

National Emergency Management Agency's Response to Cameroonian Refugee Crisis in Sardauna Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria

¹Julius L. Ngomba PhD, ²Cletus C.N Nwadiogbu PhD & ³Oliver Philip

¹Department of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, Taraba State University, Jalingo, Nigeria

²Nigeria Police Headquarter, Jalingo, Taraba State, Nigeria

³Department of General Studies, College of Agriculture, Science, and Technology, PMB 1025
Jalingo, Nigeria

Email: ngombajulius@yahoo.com, cletusnwadiogbu@gmail.com & oliverphilip30@gmail.com

Abstract

This study evaluates the effectiveness of the National Emergency Management Agency's (NEMA) response to the refugee crisis, focusing on its preparedness, recovery efforts, and coordination with stakeholders. Using a documentary research design, the study analyzes official reports, policy documents, and academic literature to assess NEMA's interventions in providing food, shelter, healthcare, and protection services to refugees. The findings reveal that while NEMA has made commendable efforts in delivering immediate relief, its effectiveness is hindered by inadequate funding, logistical constraints, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Additionally, the absence of a comprehensive legal framework for refugee management in Nigeria complicates NEMA's operations, leading to gaps in long-term solutions and sustainable integration strategies. The study highlights the importance of strengthening inter-agency collaboration, enhancing disaster risk reduction measures, and promoting social cohesion between refugees and host communities. By adopting a holistic approach that integrates emergency response, humanitarian assistance, disaster risk reduction, and refugee protection policies, NEMA can improve its capacity to manage similar crises in the future. Recommendations include the enhancement of NEMA's funding and logistical capacity, institutionalization of a national legal framework for refugee protection, and the adoption of a holistic model that integrates emergency response, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian assistance, and refugee protection. This approach would significantly improve NEMA's capacity to manage similar crises effectively.

Keywords: Cameroonian Refugee, Crisis, Disaster Risk Reduction, Emergency Management & Sardauna LGA

Introduction

The influx of Cameroonian refugees into Sardauna Local Government Area (LGA) of Taraba State, Nigeria, due to political instability and conflict in Cameroon, has presented significant humanitarian and security challenges. The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, which began in late 2016 as a peaceful protest against marginalization, escalated into an armed conflict between separatist groups and government forces (International Crisis Group, 2021). The conflict has resulted in widespread displacement, with thousands of people fleeing across the border into Nigeria in search of safety and stability. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of 2023, over 45,000 Cameroonian refugees were registered in Nigeria, with a significant number residing in Sardauna LGA (UNHCR, 2023).

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), established by the Nigerian Government under the NEMA Act of 2004, plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of displaced persons,

including refugees (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). As the primary agency responsible for disaster management and humanitarian response in Nigeria, NEMA is tasked with coordinating efforts to provide relief, shelter, healthcare, and other essential services to affected populations. However, the effectiveness of NEMA's response to the Cameroonian refugee crisis remains a subject of scrutiny, given the complex nature of the situation and the resource constraints faced by the Agency.

The Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, rooted in historical grievances and systemic marginalization of English-speaking regions, has evolved into one of the most severe conflicts in Central Africa (International Crisis Group, 2021). The violence has led to mass displacement, with many civilians crossing into neighboring countries, including Nigeria. Sardauna LGA in Taraba State, located near the Cameroonian border, has become a focal point for refugee settlement due to its proximity and relative accessibility. The influx has placed immense pressure on local resources, infrastructure, and social services, necessitating a robust humanitarian response.

As the lead Agency for disaster management in Nigeria, NEMA is mandated to coordinate national efforts in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004). In the context of the Cameroonian refugee crisis, NEMA's responsibilities include: providing immediate relief assistance, such as food, water, and medical supplies, establishing and managing temporary shelters for refugees, facilitating coordination among various stakeholders, including local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international partners like UNHCR. Despite these critical functions however, NEMA faces numerous challenges, including limited funding, inadequate logistical support, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. These issues have been documented in previous studies examining NEMA's performance in other humanitarian contexts (Umar, 2020; Okechukwu & Eze, 2019).

Understanding NEMA's response to the Cameroonian refugee crisis is vital for several reasons. First, it highlights the complexities involved in managing cross-border displacement in resource-constrained settings. Second, it provides insights into the strengths and limitations of NEMA's operational framework, offering lessons for improving future interventions. Finally, the study contributes to the global conversation on effective humanitarian responses to protracted conflicts and forced migration.

This study examines NEMA's response to the Cameroonian refugee crisis in Sardauna LGA, focusing on its effectiveness, challenges, and areas for improvement. By analyzing the strategies employed by NEMA, identifying gaps in service delivery, and evaluating collaboration with stakeholders, this research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on humanitarian response in conflict-affected regions. Furthermore, the findings of this study can inform policy recommendations aimed at enhancing NEMA's capacity to manage similar crises in the future. Specifically, the study seeks to assess the;

- i. effectiveness of NEMA's preparedness, response, recovery, and coordination efforts to Cameroonian Refugee Crisis in Sardauna Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria.
- ii. extent of collaboration with local and international partners to manage the Cameroonian Refugee Crisis in Sardauna Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria.
- iii. discrepancies between NEMA's policies and actual practices to the Cameroonian Refugee Crisis in Sardauna Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria.

- iv. challenges hindering the delivery of adequate relief services by NEMA to Cameroonian Refugee Crisis in Sardauna Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) operates within a robust emergency response framework that serves as the cornerstone for managing crises effectively. This framework emphasizes preparedness, coordinated response, and sustainable recovery to mitigate the impact of emergencies, such as the Cameroonian refugee crisis. Guided by internationally recognized standards, such as the Sphere Standards (Sphere Association, 2018), NEMA's approach integrates three critical phases: preparedness, response, and recovery to ensure comprehensive crisis management. This paper expands on these phases, incorporating additional insights and referencing scholarly sources to provide a thorough understanding of NEMA's emergency response strategy.

The preparedness phase is proactive, focusing on building readiness to address potential crises before they occur. This phase is vital for minimizing the adverse effects of emergencies and enabling rapid, effective responses. According to Alexander (2016), preparedness is the foundation of disaster risk reduction, as it enhances a community's capacity to anticipate and manage crises. NEMA's preparedness efforts include the following key components:

- i. **Risk Assessment:** This involves identifying potential hazards and vulnerabilities specific to a region or population. For instance, in the Cameroonian refugee crisis, NEMA must assess risks such as population influx, resource scarcity, security threats, and health challenges. A comprehensive risk assessment allows NEMA to prioritize interventions and allocate resources effectively (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNDRR], 2017).
- ii. **Resource Mobilization:** Securing adequate resources, personnel, equipment, funding, and supplies is critical for effective emergency response. Insufficient resource allocation can significantly undermine preparedness efforts, as noted by Okechukwu and Eze (2019). For example, pre-positioning relief supplies, such as food and medical kits, in strategic locations near Sardauna Local Government Area (LGA) can reduce response times during the Cameroonian refugee crisis.
- iii. **Contingency Planning:** Developing detailed plans for various crisis scenarios ensures that NEMA can respond swiftly and efficiently. Contingency plans outline specific actions, roles, and responsibilities, enabling seamless coordination during emergencies (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies [IFRC], 2020). For instance, NEMA's contingency plans for the refugee crisis might include protocols for rapid deployment of aid and coordination with international partners like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- iv. **Training and Capacity Building:** Regular training programs for emergency responders and community stakeholders enhance preparedness. Training ensures that personnel are equipped with the skills needed to manage crises effectively, from logistics to psychosocial support (Béné, 2019).

By prioritizing preparedness, NEMA can reduce vulnerabilities and enhance its capacity to deliver timely assistance, ultimately saving lives and reducing suffering.

The response phase focuses on delivering immediate relief to affected populations to address urgent needs and prevent further harm. Timely and efficient responses are critical to minimizing suffering and loss of life, as delays can exacerbate vulnerabilities (Sphere Association, 2018). NEMA's objectives during this phase include:

- i. **Delivering Essential Services:** NEMA prioritizes providing food, clean water, shelter, healthcare, and protection services that meet minimum humanitarian standards, as outlined by the Sphere Standards (Sphere Association, 2018). For example, in the Cameroonian refugee crisis, NEMA must ensure that refugees have access to adequate shelter and medical care to maintain their dignity and well-being.
- ii. **Coordination and Collaboration:** Effective emergency responses rely on strong partnerships among government agencies, local communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international organizations. Béné (2019) highlights that coordinated efforts improve resource allocation and service delivery. In the context of the Cameroonian refugee crisis, NEMA collaborates with UNHCR, local authorities, and NGOs to address diverse needs, such as food security and child protection.
- iii. **Information Management:** Accurate and timely information is essential for coordinating responses and monitoring outcomes. NEMA employs data collection and analysis to assess needs, track aid distribution, and identify gaps in service delivery (UNDRR, 2017). For instance, real-time data on refugee arrivals can help NEMA adjust its response strategy dynamically.
- iv. **Security and Safety Measures:** Ensuring the safety of affected populations and responders is paramount. NEMA implements security protocols to protect refugees and aid workers from threats, such as violence or exploitation, which are common in displacement crises (UNHCR, 2020).

The response phase is critical for stabilizing affected populations and laying the groundwork for recovery. Inefficiencies or delays in aid delivery can worsen the crisis, underscoring the importance of streamlined operations and robust partnerships.

The recovery phase focuses on long-term rehabilitation and rebuilding to restore normalcy and foster resilience in affected communities. This phase transitions from immediate relief to sustainable development, addressing both physical and social needs (Alexander, 2016). NEMA's recovery efforts include:

- i. **Livelihood Restoration:** Supporting income-generating activities, such as job creation programs and skills training, helps refugees and host communities achieve self-reliance. For instance, vocational training programs for Cameroonian refugees can equip them with skills to integrate into local economies (UNHCR, 2020).
- ii. **Infrastructure Reconstruction:** Rebuilding damaged infrastructure, such as schools, healthcare facilities, and roads, is essential for restoring community functionality. NEMA collaborates with government and international partners to prioritize infrastructure projects that benefit both refugees and host communities (IFRC, 2020).
- iii. **Promoting Social Cohesion:** Crises often strain social dynamics, particularly in areas hosting displaced populations. NEMA implements community engagement programs to foster social cohesion and reduce tensions between refugees and host communities. These programs may include dialogue sessions and joint community projects (Béné, 2019).

- iv. **Building Resilience:** Strengthening community resilience through disaster risk reduction initiatives ensures that populations are better prepared for future crises. This includes promoting sustainable agricultural practices and improving access to education and healthcare (UNDRR, 2017).

NEMA's emergency response framework, encompassing preparedness, response, and recovery, provides a comprehensive approach to managing crises like the Cameroonian refugee crisis. By adhering to international standards, such as the Sphere Standards, and fostering collaboration with stakeholders, NEMA ensures that its interventions are timely, effective, and sustainable. Preparedness reduces vulnerabilities, response addresses immediate needs, and recovery fosters long-term resilience. This integrated approach not only mitigates the impact of emergencies but also contributes to the broader goal of sustainable development and community empowerment.

The Cameroonian Refugee Crisis

The Cameroonian refugee crisis is a complex humanitarian emergency driven by the ongoing Anglophone conflict in Cameroon's North-West and South-West regions. What began in 2016 as peaceful protests against perceived systemic marginalization of English-speaking Cameroonians has escalated into a violent conflict between separatist groups seeking independence for the self-proclaimed state of Ambazonia and the Cameroonian government (International Crisis Group, 2021). The conflict has resulted in widespread human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, abductions, and the destruction of homes and infrastructure, forcing over 700,000 people to become internally displaced within Cameroon and more than 87,000 to seek refuge in neighboring countries, primarily Nigeria (UNHCR, 2023). This crisis highlights the intersection of colonial legacies, governance failures, and transborder dynamics, posing significant humanitarian and developmental challenges for both Cameroon and host countries.

The roots of the Cameroonian refugee crisis lie in the colonial division of Cameroon between British and French powers following World War I. The Anglophone regions, formerly under British administration, were merged with the Francophone majority in 1961 to form a federal state. However, the subsequent centralization of power under a unitary government marginalized English-speaking communities, fostering grievances over linguistic discrimination, unequal resource allocation, and lack of political representation (Adeola, 2020). These tensions culminated in 2016 when lawyers and teachers in the Anglophone regions protested against the imposition of French-speaking judges and curricula in their legal and educational systems. The government's heavy-handed response, including arrests and use of lethal force, radicalized the movement, leading to the emergence of armed separatist groups (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2019).

The conflict has since evolved into a protracted crisis, with separatists enforcing lockdowns and boycotts, while government forces conduct counterinsurgency operations. Both sides have been accused of committing atrocities, including targeting civilians, burning villages, and restricting humanitarian access (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The resulting insecurity has disrupted agriculture, education, and healthcare, compelling thousands to flee across the border into Nigeria, particularly into Taraba, Cross River, and Benue states (UNHCR, 2023).

Scale and Impact of Displacement

As of 2023, the Cameroonian refugee crisis has displaced over 700,000 people internally and driven more than 87,000 to seek asylum in Nigeria, with smaller numbers in Chad and other neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2023). In Nigeria, Taraba State's Sardauna Local Government Area (LGA) has emerged as a primary destination due to its proximity to Cameroon and historical

ties between border communities. The influx of refugees has strained local resources, particularly in rural areas with limited infrastructure (Oladeji & Oni, 2021). Host communities face challenges such as overcrowded schools, overburdened healthcare facilities, and competition for farmland, which has sparked tensions between refugees and locals (Betts *et al.*, 2017).

Refugees themselves face significant vulnerabilities, including inadequate shelter, food insecurity, and limited access to legal protection. Women and children, who constitute the majority of refugees, are particularly at risk of gender-based violence and exploitation (UN Women, 2022). Furthermore, the lack of documentation for many refugees complicates their access to services and increases their risk of statelessness (Adeola, 2020). The crisis has also disrupted education, with thousands of Cameroonian children unable to attend school due to school closures in conflict zones and limited capacity in host communities (UNICEF, 2023).

Structural and Regional Dimensions

The Cameroonian refugee crisis is not solely a product of armed conflict but also reflects deeper structural issues, including unresolved colonial-era border disputes and identity politics. Scholars argue that the porous borders between Cameroon and Nigeria, established during colonial times, have facilitated cross-border displacement but also complicate refugee management (Olayiwola, 2022). Historical ties between communities on both sides of the border have enabled refugees to integrate into host communities, but they have also created challenges for distinguishing between refugees and local populations, affecting resource allocation and aid delivery (Fredua-Kwarteng & Agyemang, 2021).

Moreover, the crisis underscores the failure of both Cameroonian and Nigerian governments to address longstanding governance issues. In Cameroon, the central government's refusal to engage in meaningful dialogue with Anglophone leaders has prolonged the conflict, while in Nigeria, weak coordination between federal and state agencies has hampered refugee assistance efforts (International Crisis Group, 2021). The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the African Union (AU) have been criticized for their limited intervention, leaving much of the response to international organizations like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Humanitarian and Development Responses

Addressing the Cameroonian refugee crisis requires a multifaceted approach that combines humanitarian aid with long-term development strategies. The UNHCR has been at the forefront of providing emergency assistance, including shelter, food, and healthcare, to refugees in Nigeria and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Cameroon (UNHCR, 2023). However, funding shortfalls have limited the scope of these interventions, with only 30% of the 2023 humanitarian response plan for Cameroon being met (OCHA, 2023). Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has collaborated with international partners to provide relief, but its capacity is constrained by competing domestic crises, such as Boko Haram-related displacement in the northeast (Oladeji & Oni, 2021).

To mitigate tensions between refugees and host communities, organizations like the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have implemented livelihood programs, such as vocational training and agricultural support, to promote self-reliance and social cohesion (IOM, 2022). Additionally, advocacy for inclusive policies, such as access to education and healthcare for refugees, is critical to ensuring their rights are protected (Betts *et al.*, 2017). Long-term solutions,

however, depend on resolving the Anglophone conflict through dialogue and addressing the structural inequalities that fuel it (Konings & Nyamnjoh, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Theory as its foundational analytical lens to evaluate the National Emergency Management Agency's (NEMA) response to the Cameroonian refugee crisis in Sardauna Local Government Area (LGA) of Taraba State, Nigeria. DRR Theory, as conceptualized by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2019), emphasizes anticipatory and preventive strategies that reduce the exposure and vulnerability of populations to disasters whether natural or human-induced. It asserts that the consequences of disasters are not solely dictated by the hazard itself but are significantly shaped by the socio-political, economic, and institutional structures of the affected environment. This perspective is especially pertinent in Sardauna LGA, where the refugee crisis triggered by external conflict has created internally layered risks due to weak infrastructure, limited social services, and institutional inadequacies.

In applying DRR Theory to the Cameroonian refugee influx into Sardauna LGA, the study situates NEMA's intervention within the core principles of risk identification, preparedness, mitigation, and resilience-building. NEMA's actions such as the establishment of temporary shelters, provision of emergency supplies, and coordination with local and international agencies are evaluated through this theoretical lens to assess their effectiveness in reducing the vulnerability of both refugees and host communities. However, this analysis also recognizes that NEMA's capacity to act is constrained by chronic issues such as underfunding, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and the absence of a legal framework tailored to refugee protection (Adeola, 2020; Oluwaseun & Ojo, 2023). Within the Sardauna context, DRR Theory enables a comprehensive examination of not just how NEMA responds to the immediate crisis, but also whether its strategies contribute to long-term stability, community resilience, and disaster preparedness in a fragile borderland setting. Thus, DRR serves not merely as a tool for response evaluation but as a framework for understanding the structural gaps and potential pathways for sustainable humanitarian governance in Taraba State.

The study draws on empirical evidence from global case studies to compare NEMA's approach with successful refugee management practices. For instance, the response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Germany highlights the importance of strong institutional frameworks, community engagement, and international cooperation in managing refugee influxes (Bansak *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, Uganda's approach to refugee management, which emphasizes self-reliance and integration, provides valuable lessons for NEMA in addressing the Cameroonian refugee crisis (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). By analyzing these case studies, the study identifies best practices that can be adapted to the Nigerian context, such as enhancing local capacity, fostering community participation, and strengthening partnerships with international organizations.

National Emergency Management Agency's Response to Cameroonian Refugee Crisis in Sardauna Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria

i. Effectiveness of NEMA's Preparedness, Response, Recovery, and Coordination Efforts

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) of Nigeria plays a critical role in addressing humanitarian crises, including the influx of Cameroonian refugees fleeing conflict in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon. This analysis evaluates NEMA's effectiveness through four key dimensions: preparedness, response, recovery, and coordination. Each dimension is essential to understanding the Agency's capacity to manage complex refugee crises, with specific attention to the Cameroonian refugee situation. This evaluation draws on existing literature and reports, highlighting both strengths and challenges while situating NEMA's efforts within the broader context of humanitarian response frameworks.

Preparedness

Preparedness refers to NEMA's ability to anticipate, plan, and allocate resources to manage refugee influxes effectively. This includes developing contingency plans, prepositioning resources, and conducting risk assessments to mitigate the impact of crises (Alexander, 2016). Effective preparedness requires robust forecasting, adequate funding, and logistical readiness to handle sudden population displacements.

Studies indicate that NEMA's preparedness for refugee crises, including the Cameroonian influx, has faced significant challenges. Oluwaseun and Ojo (2023) note that inadequate funding and logistical constraints have limited the Agency's ability to anticipate and plan for large-scale refugee movements. For instance, the lack of sufficient prepositioned supplies, such as food, shelter materials, and medical kits, has often delayed initial responses to refugee arrivals. Additionally, Nigeria's broader economic challenges and competing domestic priorities, such as internal displacement due to insurgency, have strained NEMA's capacity to prepare for cross-border refugee crises (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2021). Despite these challenges, NEMA has made efforts to improve preparedness through partnerships with international organizations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to enhance early warning systems and contingency planning (UNHCR, 2022).

Response

Response encompasses the immediate actions taken by NEMA to address the urgent needs of Cameroonian refugees, including the provision of food, shelter, medical care, and security. Effective response requires rapid mobilization of resources and personnel to ensure timely delivery of humanitarian aid (Sphere Association, 2018).

NEMA's response to the Cameroonian refugee crisis has shown mixed results. On one hand, the Agency has been commended for its efforts to provide essential supplies to refugees, particularly in border states like Cross River and Benue. For example, NEMA's 2022 annual report highlights the distribution of food items, blankets, and medical supplies to over 10,000 Cameroonian refugees in designated camps (NEMA, 2022). These efforts have been supported by collaborations with local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which have facilitated the establishment of temporary shelters. On the other hand, delays in aid delivery and insufficient resources have been reported, particularly in remote areas where infrastructure is limited (Amnesty International, 2020). Such challenges underscore the need for more robust supply chain mechanisms and increased funding to sustain rapid response operations.

Recovery

Recovery focuses on long-term strategies to restore normalcy for refugees and host communities, including livelihood support, psychosocial care, and integration programs. Recovery efforts aim to transition refugees from dependence on humanitarian aid to self-reliance and sustainable living (Global Compact on Refugees, 2018).

NEMA's recovery efforts for Cameroonian refugees have been limited by resource constraints and a lack of comprehensive long-term planning. While some initiatives, such as vocational training programs for refugees, have been implemented in collaboration with organizations like the UNHCR, their scale remains insufficient to meet the needs of the growing refugee population (UNHCR, 2022). For instance, only a small percentage of Cameroonian refugees have access to livelihood programs, leaving many reliant on temporary aid (Oluwaseun & Ojo, 2023). Furthermore, the integration of refugees into host communities has been complicated by cultural differences and competition for resources, which NEMA has struggled to address effectively due to limited funding and expertise in long-term recovery planning (IOM, 2021).

Coordination

Coordination involves NEMA's collaboration with stakeholders, including federal and state governments, international organizations, NGOs, and local communities, to ensure a cohesive and efficient response to the refugee crisis. Effective coordination requires clear communication channels, defined roles, and shared objectives among partners (Alexander, 2016).

NEMA has demonstrated strengths in coordinating with international and local partners to manage the Cameroonian refugee crisis. The Agency's collaboration with UNHCR and other organizations has facilitated the establishment of refugee camps and the delivery of aid (UNHCR, 2022). Regular coordination meetings with stakeholders have helped align efforts and reduce duplication of activities. However, challenges remain, including bureaucratic delays and inconsistencies in information sharing among agencies (Amnesty International, 2020). Strengthening inter-agency communication and streamlining decision-making processes could enhance NEMA's coordination efforts.

NEMA's effectiveness in managing the Cameroonian refugee crisis is shaped by its ability to navigate significant challenges in preparedness, response, recovery, and coordination. While the Agency has made notable strides in providing immediate aid and fostering partnerships, limitations in funding, logistical capacity, and long-term planning hinder its overall impact.

ii. Extent of Collaboration with Local and International Partners in Addressing the Cameroonian Refugee Crisis in Sardauna Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) of Nigeria has played a pivotal role in managing the Cameroonian refugee crisis, particularly in Sardauna Local Government Area (LGA), Taraba State, a region significantly affected by the influx of refugees fleeing conflict in Cameroon's Anglophone regions. Effective collaboration with local and international partners is critical to delivering humanitarian aid, ensuring resource efficiency, and fostering sustainable solutions. This analysis examines the extent of NEMA's partnerships with local and international stakeholders, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based groups. It evaluates the strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in these collaborative efforts, drawing on relevant literature and reports to provide a comprehensive assessment.

NEMA's response to the Cameroonian refugee crisis in Sardauna LGA involves collaboration with a diverse range of partners, each contributing unique expertise and resources. These partners include international organizations, local NGOs, government agencies, and host communities.

International Organizations

- i. **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR):** UNHCR is a primary partner in NEMA's refugee response, providing technical expertise, funding, and coordination support. In Sardauna LGA, UNHCR has facilitated the establishment of refugee settlements and provided essential supplies, such as tents, blankets, and hygiene kits (UNHCR, 2021). Joint assessments conducted by NEMA and UNHCR have helped identify priority needs, particularly in remote areas with limited access.
- ii. **International Organization for Migration (IOM):** IOM supports NEMA through its Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), which monitors refugee movements and provides data to inform resource allocation. In 2022, IOM's DTM reports aided NEMA in mapping refugee populations in Sardauna LGA, enabling targeted aid delivery (IOM, 2022). IOM also provides capacity-building training for NEMA staff on camp management and protection.
- iii. **Other UN Agencies:** Agencies like the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) collaborate with NEMA to address specific needs. WFP has supported food distribution programs, while UNICEF has focused on child protection and education initiatives for refugee children in Sardauna LGA (WFP, 2022; UNICEF, 2021).

Local Non-Governmental Organizations

Local NGOs, such as the Taraba State Emergency Response Initiative (TSERI) and the Nigerian Red Cross Society, play a critical role in NEMA's operations. These organizations leverage their knowledge of local dynamics to facilitate aid delivery in Sardauna LGA's challenging terrain. For instance, the Nigerian Red Cross has supported NEMA in distributing relief materials and conducting health outreach programs for refugees (NEMA, 2022). Local NGOs also serve as intermediaries between NEMA and host communities, helping to mitigate tensions over resource competition.

Government Agencies and Host Communities

NEMA collaborates with Taraba State government agencies, including the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), to coordinate logistics and security for refugee operations. Host communities in Sardauna LGA have also contributed by providing land for refugee settlements and participating in community-based protection initiatives (UNHCR, 2021). However, engagement with local communities requires careful management to address concerns about resource strain and cultural differences.

Strengths of NEMA's Collaborative Efforts

NEMA's partnerships have yielded several notable achievements in addressing the Cameroonian refugee crisis in Sardauna LGA:

- i. **Resource Mobilization:** Collaboration with UNHCR and IOM has enabled NEMA to access international funding and resources, supplementing its limited budget. For example,

- UNHCR's 2021 funding support allowed NEMA to establish temporary shelters for over 5,000 refugees in Sardauna LGA (UNHCR, 2021).
- ii. **Data-Driven Response:** IOM's DTM and UNHCR's needs assessments have provided NEMA with reliable data, improving the targeting of aid to vulnerable populations, such as women and children (IOM, 2022).
 - iii. **Community Engagement:** Partnerships with local NGOs and host communities have facilitated culturally sensitive interventions, enhancing the acceptance of refugees in Sardauna LGA (NEMA, 2022).
 - iv. **Capacity Building:** Training programs offered by international partners have strengthened NEMA's technical capacity in areas like camp coordination and protection monitoring (UNHCR, 2021).

Challenges in Collaboration

Despite these strengths, NEMA's collaborative efforts face significant challenges that limit their effectiveness:

- i. **Bureaucratic Delays:** Bureaucratic bottlenecks, particularly in decision-making processes between NEMA and government agencies, have delayed aid delivery. Oluwaseun and Ojo (2023) highlight instances where approvals for resource deployment took weeks, exacerbating refugee suffering.
 - ii. **Unclear Roles and Responsibilities:** The absence of clearly defined roles among partners has led to overlaps and gaps in service delivery. For example, confusion over responsibilities for healthcare provision in Sardauna LGA has resulted in inconsistent medical services (Amnesty International, 2020).
 - iii. **Insufficient Information Sharing:** Poor communication and data-sharing mechanisms have hindered coordination. Oluwaseun and Ojo (2023) note that NEMA's limited use of digital platforms for real-time information exchange has caused delays in responding to emerging needs.
 - iv. **Resource Constraints:** While international partners provide significant support, funding shortages remain a barrier. UNHCR's 2022 report indicates that only 60% of the required funds for Nigeria's refugee response were met, affecting operations in Sardauna LGA (UNHCR, 2022).
 - v. **Host Community Tensions:** Competition for resources between refugees and host communities has strained relations, complicating NEMA's efforts to foster collaboration with local stakeholders (IOM, 2022).
- iii. Discrepancies between NEMA's Policies and Actual Practices in Addressing the Cameroonian Refugee Crisis in Sardauna Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) of Nigeria is tasked with coordinating and implementing policies to address humanitarian crises, including the Cameroonian refugee crisis in Sardauna Local Government Area (LGA), Taraba State. This region has seen a significant influx of refugees fleeing conflict in Cameroon's Anglophone regions since 2016. While NEMA's policies outline structured approaches to disaster and refugee management, including community involvement and sustainable solutions, significant discrepancies exist between these policies and their practical implementation. These gaps undermine the Agency's effectiveness in addressing the needs of Cameroonian refugees and host communities in Sardauna LGA.

NEMA's Policy Framework

NEMA's policies are grounded in its mandate to manage disasters and humanitarian crises in Nigeria, as outlined in the *National Emergency Management Agency Act of 1999*. The Agency's refugee management policies emphasize several key principles: community engagement, sustainable solutions, timely and equitable aid distribution, and coordination with stakeholders (NEMA, 2022). For instance, NEMA's guidelines advocate for participatory approaches that involve host communities in decision-making to foster social cohesion and reduce tensions between refugees and locals. Additionally, the Agency's policies prioritize long-term strategies, such as livelihood programs, to promote self-reliance among displaced populations (NEMA, 2022). These policies align with international frameworks, such as the *Global Compact on Refugees* (2018), which emphasizes burden-sharing and sustainable interventions.

Discrepancies in Community Involvement

One major discrepancy lies in the gap between NEMA's policy emphasis on community involvement and its actual practices in Sardauna LGA. NEMA's guidelines stress the importance of engaging host communities to ensure that refugee interventions are culturally sensitive and socially sustainable (NEMA, 2022). However, studies indicate that NEMA's interventions in Sardauna LGA have often sidelined local communities, focusing instead on top-down aid delivery (Oluwaseun & Ojo, 2023). For example, relief distributions have frequently been conducted without consulting community leaders, leading to tensions over resource allocation and perceptions of favoritism toward refugees (Amnesty International, 2020). This lack of engagement has exacerbated conflicts between Cameroonian refugees and host communities, particularly in areas with scarce resources like water and farmland (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2021).

The failure to involve communities stems partly from logistical constraints and inadequate staffing. Oluwaseun and Ojo (2023) note that NEMA's field operations in remote areas like Sardauna LGA are often understaffed, limiting the Agency's capacity to conduct community consultations. Additionally, the absence of formalized mechanisms for community participation in NEMA's operational plans further undermines policy implementation (Adeola, 2020). As a result, interventions have often been perceived as disconnected from local realities, reducing their effectiveness and sustainability.

Short-Term Relief and Sustainable Solutions

Another significant discrepancy is the focus on short-term relief measures despite NEMA's policy commitment to sustainable solutions. NEMA's guidelines advocate for programs that promote long-term recovery, such as vocational training, microfinance, and agricultural support, to enable refugees to achieve self-reliance (NEMA, 2022). However, in Sardauna LGA, NEMA's interventions have predominantly centered on immediate relief, such as food, blankets, and temporary shelters (Oluwaseun & Ojo, 2023). While these measures address urgent needs, they fail to tackle underlying issues, such as unemployment and lack of access to education, which perpetuate dependency among refugees (UNHCR, 2022).

The prioritization of short-term relief is largely driven by funding constraints and logistical challenges. According to Adeola (2020), Nigeria's lack of a comprehensive legal framework for refugee management limits NEMA's ability to secure consistent funding for long-term programs. International donors, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), often prioritize emergency aid over sustainable initiatives, further skewing NEMA's interventions (UNHCR, 2022). For instance, only a small fraction of Cameroonian refugees in Sardauna LGA have access to livelihood programs, leaving many reliant on intermittent aid distributions (IOM,

2021). This gap between policy and practice hinders the Agency's ability to foster resilience and integration among refugees.

Lack of a Comprehensive Legal Framework

The absence of a robust legal framework for refugee management in Nigeria is a critical factor contributing to discrepancies between NEMA's policies and practices. While NEMA's policies are designed to align with international standards, Nigeria's domestic legal framework for refugees remains underdeveloped (Adeola, 2020). The country is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, but it lacks a specific national law to operationalize these commitments. As a result, NEMA's responses in Sardauna LGA are often ad hoc, lacking the legal backing needed to enforce consistent and comprehensive interventions (Amnesty International, 2020).

This legal gap leads to inconsistent practices, such as uneven aid distribution and inadequate protection mechanisms for refugees. For example, Adeola (2020) highlights cases in Sardauna LGA where refugees faced challenges accessing legal documentation, limiting their ability to secure employment or education. NEMA's policies emphasize equitable treatment and protection for refugees, but without a clear legal framework, the Agency struggles to implement these principles effectively (Oluwaseun & Ojo, 2023). This discrepancy underscores the need for legislative reforms to strengthen NEMA's operational capacity.

iv. Challenges Hindering the Delivery of Adequate Relief Services by NEMA to the Cameroonian Refugee Crisis in Sardauna Local Government Area, Taraba State, Nigeria

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) of Nigeria faces significant obstacles in providing adequate relief services to Cameroonian refugees in Sardauna Local Government Area (LGA), Taraba State, a region hosting thousands of refugees fleeing the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. These challenges, ranging from systemic issues like inadequate funding and logistical constraints to socio-cultural barriers and policy gaps, have impeded NEMA's ability to meet the humanitarian needs of this vulnerable population. This analysis explores these challenges in depth, drawing on scholarly literature, reports, and frameworks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the barriers to effective relief delivery, while situating Sardauna LGA's unique context within Nigeria's broader humanitarian landscape.

Inadequate Funding

One of the primary challenges hindering NEMA's relief efforts in Sardauna LGA is insufficient funding. Humanitarian response operations, including the provision of food, shelter, medical supplies, and other essentials, require substantial financial resources. However, NEMA's budget allocations are often inadequate to address the scale of the Cameroonian refugee crisis (Oluwaseun & Ojo, 2023). The Agency relies heavily on federal government funding, which is frequently stretched thin due to competing priorities, such as internal displacement caused by Boko Haram insurgency and natural disasters (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2021). In Sardauna LGA, a remote and resource-scarce area, the lack of funds has limited NEMA's ability to procure sufficient relief materials and deploy personnel effectively. For instance, NEMA's 2022 annual report notes that funding shortfalls delayed the delivery of food supplies to refugee settlements in Taraba State, exacerbating food insecurity among Cameroonian refugees (NEMA, 2022).

Logistical Constraints

Logistical challenges, including inadequate transportation and storage infrastructure, further complicate NEMA's relief operations in Sardauna LGA. The region's mountainous terrain and poor road networks make it difficult to transport relief materials to refugee settlements, particularly during the rainy season when roads become impassable (Amnesty International, 2020). Additionally, the lack of sufficient storage facilities has led to spoilage of perishable food items and damage to other supplies, reducing the effectiveness of aid distribution (NEMA, 2022). These logistical bottlenecks highlight the need for investment in infrastructure and prepositioned resources to ensure timely and efficient delivery of humanitarian assistance in remote areas like Sardauna LGA.

Strain on Local Resources

The influx of Cameroonian refugees has placed significant pressure on Sardauna LGA's limited resources, creating competition between refugees and host communities for access to water, farmland, and healthcare services. This strain has hindered NEMA's ability to deliver adequate relief, as local governments often lack the capacity to support both populations simultaneously (UNHCR, 2022). For example, overstretched healthcare facilities in Sardauna LGA have struggled to provide medical care to refugees, leading to delays in treatment and increased health risks (IOM, 2021). Furthermore, resource scarcity has fueled tensions between refugees and host communities, complicating NEMA's efforts to distribute aid equitably and maintain social cohesion (Adeola, 2020).

Absence of a Comprehensive Legal Framework

The lack of a comprehensive legal framework for refugee management in Nigeria poses a significant challenge to NEMA's operations. While Nigeria is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, the country has yet to domesticate these international instruments into national law, leaving a policy vacuum that complicates refugee assistance (Adeola, 2020). In Sardauna LGA, this absence of clear legal guidelines has created uncertainty around the roles and responsibilities of NEMA, state authorities, and international partners, leading to coordination gaps and inefficiencies in relief delivery. For instance, the lack of formalized refugee status determination processes has delayed access to services for some Cameroonian refugees, as NEMA struggles to navigate bureaucratic hurdles (UNHCR, 2022).

Cultural and Social Barriers

Cultural differences, including language barriers and mistrust between Cameroonian refugees and host communities in Sardauna LGA, have impeded NEMA's ability to deliver culturally sensitive humanitarian assistance. Many Cameroonian refugees speak English or Pidgin, while host communities in Taraba State predominantly use local languages, creating communication challenges during aid distribution and needs assessments (Sphere Association, 2018). Additionally, mistrust stemming from cultural differences and perceived favoritism in aid allocation has led to resistance from host communities, further complicating NEMA's operations (Amnesty International, 2020). The Sphere Handbook emphasizes the importance of culturally appropriate interventions in humanitarian response, underscoring the need for NEMA to adopt participatory approaches that involve both refugees and host communities in planning and implementation (Sphere Association, 2018).

Security Concerns

Security challenges in Taraba State, including communal clashes and banditry, have also hindered NEMA's relief efforts in Sardauna LGA. Insecurity along access routes has restricted the movement of humanitarian personnel and supplies, delaying aid delivery to refugee settlements (IOM, 2021). Furthermore, the presence of armed groups in the region has heightened risks for both refugees and aid workers, forcing NEMA to prioritize safety over operational efficiency in some instances (UNHCR, 2022). These security constraints underscore the need for enhanced collaboration with security agencies to ensure safe access to affected populations.

Conclusion

The National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has demonstrated notable commitment in responding to the Cameroonian refugee crisis in Sardauna Local Government Area, Taraba State. Its interventions in providing emergency relief, temporary shelter, and essential health services reflect the Agency's operational relevance during humanitarian emergencies. However, the study reveals that despite these efforts, significant gaps persist in terms of preparedness, inter-agency coordination, recovery strategies, and policy implementation. Inadequate funding, weak legal frameworks, logistical bottlenecks, and limited collaboration with local and international partners have all constrained the effectiveness and sustainability of NEMA's interventions. Consequently, the need for strategic reforms is imperative. A comprehensive, well-coordinated, and legally grounded approach is essential if NEMA is to address current shortcomings and build resilience against future refugee-related emergencies.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. **Enhanced Emergency Preparedness through Early-Warning and Pre-Positioning Strategies;** NEMA should strengthen its preparedness by developing robust early-warning systems and contingency plans specific to border communities like Sardauna LGA. This includes the strategic pre-positioning of relief materials, stockpiling of essentials, and risk mapping to anticipate future refugee influxes. Preparedness must be data-driven and aligned with the Sendai Framework's priority of understanding disaster risks.
- ii. **Strengthen Stakeholder Coordination Mechanism:** To ensure more effective response and recovery operations, NEMA must institutionalize multi-stakeholder coordination frameworks. This includes clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of international partners (e.g., UNHCR, IOM), local governments, and community-based organizations. Establishing joint operation centres and regular coordination meetings can improve synergy and reduce duplication of efforts.
- iii. **Develop and Implement a National Legal Framework on Refugee Management;** In line with international protocols such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and the AU's 1969 Convention, the Federal Government should enact comprehensive legislation on refugee protection. Such a framework will empower NEMA to implement long-term recovery and integration programs with legal backing, reduce policy inconsistencies, and guide institutional accountability.
- iv. **Invest in Sustainable Recovery and Integration Program;** Beyond immediate relief, NEMA should prioritize sustainable recovery efforts by promoting livelihood empowerment, skills training, and community resilience programs. This should include inclusive policies that

foster peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities, reduce dependency on aid, and promote socio-economic reintegration.

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