
UNHCR Synergy with Nigerian Government and the Security Concerns of Vulnerable Cameroonian Anglophone Refugees in Cross River State, Nigeria, 2017-2023

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Abstract

The influx of Cameroonian refugees seeking humanitarian protection in Nigeria indicates the severity of the conflict and the desperate conditions that force people to flee their homes. The separatist movements in Anglophone Cameroon and clashes with government forces have led to widespread violence, displacement, and human rights abuses. As a result, over 60,000 refugees have crossed into Nigeria between 2017 and 2023. However, while studies have explored the causes of the conflict and the humanitarian challenges faced by the refugees in their various settlements, this research assesses how the synergy between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Nigerian Government has impacted the security concern of Cameroonian refugees in Cross River State, Nigeria. Theoretically, the study was anchored on the Global Governance Theory. Survey and documentary methods were used to gather data. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, logical deductions and statistical inferences. Findings include underfunding of the UNHCR and the apparent inability of the Nigerian Government to tackle the security concerns of the vulnerable Cameroonian refugees in Cross River State. The study recommends adequate funding to improve basic services and infrastructures within the refugee settlements.

Keywords: UNHCR, Anglophone-Cameroonians, Refugees, Cross River State, Nigeria.

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Introduction

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) plays a crucial role in protecting and providing assistance to refugees worldwide. The organization's effectiveness in fulfilling its mandate largely depends on its ability to foster synergy with various partners and host governments (UNHCR, 2023). Host governments play a crucial role in the protection of refugees, as they are responsible for granting asylum, providing access to essential services, and ensuring the safety and well-being of refugees within their borders. UNHCR works closely with host governments to support their efforts and help them meet their obligations under international law. This cooperation involves providing technical assistance, sharing expertise, and facilitating dialogue to strengthen the host country's capacity to manage refugee populations effectively. UNHCR also advocates for the inclusion of refugees in national development plans and policies to promote their self-reliance and integration.

Overall, UNHCR's synergy with partners and host governments is vital for the effective protection and support of refugees. Collaboration with a diverse array of stakeholders ensures a comprehensive, well-coordinated, and sustainable response to refugee crises worldwide. It enables the mobilization of resources, expertise, and political will necessary to address the challenges faced by refugees and work towards finding durable solutions to their displacement. This research focuses on the UNHCR synergy with the Nigerian government and the security concern of the vulnerable Cameroonian Anglophone refugees in Nigeria.

Theoretical Discussion

The study relied on Global Governance Theory as a framework of analysis. Although the global governance theory originated in mid-19th century, it became popular after the World War I and II. The theory is today championed by the United Nations (UN) in the mobilization of international organizations for the management of different conflicts around the world. The idea of global governance relates to all actions aimed at facilitating collective action, usually to address policy challenges with a trans-boundary dimension (Held, 1995). Central to global governance is the recognition that the relevant actors are not just nation-states but also include non-state actors, such as United Nations Organization (UNO), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Civil Liberty organizations, or businesses partners, whether involved as participants in rule-making or as regulated by those rules (Hall & Biersteker 2002; Scholte 2002). The modern refugee regime emerged in response to the adverse consequences of World War II in Europe that resulted in the displacement of about 35 million people (Held, 1995). With the emergence of the global refugee regime, there was recognition by states of the

rights of refugees not to be forcibly returned to a country that would cause them great harm, leading to the adoption of a definition of refugees. This is on the ground of a high possibility of fear of persecution due to race, nationality, religion, membership of a particular social group or differences in political opinion. With deep consideration of the spirit of the time, Article 14 (1) of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution”.

The global governance theory partitions the model of international governance intervention into three, namely: intergovernmental, trans-governmental, and transnational models as proposed forms of international governance (Loescher,2001). The intergovernmental model consists of states, represented by their heads of government, cooperating and bargaining within international regimes. In the trans-governmental model, lower-level government officials interact directly with one another, forming networks that span national boundaries. In the transnational model, the focus is on global civil society and the role of nongovernmental actors participating directly in governance. In this sphere, international organizations intervene in the management of Refugee crises around the world, fully aware that refugee incidents pose global challenges to humanity as a whole. The movement of Anglophone Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria that dwarfed the existing infrastructures in Cross River State and other places like Taraba and Benue States, creating a need for the intervention of infrastructural organizations to supplement the traditional suppliers of those goods.

The following are the basic assumptions of the theory:

- ✓ That the state is not the major actor in international conflict but the actors include international organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil-liberty organizations and concerned stakeholders.
- ✓ The refugee crisis is a humanitarian crisis and deserves the concerted effort of the international community in combating it.
- ✓ Given the huge nature of the refugee crisis, there is a need to mobilize voluntary funds from international communities to solve the humanitarian crisis.

The global governance theory with its emphasis on the activities of non-state actors as stakeholders in the management of the international refugee crisis has illuminated the intervention of UNHCR in the management of the refugee issues in the Cross-River state. More specifically, the theory posits that refugee challenges should be addressed from a humanitarian angle and it is not surprising that at the early period of the movement of the Anglophone Cameroonians into Cross-River

state, Nigeria, it was the immediate provisions of these humanitarian gestures like food, nutrition, shelter, education and other facilities of livelihood that saved the crisis.

UNHCR Synergy with Nigerian Government and the Protection of Vulnerable Cameroonian Refugees in Cross River State

In Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Benue, and Taraba States of Nigeria, the UNHCR has joined forces with 12 government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to conduct crucial monitoring visits to the border communities, detention facilities, and refugee settlements. This collaborative effort is aimed at providing comprehensive protection and much-needed assistance to Cameroonian refugees who have sought refuge in these areas. The focus of these monitoring visits is to address the diverse and pressing needs of the displaced individuals, ensuring their well-being and safety during their stay in Nigeria. The joint efforts encompass a wide range of essential services, including child protection and measures to prevent and respond to Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Moreover, the security of the refugees is of utmost importance, given the potential risks they may face. The concerted endeavors of the UNHCR, the Cross River State government, and other partners are directed at safeguarding the refugees from any form of sexual and gender-based violence, insecurity, exploitation, trafficking, and assault within the confines of the refugee camps. By pooling resources, knowledge, and expertise, the UNHCR and its partners are working tirelessly to create an environment where Cameroonian refugees can find solace, support, and protection. The collaborative approach aims to ensure that the refugees are treated with dignity and respect, with their basic human rights upheld (Hernandez et al. 2022; Brown & Jones,2023; UNHCR, 2023).

In the efforts to protect vulnerable Cameroonian refugees in Cross River State, Nigeria, particular attention is given to ensuring the safety and well-being of specific groups, including the elderly, children, and women. These individuals are often more susceptible to various risks and require specialized protection measures. Elderly refugees may face unique challenges during displacement, including physical limitations, health issues, and social isolation. Likewise, Children constitute a significant portion of the refugee population, and they are especially vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and neglect. UNHCR and its partners prioritize child protection services, ensuring that children are not separated from their families and receive proper nutrition, healthcare, and education. Child-friendly spaces and psycho-social support programs are established to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children to recover from the trauma of displacement (UNHCR, 2023). Also, the UNHCR, Cross River State government and other

partners are working together to protect refugees from sexual and gender-based violence, insecurity, exploitation, trafficking and assault in their camps in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Security Concerns of Vulnerable Cameroonian Refugees in Cross River State

In the heart of Cross River State, a land once known for its serene beauty lies a stark reality that has unfolded in recent times - the plight of Cameroonian refugees seeking sanctuary from violence and persecution. With heavy hearts and harrowing tales, these individuals have fled their homeland in search of safety and a chance to rebuild their lives. However, their journey to refuge has been fraught with numerous security concerns that continue to cast a dark shadow over their lives. One of the most pressing issues faced by these refugees is the haunting specter of violence and persecution that drove them from their homes in the first place. Back in Cameroon, they experienced the ravages of armed conflict, oppressive regimes, and persecution based on various factors such as ethnicity, political affiliation, or beliefs. As they crossed the borders into Cross River State, they may have hoped to leave the horrors behind, but the reality is not so forgiving. Many of these refugees remain vulnerable to harm, as the perpetrators of the violence from which they escaped may still be in pursuit. The fear of reprisals looms large, haunting their every step, and hindering their ability to fully embrace their new lives. The scars of the past are not easily erased, and the uncertainty of their safety adds an extra layer of trauma and anxiety to their already burdened hearts (Martinez, et al., 2023; Adams & Wilson, 2022; UNHCR, 2023).

Moreover, life in a refugee camp is not without its own set of security challenges. The sheer number of people crammed into these makeshift settlements creates an environment ripe for tensions and conflicts. Resources are often scarce, and competition for necessities like food, water, and shelter can lead to disagreements and occasional outbreaks of violence. Vulnerable populations, including women, children, and the elderly, may face additional risks, such as gender-based violence and exploitation. In addition to interpersonal security concerns, the refugees' physical safety is also at risk due to their proximity to the volatile border regions. Cross River State shares a porous border with Cameroon, and the spill-over of armed conflicts and instability from across the border is an ever-present threat. Armed groups and criminal elements take advantage of the porous boundaries, posing a constant danger to both the refugees and the host communities (UNHCR, 2023). Below are some specific security vulnerabilities that Cameroonian refugees in Cross River State camps face.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Amid the dire circumstances faced by Cameroonian refugees in Cross River State, there is a deeply troubling concern and threat of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). Women and children, in particular, are at a heightened risk of experiencing various forms of abuse, adding further layers of trauma and despair to their already vulnerable existence within the camps. For women, the refugee camps can become breeding grounds for sexual violence and exploitation. The lack of secure and private spaces, coupled with crowded living conditions, makes them susceptible to predatory behaviours from both fellow refugees and even those working within the camps. Rape, sexual assault, and harassment are distressingly common, leaving the victims scarred physically and emotionally. The fear of SGBV permeates every aspect of their daily lives, creating a constant state of anxiety and vulnerability. Forced marriages also pose a grave threat to the well-being and autonomy of women and girls within the camps. In their struggle to find safety, they may find themselves forced into marriages with older men or members of the host communities, often as a means of survival or to secure protection. These marriages can lead to a cycle of abuse and exploitation, trapping the victims in a life of misery and powerlessness. Children, too, bear the brunt of SGBV in these precarious settings. They are vulnerable to sexual abuse, trafficking, and forced labour. Young girls are particularly at risk, facing early and forced marriages, which rob them of their childhood and potential.

Table 1:

Cases and Type of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Among Refugees in Cross River State

Category	Data
Total number of cases reported	1,200
Gender of victims	74% female, 16% male, 10% children
Perpetrators	72% men, 24% women, 4% both
Types of violence	Rape, physical assault, sexual abuse, intimate partner violence, denial of resources, psychological and emotional abuse
Location of violence	Resettlement areas and Refugee Camps
Barriers to reporting	Fear of retaliation, stigma, lack of trust in authorities, lack of knowledge about SGBV
Response to SGBV	Legal, medical, psychosocial, economic

Source: UNHCR Cameroonian Refugees Situation SGBV Report (2020)

Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the cases, challenges, and types of SGBV among Cameroonian refugees in Cross River State. With 1,200 cases reported, it highlights the severity of the issue and its impact on different segments

of the refugee population. The data reveals that the majority of victims are women, comprising 74% of reported cases, while 16% are male, and 10% are children. It is concerning that women and children are disproportionately affected, reflecting the vulnerability they face in the camps. Surprisingly, 24% of perpetrators are women, indicating that SGBV is not solely perpetrated by men. A small percentage, 4%, involves both male and female perpetrators. The table outlines various types of violence that the refugees experience. These include appalling acts like rape, physical assault, sexual abuse, and intimate partner violence. Additionally, it sheds light on the less visible forms of abuse, such as denial of resources, psychological and emotional abuse, child marriage, and even human trafficking. The variety of abusive tactics reflects the multifaceted nature of SGBV, encompassing both overt and subtle forms of violence.

Trafficking and Exploitation

Amid the already precarious conditions faced by Cameroonian refugees in Cross River State, another sinister threat looms over the most vulnerable among them - the grave risk of trafficking and exploitation. Among these vulnerable refugees, unaccompanied minors and girls stand as some of the most at-risk individuals, easily falling prey to human traffickers who exploit their dire circumstances for various heinous purposes, such as forced labour, prostitution, and other forms of abuse. The refugee camps and resettlement areas, while intended to be places of safety, can, unfortunately, become hotspots for human traffickers seeking to exploit the desperation and vulnerability of those seeking refuge. Unaccompanied minors, already separated from their families and support systems, are particularly susceptible targets for these criminal networks. Lured by false promises of a better life, they most times find themselves ensnared in a nightmarish reality of exploitation, deprived of their freedom and dignity. Traffickers do subject these innocent souls to forced labour, making them toil in dangerous conditions for little or no pay. Whether working on farms, in factories or engaging in other labour-intensive activities, these young refugees find themselves trapped in a cycle of abuse from which escape seems impossible. For some unaccompanied minors, the horrors of exploitation extend even further, with traffickers forcing them into the harrowing world of prostitution. Stripped of their childhood and subjected to unspeakable abuse, these young victims are robbed of their innocence and left scarred both physically and emotionally (Martinez, et al., 2023; Adams & Wilson, 2022; UNHCR, 2023).

Physical Assault

The safety and well-being of refugees are often jeopardized by the harsh realities of living in overcrowded camps or informal settlements. In these precarious

environments, physical safety becomes a pressing concern, as refugees face numerous threats, including criminal activities that can profoundly impact the vulnerable members of the community. Overcrowded camps create an environment ripe for criminal activities. Limited resources and necessities, such as food, water, and shelter, can lead to tensions and competition among the refugee population, increasing the likelihood of theft and violence. The lack of adequate infrastructure and security measures further exacerbates the risks faced by those seeking refuge. Women, children, the elderly, and disabled individuals are particularly at risk, as they may be more susceptible to various forms of exploitation, harassment, and abuse (UNHCR, 2023; Lee & Harris, 2023).

Armed Groups Spill over Attacks

The spillover of the Anglophone crisis from Cameroon into Cross River State poses a significant security concern for both refugees and host communities. Armed groups operating in the region can potentially create a volatile and dangerous environment, further exacerbating the already challenging conditions faced by refugees seeking safety in the state. The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, which involves conflict between the government and separatist groups in the English-speaking regions, has led to violence, displacement, and instability. The proximity of Cross River State to the affected areas of Cameroon makes it susceptible to the spillage of armed conflict and the infiltration of armed groups into the region. Although there is a heavy security by the Nigerian armed forces at the border region protecting such illegal groups into the country, they still penetrate through forest paths and risky crossing of rivers.

Tensions with Host Communities

The presence of a large refugee population in the host communities in Cross River State can indeed create significant challenges and strains on resources for both refugees and host communities. As resources become scarce and competition for necessities intensifies, tensions can arise and escalate, leading to conflicts that further exacerbate security concerns, frustration and resentment among the local population. The host communities may perceive that their own needs and interests are being overlooked, and they may feel that the presence of refugees is negatively impacting their quality of life. This was practically felt in Ogoja at the early stage of their arrival, when the prices of garri and yams and other food items suddenly skyrocketed, leaving the local inhabitants in shock. Such incidence can fuel tensions and create a sense of competition and animosity between refugees and locals. Moreover, cultural and social differences between the refugees and the host communities can also contribute to misunderstandings and conflicts. Religious differences and varying social norms may lead to misunderstandings or disputes,

adding to the already volatile situation (Hernandez et al, 2022; Lee & Harris, 2023).

Challenges and Shortcomings of UNHCR and Nigeria's Synergy in Protecting Vulnerable Cameroonian Refugees in Cross River State

The protection of vulnerable Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria is a complex challenge. While the collaboration between the UNHCR and the Nigerian government at both federal and state levels is essential for protecting vulnerable Cameroonian refugees, it has faced fundamental challenges. These challenges in many cases have hindered the effectiveness of protection efforts and created additional hardships for the refugee population. Among other things, limited collaboration between the UNHCR and Nigerian security personnel represents a significant obstacle in the effort to protect vulnerable Cameroonian refugees seeking safety in Nigeria. The successful protection of refugees relies heavily on harmonious cooperation and coordination between international humanitarian organizations like the UNHCR and the host country's security forces. However, when collaboration is lacking or ineffective, the consequences can be detrimental to the safety and well-being of the refugee population. At the heart of this challenge lies the issue of understanding and awareness. Nigerian security personnel do not possess a comprehensive understanding of the UNHCR's mandate and the specific needs and vulnerabilities of refugees. This lack of awareness leads to a limited appreciation of the delicate nature of refugee protection, resulting in a potential mishandling of security situations within refugee camps and surrounding areas. This, in turn, creates an environment of uncertainty and fear among the refugees, as they might not feel adequately protected and supported (Lee & Harris, 2023; UNHCR, 2023). Moreover, differing priorities and approaches contribute to strained collaboration. While the UNHCR focuses primarily on providing humanitarian aid, ensuring access to basic services, and protecting refugee rights, the Nigerian security forces are often concerned with broader security issues and maintaining law and order in the state. As a result, there occurs a mismatch in priorities, leading to miscommunication and friction between the two entities. Institutional barriers and communication gaps also hinder effective collaboration. The UNHCR and Nigerian security agencies operate within different bureaucratic structures, making it challenging to share crucial information and coordinate responses promptly. This lack of real-time information exchange can lead to delays in addressing security threats or emergencies within the refugee camps, leaving vulnerable refugees exposed to potential dangers (UNHCR, 2023).

Also, the lack of training on refugee security personnel deployed near refugee camps and border regions is a critical concern that significantly impacts the safety

and well-being of vulnerable populations. Without proper and specialized training, security personnel may struggle to effectively provide protection and security to refugees, leading to potential misunderstandings and mismanagement of security situations. This is predicated on the fact that refugee populations have distinct needs and vulnerabilities resulting from their displacement. These unique challenges demand an understanding of the complexities surrounding refugee situations and the importance of upholding their rights and dignity. However, security personnel, who primarily receive general law enforcement training, might not possess the knowledge and expertise required to address the specific issues faced by refugees. One of the primary consequences of inadequate training is a potential lack of empathy and cultural sensitivity. Without an understanding of the trauma and hardships endured by refugees, security personnel may fail to approach situations with the necessary compassion, leading to unintended harm or exacerbating their distress. The absence of specialized knowledge regarding refugee rights can also result in the violation of human rights within the camps. Security personnel may inadvertently infringe upon the rights of refugees, such as their right to freedom of movement, privacy, and protection against arbitrary arrest or detention. These violations can erode the trust between refugees and security forces, making it challenging to establish a secure and cooperative environment (UNHCR, 2023).

Table 2:
Challenges Facing UNHCR and Nigeria Government Collaboration in Protecting Security of Vulnerable Refugees in Cross River State

Challenges	Description	Negative Impact
Lack of Effective Collaboration	Inadequate coordination between the UNHCR and Nigerian government agencies has often led to gaps in protection efforts. Lack of communication and collaboration may result in inefficient and disjointed responses to refugee protection challenges	Poor coordination often leads to disjointed responses, delayed interventions, and missed opportunities
Inadequate Training in Refugee Protection	Some security personnel in Cross River state lack specialized knowledge and training on how to effectively provide protection and support to refugees. This often led to misunderstandings and mismanagement of security situations within refugee camps.	Insufficient training can result in security personnel mishandling security incidents, leading to potential harm to refugees.
Extortion and Corruption	Instances of corruption among Nigerian security personnel create an environment of exploitation and insecurity within the refugee community. Extortion and bribery	Corruption erodes trust in security forces, making refugees hesitant to report crimes or seek help, leaving them vulnerable to

	may lead to refugees being denied access to basic services or being exposed to criminal activities within the camps.	exploitation and violence within the camps.
Overstretched Services	Hosting a large number of refugees in Cross River State has strained local infrastructure and services. This resulted in limited access to essential resources such as healthcare, education, and shelter, impacting the well-being of refugees.	Overburdened services have led to inadequate living conditions, particularly among the vulnerable population, increasing their vulnerability to health issues and hardships.
Lack of Adequate Security Personnel	The refugee population in Cross River State exceeded the capacity of available security personnel. Insufficient manpower resulted in challenges in maintaining law and order, potentially leaving refugees vulnerable to security threats.	The shortage of security personnel can lead to inadequate surveillance and protection measures, leaving refugees susceptible to security risks and hindering their access to timely assistance during emergencies.

Source: compiled by the researcher, data generated from UNHCR, 2023 https://www.unhcr.org/ng/wp-content/uploads/sites/121/2021/12/GCR-in-Nigeria-Booklet-10.12.2021_for-web.pdf

This data was further validated using the questionnaire results generated from the researcher's fieldwork. Items 1 to 7 in the questionnaire were used to elicit responses that answered the question of why UNHCR synergy with the Nigerian government has been unable to fully address the security concern of vulnerable Cameroonian refugees in Cross-River State.

Table 3:

Questionnaire responses on why UNHCR synergy with the Nigeria government has been unable to fully address the security concern of vulnerable Cameroonian refugees in Cross-River State

S/N	Items	X	STD	DECISION
1	Insufficiency of funds spent by the Nigerian government	2.5	0.96	Accepted
2	Insufficiency of funds spent by UNO through UNHCR	3.0	0.98	Accepted
3	UN partnership with non-governmental actors	2.8	1.00	Accepted
4	UN partnership with government on regulatory mechanism	2.7	0.91	Accepted
5	An increasing number of the refugees	2.8	1.04	Accepted
6	An increasing number of those unable to access the basic needs	2.9	1.2	Accepted
7	the increasing number of vulnerable ones like older people and pregnant women	2.7	1.00	Accepted
8	The increasing arrest of refugees by the government officials	3.1	1.02	Accepted
	Grand Mean	2.8	1.01	Accepted

Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, (2023)

Table 3 presents the questionnaire result with each item representing a specific factor that is contributing to the inability of the UNHCR to protect vulnerable Cameroonian refugees in Cross River State, Nigeria. The participants were asked to rate each item on a scale, and the mean responses indicate the average rating given by the participants for each factor. The scale ranges from 1 to 5, where higher values indicate a stronger agreement with the statement. The first item, "Insufficiency of funds spent by the Nigerian government," received a mean response of 2.5. This suggests that the participants generally agreed that the Nigerian government's allocation of funds towards addressing the refugee crisis is insufficient, which could be hindering the effectiveness of their efforts. The second item, "Insufficiency of funds spent by UNHCR," obtained a higher mean response of 3.0. This indicates a stronger consensus among the participants that the funding provided utilized by the UNHCR is also inadequate, potentially impacting their ability to address the security concerns of the refugees. Likewise, the third item, "UNHCR partnership with non-governmental actors," received a mean response of 2.8. This suggests that the participants agreed, to some extent, that UNHCR's collaboration with non-governmental actors might be influencing the effectiveness of their response to the refugee crisis. The fourth item, "UN partnership with the government on regulatory mechanisms," obtained a mean response of 2.7. This indicates that the participants generally agreed that UNHCR's partnership with the Nigerian government regarding regulatory mechanisms might be affecting their ability to fully address the security concerns of the refugees. The fifth item, "increasing number of refugees," received a mean response of 2.8. This suggests that the participants recognized the challenge posed by the growing number of refugees, which may be straining available resources and complicating the efforts to address their security concerns. The sixth item, "increasing number of those unable to access basic needs," obtained a mean response of 2.9. This indicates that the participants acknowledged the rising number of refugees who are unable to access necessities, potentially exacerbating the security concerns in the region. The seventh item, "the increasing number of vulnerable individuals, such as older people and pregnant women," received a mean response of 2.7. This suggests that the participants agreed that the growing population of vulnerable individuals among the refugees, such as older people and pregnant women, is an additional challenge that needs to be addressed in the context of security concerns. Finally, the eighth item, "increasing arrests of the refugees by government officials," obtained the highest mean response of 3.1. This indicates a strong consensus among the participants that the increasing number of arrests of refugees by government officials is a significant factor impacting the effectiveness of the UNHCR-Nigerian government synergy in addressing the security concerns of Cameroonian refugees.

The findings from Table3 suggest that the participants identified a range of interconnected factors contributing to the challenges faced by UNHCR and the Nigerian government in addressing the security concerns of vulnerable Cameroonian refugees in Cross River State. These factors include insufficient funding from both the Nigerian government and UNHCR, partnerships with non-governmental actors, regulatory mechanisms, the growing number of refugees, limited access to basic needs, the presence of vulnerable individuals, and increasing arrests by government officials. Addressing these challenges will be crucial in achieving more effective and comprehensive security solutions for the refugee population in the region. Also, in a revealing in-depth interview with selected stakeholders working with the UNHCR in Cross River state, the panel of officials shed light on other critical factors hindering the synergy between the United Nations and the Nigerian government. They highlight Corruption among officials, mismanagement of funds, insecurity, and social vices such as drugs, rape, gun running, and gender-based violence, along with the culture of the host community, as the major roadblocks in addressing the challenges faced by refugees. One of the interviewees, Catechist Elias Enu, who holds significant roles as a refugee community leader and leader of the Catholic community, expressed his deep concern over the prevailing insecurity in the camps. He emphasized that this pervasive sense of insecurity constantly frustrates all the efforts aimed at providing assistance and relief to the refugees. Another official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, identified corruption and social vices among the personnel of agencies involved as primary reasons behind the inefficiencies in addressing refugee challenges. This candid official accused UNHCR Nigeria of corruption, while also pointing fingers at their partnering organizations, branding them as "white-collar thieves" solely focused on securing budgets for their contracts. The official further revealed that the crisis in Cameroon had led to the creation of various employment opportunities for jobless individuals in Nigeria and beyond, highlighting the exploitation of the situation for personal gains.

Another official in the interview pointed out the fundamental factors that have hindered the synergy between the UNHCR and the Nigerian government in addressing the survival challenges of refugees. According to this official, mismanagement of funds, gender-based violence, and child abuse are the key obstacles to effectively tackling the refugee crisis. He pointed out that Nigeria maintains a positive relationship with UNHCR, being one of the countries that signed the 1951 UN (Geneva) Convention relating to refugee status. This establishes UNHCR as the global refugee agency providing essential assistance to the Federal Government of Nigeria in offering durable solutions and protection to

refugees within the country. However, despite this cooperative relationship, there are constraints in fully addressing the refugee challenges. The primary factors contributing to these limitations are the security situation within the refugee camps, instances of refugees being mistreated or abused by security personnel, corruption among some officials, and the prevalence of sexual abuse.

Conclusion

The synergy between UNHCR and the Nigerian government has fallen short in effectively safeguarding the security of vulnerable Cameroonian refugees in Nigeria. Several challenges have contributed to this failure, hindering the successful resolution of the refugee crisis in the region. One of the primary challenges has been the insufficiency of funds allocated by both the Nigerian government and UNHCR. The lack of adequate financial resources has constrained their ability to provide essential services, proper shelter, and security measures for the growing refugee population. Furthermore, partnerships with non-governmental actors and the Nigerian government on regulatory mechanisms have proven to be complex, leading to coordination and implementation challenges. These intricacies have potentially delayed the timely delivery of aid and support to the refugees. The increasing number of refugees and those unable to access basic needs have put immense pressure on available resources and humanitarian services. To address the shortcomings in the synergy between UNHCR and the Nigerian government, it is recommended that both the Nigerian government and UNHCR should prioritize the provision of sufficient financial resources to ensure adequate access to essential services, proper shelter, and enhanced security measures for the growing refugee population. Adequate funding is the backbone of effective humanitarian assistance and support to refugees globally.

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