next school is one of the major challenges to education of children and young people in Nigeria, including Cameroonian refugees.

The quality of education for Cameroonian refugees and locals in public schools remains a major concern, due to the shortage of teachers and learning resources. The teacher/student ratio is estimated to be over 1:100. The deployment of teachers by national education authorities is a priority. Therefore, while a positive inclusive environment is in place and progress can be observed, further development interventions are necessary to support quality education for refugees and host communities.

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR Nigeria (2021): Population Statistics August 2021

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF (2021): Adjusted-Net-Attendance- Rate-April 2021



# IDENTIFICATION AS A BASIS FOR LEADING PRODUCTIVE LIVES

SDG 16.9 sets out the goal to ‘by 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration’. Identification and associated documentation are key elements in ensuring protection for refugees giving them the ability to lead safe and productive lives,

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Nigeria is putting up elaborate measures to ensure that the fundamental basic human rights of refugees, and their dignity are protected while safeguarding them from all forms of violence and discrimination.”

– **ANETU-ANNE ALIU**, Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management, and Social Development, Global Refugee Forum, Geneva, 17-18 December 2019.



pursuing social and economic opportunities in their host countries. Refugees in Nigeria, upon arrival, are registered by NCFRMI and issued a National Identification for Refugee identity document. The bearer is a recognized refugee and has the right of residence, freedom of movement, and right to work in Nigeria. NCFRMI issues and prints refugee identify cards. Refugee children have access to birth registration in Nigeria through the same system as nationals.

Demonstrating national ownership, Nigeria has taken further steps to ensure refugee inclusion in national systems. NCFRMI in collaboration with the National Identity Management Commission is promoting registration



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## Benefits of registration in the National System and having a National Identity Card



Right of residence



Freedom of movement



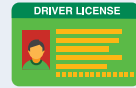
Right to work



Provision to open bank accounts



Purchasing of sim cards



Apply for drivers' licenses

### ■ GCR Objectives

- ▶ Ease pressures on host countries;
- ▶ Enhance refugee self-reliance;
- ▶ Expand access to third country solutions;
- ▶ Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity. efforts to address the root causes of displacement.

of refugees in the newly rolled out National Identification Number system. Arrangements to include refugees in national social safety nets through the Government's National Social Safety Net Coordination Office under the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs are also advancing.

Being registered in the national system and getting a national identity card will enable refugees to access essential services such as bank accounts, sim cards, and drivers' licenses, which in turn greatly facilitate integration and the ability to lead productive lives contributing to local economies.

# SELF-RELIANCE THROUGH SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION



Refugees recognized under the National Commission for Refugees Act have the right to live and work in Nigeria

(with the exception of work in certain sectors, such as security services). For specific refugee groups such as the Cameroonian population, individuals are granted the temporary right to live and work in Nigeria.



About 63 per cent of refugees in Nigeria who have reported an occupational status left agricultural or fishery-related

livelihoods behind, making this a priority sector for intervention. In Benue and Cross River States facilitating access to land to support agricultural livelihoods are notable State level initiatives. With 191 hectares set aside for agricultural livelihoods, refugees alongside host communities are provided with necessary agricultural inputs such as seeds and tools allowing them to produce food for themselves and for sale giving them an income to meet basic needs.



With a burgeoning youth refugee population, engagement within local labour markets, technical and vocational

education and training (TVET), linkages to employment opportunities and support to set up micro, small and medium enterprises is essential. The Lagos State Employability Trust Fund has successfully facilitated access to certified TVET trainings and linking refugees to traineeship opportunities, many times leading to employment.

A key factor in being able to set up and operate a business in Nigeria as a refugee is the ability to have a bank account. Refugees running enterprises especially in urban areas such as Lagos need to be banked to effectively run their businesses. Following UNHCR advocacy, the Nigerian Government has ensured improved access to banking systems for refugees through a directive from the Central Bank of Nigeria instructing financial institutions such as banks to recognise refugee identification documents as meeting 'Know Your Customer (KYC)' regulations. This also makes it easier to access capital through low interest loans for



“

The landlord allows me and my family to stay here for free because I helped him with the construction of a new building. I could not afford the rent. I work as a daily labourer, and I do not know whether I will earn something tomorrow. My profession back home was furniture production where I had eight apprentices. I would do furniture again, but I don't have the capital to start.

”

– **KIMBO LIBERTY**

Cameroonian refugee in Enugu City.

refugees to set up their own enterprises using their skills and education.

In working to achieve refugee self-reliance, it is important to recognize that they alongside host communities are affected by widespread poverty, chronic unemployment and underemployment especially of youth, and the security crisis which impacts all aspects of lives. Many refugees live in areas alongside vulnerable local households with high levels of food insecurity. Access to land remains the main challenge to restart agricultural livelihoods. Increased engagement with stakeholders to ensure access to key productive assets for refugees is needed.

Leading up to the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, the Nigerian Government made a series of pledges further solidify its comprehensive approach to forcibly displaced populations. Nigeria pledged to:

**1** Include refugees, IDPs, returnees and their host communities in National government development plans;

**2** Strengthen its protection capacity;

**3** Ensure the availability and access to durable solutions for refugees and IDPs;

**4** Continue playing an active and constructive role in regional and sub-regional efforts to address the root causes of displacement.



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# HEALTH

In the Health Sector, the Nigerian Government has opted for an inclusive approach giving refugees access to national health care facilities.

The overall aim is to have a stronger health system, in line with the development-oriented approach outlined in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). This will ensure access and equity of care between refugees and host populations with a focus on primary health care improvement for all in fulfillment of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 'Good Health and Wellbeing'<sup>2</sup>.

Nigeria's 1999 National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) Act provides for social health insurance,



where health care is provided to participants in a contributory scheme. They contribute a fixed

regular amount to a pre-payment plan.<sup>3</sup> The scheme is rolled out through private Health Maintenance Organisations (HMOs), which are linked to a network of primary, secondary and tertiary health care facilities regulated by the National Health Insurance Scheme.

Refugees and asylum-seekers are integrated within this national social health insurance scheme, moving towards an approach where parallel



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## 36,900 host community members - improved access and quality to health care

emergency-based support is avoided. This entails collaboration between HMOs, NCFRMI (National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs) and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, to enroll refugees in the system. HMOs then allocate refugees and asylum-seekers to health facilities nearest to them. Several dedicated health facilities have shown significant improvement in infrastructure using the insurance funds. At the same time, there is a planned gradual phasedown of emergency-based health support to refugees over a 5-year period.

Simultaneously, the government with support from partners works on health systems strengthening in Cross River, Taraba and Benue States. The host community shares benefits in all interventions. This entails health policies improvement,

human resources for health, health infrastructure (rehabilitation and construction of primary health centre wards (including pediatric and COVID wards) and hospitals, laboratories and staff quarters), health equipments, quality medicines, data improvement, solar electricity and WASH in Health facilities.

About 25,000 refugees and asylum-seekers including children are enrolled in the National Health Insurance Scheme.<sup>4</sup> Over 36,900<sup>5</sup> host community members benefit from improved access and quality of health care in the different localities.

Despite significant advances, health facilities in refugee hosting areas continue to lack government personnel and equipment. In addition, outreach to distant rural areas is limited which affects the quality of care there.



**Nigeria has included refugees in national services such as education and health, totally avoiding the creation of parallel unsustainable services and structures.**



– **ANETU-ANNE ALIU**, Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management, and Social Development, Global Refugee Forum, Geneva, 17-18 December 2019.

<sup>2</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nhis.gov.ng/>

<sup>4</sup> As of September 2021, UNHCR data.

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR data. This figure is for 2020.

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