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International Women's Day

Female refugees receive an improved Cohesion Space in Cameroon

Date: Friday, February 24, 2017

The Minister of Women's Empowerment inaugurated UN Women's "Women Cohesion Space" during a high level visit to launch the 2017 International Women's Day in Cameroon.

Maroua-Cameroon 22 February, 2017: Over 30,000 female refugees at the Minawao refugee camp in the Far North Region of Cameroon have expressed profound gratitude to UN Women for putting at their disposal yet another modern structure aimed to support and protect women and girls in humanitarian situations.



High level delegation led by Minister of Women's empowerment inaugurates Women Cohesion Space at Minawao Refugee camp. Photo: UN Women/Fajong Joseph

"When we arrived at the camp some three years ago, our rights were violated, we were often beaten, sexually harassed and we could not even afford basic needs for ourselves...but thanks to UN Women, we can now live in peace, cases of violence and child marriage have reduced, we can now carry out revenue generating activities", explained Awakilo Victorine, Vice president of female refugees at the Minawao refugees camp.

The female refugees, through their leader, were speaking shortly after the inauguration of the second Women Cohesion Space on 22 February 2017, by the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Family, Marie Therese Abena Ondoua in the Presence of other humanitarian actors.

The Minister, just like the other humanitarian actors such as UNHCR, lauded UN Women Cameroon for a timely response to the increasing needs of female refugees at the camp.

In his remarks, UN Women Cameroon Representative, Mr. Adama Moussa noted that women are not just refugees but leaders. "We have scaled up the Women Cohesion Spaces at the camp to meet the increasing needs of female refugees including the provision of safe havens and assistance for survivors of gender based violence (GBV) and spaces for sensitization, capacity building, and recreation for refugees including children", he explained.

Prior to inaugurating the Women Cohesion Space, the high level delegation visited Zamay, a refugee host community where the Minister inaugurated a market shed constructed by UN Women for Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and local population. A package of basic items **economic kits** to kick-start small-scale income-generating activities were handed over to groups of female refugees and IDPs.

UN Women's humanitarian intervention in the Far North region of Cameroon on mainstreaming gender into the humanitarian response - funded by the government of Japan - focuses on three key areas: protection of women and girls and increased access to integrated GBV services; economic support to women among refugees, IDPs and vulnerable host communities; and mainstreaming gender dimension into the humanitarian coordination system.



Minister, UN Women Representatives, Governor of Far North Region and other dignitaries pose for a photo after handing over economic kits to female refugees at the Minawao refugee camp. Photo: UN Women/Fajong Joseph