



For Immediate Release

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UNHCR and CIFOR-ICRAF officialize partnership for resilience and sustainable use of forest resources in communities affected by forced displacement in Cameroon

Yaounde, Cameroon – UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency and CIFOR-ICRAF, the world's leader on forestry and agroforestry research, have formalized an agreement to work together to strengthen the resilience of refugees and host community members, while safeguarding the sustainable management of forest resources in areas affected by forced displacement in Cameroon.

A Memorandum of Understanding between both organizations was signed on 23 March 2023 in Yaounde, with the UNHCR Representative for Cameroon, Olivier Guillaume Beer signing for the UN agency and Richard Eba'a and Ann Degrande for CIFOR and ICRAF respectively, to find ways of improving the living standards of refugees and internally displaced people, while reducing their environmental footprint.

"Refugees as well as host community members very often use wood for cooking and other activities, which has a significant impact on the environment, including the loss of trees. This in turn threatens peaceful coexistence, exacerbates the risks of gender-based violence, and worsens the effects of climate change," said UNHCR Representative Olivier Beer. "This Memorandum of Understanding is therefore a crucial step towards mitigating any adverse effects brought on by the prolonged stay of people in a situation of forced displacement, while supporting resilience and sustainable development in areas that host people served by UNHCR."

By combining their efforts to mobilize resources for the improvement of the livelihoods of refugees and host community members as well as the sustainable use of forests, UNHCR and CIFOR-ICRAF are aiming to reduce their vulnerability, in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals on zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, affordable and clean energy, and climate change.

"Including energy supply and livelihood options early on in interventions in refugee situations makes it easier to avoid damage and long-term impacts," said Abdon Awono, a CIFOR-ICRAF scientist. "Moreover, community involvement and local governance support are essential to the success of such programs".

UNHCR and CIFOR-ICRAF will begin their collaboration in Garoua-Boulai Subdivision in the East Region, which hosts over 64,000 Central African refugees. Both organizations have agreed to conduct participative research to allow various groups within communities to be part of the process of finding and implementing solutions that improve the management of natural resources, so they can build futures for themselves and generations to come.

UNHCR serves over two million people in Cameroon, of whom 475,000 are refugees. 347,000 of them are Central African refugees living in settlements, towns and villages in the East, Adamawa, and North Regions. Another 126,000 are Nigerian refugees living in and out of Minawao camp in the Far North Region. There are also 24,000 refugees of several nationalities living in urban areas like Yaounde and Douala. According to UNOCHA, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, there are more than one million internally displaced people in Cameroon, and over 557,000 returnees.

For more information

UNHCR

Helen Ngoh Ada
Assistant Communications Officer
+237 691 142 788
ada@unhcr.org

CIFOR-ICRAF

Dr. Abdon Awono
Scientist Forests and Woodfuel
+ 237 699 47 43 33
a.awono@cifor-icraf.org