FAR NORTH FACTSHEET

UNHCR Cameroon Multi-Country Office (MCO) | Jan-Aug 2026



Aerial view of Minawao Camp, July 2026. Photo: @UNHCR

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

UNHCR is strengthening protection, essential services and durable solutions in the Far North in the face of a cholera outbreak and rising protection incidents.

The Far North region of Cameroon continues to face a complex and protracted humanitarian crisis, linked to the Lake Chad Basin conflict, internal displacement, return movements and recurrent climate shocks (floods, drought). The region hosts 125,012 refugees (mostly Nigerian refugees), 453,661 internally displaced persons, 280 asylum seekers, 198,940 returnees and 30,581 spontaneous Cameroonian IDP returnees - a total population of more than 808,474 people (31 July 2026).

Nearly two-thirds of Nigerian refugees live in Minawao camp, which is severely overcrowded, placing unsustainable pressure on basic services, natural resources and relations with host communities. New multi-year programmes have been launched to develop viable alternatives to the camp and to strengthen services, resilience, and livelihoods.

The Minawao camp has been facing an active cholera epidemic since July 23, 2026. Protection incidents and kidnappings are on the rise (269 people abducted between January and July 2026, compared to 249 for the whole of 2025) and insecurity is hampering humanitarian access in several localities.

UNHCR continues to work closely with the Government of Cameroon to support a transition from direct humanitarian delivery towards stronger inclusion into national systems and sustainable solutions that promote self-reliance and social cohesion.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS (JANUARY – AUGUST 2026)

- 10,158 UNHCR Refugee Identity Cards distributed; 1,296 family composition certificates issued/renewed.
- April-May UNHCR organised a verification exercise at Minawao to ascertain current camp numbers. The last exercise was conducted three years ago.
- 18,676 General Directorate for National Security (DGSN) biometric card receipts issued.
- 3,083 Nigerian refugees voluntarily repatriated (544 households, 5 convoys); 987 Cameroonian refugees returnees from Chad arrived in Kousseri.
- 516 new cases of GBV documented and assisted; 314 awareness-raising sessions reaching 38,885 people.
- 293 vulnerable children identified and assisted; 189 best interests of the child assessments completed.
- 13,856 students enrolled (preschool, elementary, secondary); 117 community teachers paid ($19,630 USD).
- 10,737 medical consultations, 592 assisted deliveries; 32,473 people enrolled in Universal Health Coverage.
- 20,085 households (7,900 refugees) assisted with essential household items; 600 households received roofing kits.
- 342,844 kg of ecological briquettes produced by 7,855 households (46.2% of the camp's households).
- 192.5 hectares of agricultural land allocated for refuge use; 4,600 fish and 850 chickens raised in community farms.



Solar powered manual irrigation of 151 hectare land donation from Government for Refugees and host communities in Minawao and environs. Photo: UNHCR/Richard Atem

Key Figures (as of 31 July 2026 UNHCR/Govt. IOM DTM R24)

25,012 Refugees	453,661 Displaced	198,940 Returnees (IDPs)	280 Asylum seekers	30,581 Spontaneous returnees	808,474 Total population of concern
53.72% Female refugees	46.28% Male refugees	60.13% Refugee children under 18	22,976 (18%) Persons with specific needs	62,087 (36%) Children of school age	

PROTECTION

Registration and documentation

- 10,158 UNHCR refugee identity cards distributed, 1,296 Certificate of Family Composition (ACFs) and 23 Certificate of Asylum-Seeker Status (CDAs) issued/renewed; 1,957 new births registered in Minawao; 237 households (429 people) registered at the transit centre.
- 269 kidnappings recorded from January to July 2026, compared with 249 throughout 2025;

Verification

- Minawao: 51,723 of 79,491 refugees verified (65%), with 27,768 yet to be verified. Outside the camp, 2,818 refugees were verified in Mayo-Tsanaga and 24,927 in Logone-et-Chari, while approximately 43,000 remain to be verified across Mayo-Sava, Mayo-Tsanaga, Logone-et-Chari, Bashéo and Gashiga.

Legal assistance and monitoring

- 2,100 people counselled, including 1,139 women; 18 refugees received legal assistance before civilian and military courts.
- 6,450 protection incidents documented, affecting approximately 8,010 people.
- Three prison visits conducted.

Community protection

- Two new refugee associations created (bringing total to nine); Joint Protection Committees active with the authorities in Mayo-Tsanaga and Logone and Chari.

Child protection

- 293 vulnerable children identified and assisted; 189 best interest assessments; 200 children with special needs supported; 19 foster families supported; 1,157 birth registrations identified.

Gender-based violence (GBV)

- 516 new cases assisted (214 refugees, 173 IDPs, 115 hosts); 705 women/girls in life skills; 108 survivors received economic empowerment support amounting to18.996.72 USD; MoU signed with MINAS and MINPROFF.

People with Special Needs (PSN)

- 2,568 people supported with psychosocial support and referrals; 9,000 sensitized on the inclusion of PSN

Challenges: Increase in incidents/abductions; funds needed for protection monitoring; ~43,000 refugees outside camp unverified; insufficient specialised staff in remote areas.

Opportunities: Active Joint Protection Committees; strong collaboration between UNHCR and authorities; nine refugee associations

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

- Voluntary repatriation: 3,083 Nigerian refugees repatriated (544 households, 5 convoys); 9,015 sensitised; 3,122 intentions to return confirmed.
- Facilitated returns from Chad: 987 Cameroonian refugee returnees received at the Kousseri one-stop shop (908 provided cash-based assistance).

Challenges: Persistent insecurity in some areas of return in Nigeria; roads impassable during the rainy season.

RESILIENCE, INCLUSION AND ALTERNATIVES TO CAMP-BASED ASSISTANCE

Minawao camp hosts more than tens of thousands of Nigerian refugees, significantly exceeding its initial capacity for 15,000 people. The protracted nature of displacement continues to place pressure on basic services, natural resources, land availability and livelihood opportunities. In line with the Government of Cameroon's refugee policy and the Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR and partners are strengthening area-based approaches that promote self-reliance, social cohesion and sustainable solutions for refugees and host communities:

With funding from the **European Union** and the **German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ),** UNHCR and GIZ have started to implement a three-year programme, **Alternatives to Minawao Camp**, to advance durable solutions and strengthen resilience in Cameroon's Far North Region.The programme is designed to accelerate Minawao's transition from aid dependence towards more sustainable, locally led solutions and includes investments in basic service infrastructure in the camp and surrounding villages to support refugee inclusion, economic opportunities and social cohesion.

The programme aims to decongest Minawao camp and develop out-of-camp solutions for 12,500 refugees including seasonal employment and sustainable settlement in host villages. It seeks to strengthen sustainable access to basic services, gradually integrating camp services into national systems, and reinforcing local governance systems.

A joint Solutions Unit brings together government authorities, UNHCR and GIZ to profile candidates, assess protection risks, match skills and aspirations with verified opportunities and monitor outcomes. The programme will identify and assess at least 50 options outside Minawao and provide targeted transitional assistance to 800 vulnerable households with strong prospects for sustainable settlement. UNHCR leads the work on protection, profiling, civil documentation, governance and access to water, health, education and community services, while GIZ supports livelihoods, skills development and economic opportunities.

African Development Bank-supported resilience pathway: The PAADF project (Projet d'Appui à l'Autonomisation des personnes déplacées de force et communautés hôtes dans l'Extrême-Nord du Cameroun) seeks to support displaced populations and host communities in Logone Birni district, Far North Region, by strengthening social cohesion and economic empowerment. In March, a socio-economic profiling exercise identified 48 producer groups, mostly agricultural, and 61% women . The findings will inform targeted support in equipment, inputs, training, finance, market access, irrigation and climate-risk management. Further profiling is ongoing.

Complementarity with the World Bank: UNHCR engages with stakeholders involved in the World Bank-financed Projet d'Amélioration de la Connectivité, de la Résilience et de l'Inclusion le long du Corridor Mora-Dabanga-Kousseri (PACRI-MDK), implemented under the Government of Cameroon's Programme Spécial de Reconstruction et de Développement de la Région de l'Extrême-Nord (PSRDREN). Its inclusion and community development components can create opportunities for refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities to benefit from infrastructure development, livelihood support, climate resilience measures and labour-intensive employment activities, promoting socioeconomic inclusion and reducing reliance on humanitarian aid.



Water collection point in Minawao camp, March 2026. ©UNHCR

EDUCATION

- 13,856 students enrolled: 2,064 preschool, 10,837 primary, 955 secondary; 335 learners in literacy centres.
- 117 community teachers paid (19,629.95 USD).

Needs: Strengthen access to quality, inclusive education through the deployment of additional government teachers, including English-speaking teachers, to support the integration of Nigerian refugee children into the national education system. Priority interventions include the construction and rehabilitation of classrooms to reduce overcrowding; the provision of desks and other classroom furniture; the installation of water points and gender-segregated latrines to improve the learning environment; the distribution of school kits and uniforms to vulnerable learners; and the strengthening of education sector planning, data management, and monitoring through Education Management Information System (EMIS) training for education authorities and school personnel.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

- Active cholera outbreak in Minawao since July 23, 2026: 114 cases, 1 fatality (as of July 31).
- 10,737 medical consultations; 592 births attended at the District Medical Centre CMA (94.12%).
- 32,473 people enrolled in Universal Health Coverage (22,305 children <5 years old, 9,810 pregnant women, 187 cases of onchocerciasis (river blindness), 75 TB, 88 HIV).
- ·New Cholera Treatment Unit (20 beds); operating theatre, neonatology, emergency ward, laboratory and laundry room built; 162 vulnerable refugees referred to Mokolo/Maroua.

- **Needs:** 8 additional state health workers; access to reliable electricity for new infrastructure.

SHELTER, HOUSEHOLD ITEMS AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- 600 households received roofing kits; 20,085 households (≈7,900 refugees) assisted with essential household items.
- Gourenguel transit centre rehabilitated with sustainable materials; 4 on-call housing units built for teachers.
- Construction of 2 latrine blocks at the Group 1 School; construction of a hospital waste management pit.
- Production of 800 bags of natural biofertilizers from faecal sludge.
- Installation of a solar pumping system in Mayo Louti.

- **Challenges:** Scarcity of resources; difficult access to local building materials.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION

- 342,844 kg of ecological briquettes produced by 7,855 households (46.2% of the camp's households); 465 rice husk stoves distributed.
- 200 people trained in briquette production (new unit installed in Mokolo); 100 young people/women trained in photovoltaic maintenance.

Impact: Reduced timber collection distances for women and girls and reduction of deforestation and replanting to trees.
Gap: Insufficient funding to ensure full coverage of the targeted population and procure higher-capacity equipment.

LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC INCLUSION

- 192.5 ha of agricultural land allocated (117.5 ha Mayo Laddé, 65 ha GIC Nouma, 57 ha GIZ Alternative Solutions project in Gawar).
- 156 bags of onions harvested (2 ha); cumulative market garden sales of ≈ 701 USD.
- ≈4,600 fish in fish farming; poultry farm (850 animals, turnover of ≈ 3 500 USD).
- Entrepreneurship: ≈ 1 729 USD in earnings through the camp cafeteria project (11 women); The Multimedia Centre enhances refugees' access to digital technologies, training, and online resources, promoting education, livelihoods, self-reliance, and digital inclusion. kiosk ≈ 2 811 USD; sale of plants ≈ 2 489 USD.
- **Gap:** Only 20% of needs covered (80% gap); limited access to arable land and formal financial services.

FUNDING UPDATE

Funding gaps reported by sector: women/girls empowerment and the women's centre in Minawao (GBV); deployment of teachers, classrooms and kits (education); protection monitoring coverage; scaling up of ecological briquettes; boreholes and rehabilitation of the Mokolo-Minawao (EHA) network.

COLLABORATION WITH PARTNERS

- **Authorities:** Joint Protection Committees, CNARR, DGSN, BUNEC, MINAS, MINPROFF, MINESEC/MINEDUB, MINEE.
- **UN agencies:** FAO, WFP, IOM (DTM).
- **NGOs:** DRC, NRC, LWF, JRS, ShelterBox, IHS, ALDEPA, ACF, ONYX Expertise, GIZ
- **Refugee-led organisations:** Nine associations
- **Coordination of regional/departmental humanitarian platforms;** flood/drought preparedness (12 municipalities); update of 4 ORSEC plans.
- EU, AfDB, World Bank.

UNHCR is grateful for contributions from donors

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