

A CHILD PROTECTION AND EDUCATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN SELECT COMMUNITIES OF BORNO AND ADAMAWA STATE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of primary data collected in July–August 2017 by Plan International Nigeria and is supplemented by available secondary data on the humanitarian situation in Northeast Nigeria. The following report highlights the **priority humanitarian needs in the sectors of Child Protection and Education and gathered information on the Nutrition and Economic needs of children, youth and their families to better inform the design of comprehensive multi-sector programmes that respond to the complexity of the crisis in Northeast Nigeria**. Particular attention was paid to understanding the differences in risks faced by boys and girls in order to better respond to the unique needs of girls affected by the crisis.

Since 2009, the Lake Chad Basin region is faced by a complex and protracted humanitarian emergency affecting around 17 million people in the most affected areas across north-eastern Nigeria, the Far North region in Cameroon, the Diffa region in Niger and western Chad.

Several factors are contributing to the crisis, such as conflict, rapid population growth and severe vulnerability caused by the effects of climate change, environmental degradation, poverty and underinvestment in social services, translating into high numbers of people in need of humanitarian assistance

In May 2013, as a result of increasingly sophisticated attacks and the fact that the group commonly known as Boko Haram controlled over half of Borno State's Local Government Areas (LGAs) - the President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan declared a State of Emergency in the States of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa (Sahara Reporters, 2013).

Over 12 million people in Northeast Nigeria are currently affected by the crisis – and an estimated 8.5 million are in need of humanitarian assistance (UN OCHA, August 2017). Today more than 1.62 million people are internally displaced across the 3 states in the Northeast region with 80 per cent of the internally displaced people (IDPs) living in Borno State, the epicentre of the crisis (UN OCHA, August 2017).

Nearly 80 per cent of IDPs live in host communities, with under 8 per cent residing in formal or

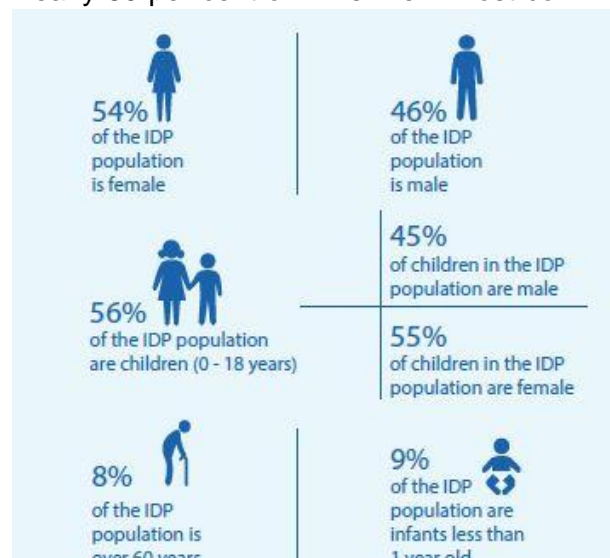


Image taken from: (International Organization for Migration, June 2017)

informal camps and settlements. Over 1.2 million Nigerians have sought refuge in neighbouring countries and are just now beginning to return to Nigeria. As of June 2017, 95,174 returnees were documented from neighbouring countries. Displacement data continues to change as individuals within and outside of Nigeria return to their place of origin (International Organization for Migration, June 2017).

Insecurity, leading to lack of humanitarian access to disputed territory has characterized the emergency. Since January 2016, Nigerian security forces have significantly regained territories - enabling access to the main towns in all but three LGAs in Borno and one in

Adamawa. Despite this fact, the humanitarian situation remains a matter of deep concern as the violence is still raging. Boko Haram-related attacks continue to cause death, injury, forced displacement, abduction and conflict-related psychological distress (UN OCHA, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

Plan International Nigeria has conducted the assessment in Borno and Adamawa State – two of the most conflict-affected states – covering 20 communities in 11 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Plan International Nigeria’s emergency response operations. To select these locations, Plan International Nigeria used purposive sampling methodology.

The assessment used 224 Focus Group Discussions (FGD), 140 Key Informant Interviews (KII) and 19 Direct Observations (DO). Each tool has covered areas of child protection, gender based violence, education, nutrition and livelihoods. The development of the tools was informed by a desk review that covered more than 60 needs assessments.

In total **2,097** individuals (565 children, 273 adolescents, 287 youth, and 972 community members) have been interviewed.¹ These individuals were selected by community leaders and community volunteers and pre-screened by Plan International Nigeria community partner staff.

KEY FINDINGS

The following presents key findings from the Child Protection and Education Needs Assessment.

Child Protection

Girls and young women are facing increased risk to gender based violence (GBV), including sexual violence, exploitation, early pregnancy and forced marriage. As the Child’s Right Act hasn’t been adopted by all States in Nigeria, there is a variation for the legal status of children on issues like the age of marriage (Right to Education Project, 1999). A wide range of **sexual violence** has taken place in Northeast Nigeria. People abducted by Boko Haram and survivors of rape and children born out of sexual violence face stigmatization and are subsequently ostracized. Girls have reported to be forced by their parents to marry because they couldn’t afford school fees, food, shelter and other basic necessities. Some reports indicated forced marriage (20 per cent or 4 of 20 sites) as an arranged marriage against the will of the girl child, because **of pregnancy**, or for economic reasons (as a result of parental pressures – 75 per cent or 15 of 20 sites). This has been so widely reported that the interconnection between food insecurity, household income and sexual exploitation cannot be refuted.

Boys and girls are used as Boko Haram insurgents and as members of the Civilian Joint Task Force. Despite international attention and whistle-blowing on the recruitment and use of children in conflict, children in Northeast Nigeria continue to be associated with armed forces and groups. Safety risks includes the following reported incidents: attacks or bombings, killings of civilians by military/armed groups, other physical violence (abuse, torture, mutilation), tensions/hostility between IDPs and host community members, tensions/hostility, between IDP groups, destruction of property or theft/looting, arbitrary arrest/detention, forced recruitment by

¹ The definition of beneficiaries are the following: Children (9-13), Adolescents (14-17), Youth (18-24)

CJTF/vigilantes, civilians released from abduction (under Boko Haram), presence of landmines/unexploded ordinances, discrimination in access to assistance, incidents of trafficking and incidents of drug sales/abuse (Protection Sector Working Group, 2016). 30 per cent of sites (6 of 20) assessed reported knowing of children working with or being used by armed forces or groups – of these, all reported them to be mostly boys.

Boys and girls are affected by increased child labour practices. A recent secondary desk review by ACAPS indicated that 4,901 children in eight newly accessible areas in Borno State were engaged in hawking or begging, some as young as five. Others collect firewood for sale, an activity that puts girls at particular risk of assault (ACAPS, 2017). Plan International Nigeria's assessment found boys and girls to be engaged in all types of labour including: farming (cattle grazing, feeding animals/livestock, and cattle rearing), household chores (cooking, washing, sweeping, fetching water/firewood) and hawking (begging for alms, selling items at market). Both boys and girls are reportedly engaged in high-risk livelihood strategies, notably in transactional sex. Seventy-five per cent of sites (15 of 20) reported children in the community to be involved in types of work that are harsh or dangerous to them. Sixty-five per cent of sites (13 of 20) reported harmful labour as a leading cause of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation to children.

Traditional practices of separation have been exacerbated by crisis and relocation. The estimated number of unaccompanied and separated children is 32,000 with 9,600 (30 per cent) of them unaccompanied (UN OCHA, 2016). These children are at increased risk of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect as they have lost the care and protection of their families and caregivers. Seventy-eight per cent of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) are orphans who have lost both of their parents due to the conflict. Sixty-five per cent (13 of 20) communities assessed by Plan International reported losing caregivers/children during relocation and the disappearance of children/caregivers in the immediate aftermath of the insurgency. Forty per cent of sites (8 of 20) reported the presence of unaccompanied children living without any adults – with a higher number of boys than girls.

Psychosocial distress among parents and children is linked to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. Children in Northeast Nigeria are experiencing immense suffering. Many have seen parents, siblings, relatives or neighbours killed, tortured or abducted. Many have had to run for their lives and walk for days to reach safety. Others have been exposed to extreme violence and abuse (Child Alert/UNICEF, 2016). UNOCHA has reported that 2 million children aged 3 to 17 are estimated to be suffering from psychosocial distress as a result of the constant threat of violence (UN OCHA, 2016). In Plan International Nigeria's assessment, 90 per cent of sites (18 of 20) reported a negative change in children's behaviours since the crisis. Thirty per cent of sites (6 of 20) reported a negative change in caregiver's attitudes toward their children since the crisis. Reports cited maltreatment, neglect, and emotional and physical abuse as some of these changes. Sixty per cent of sites (12 of 20) reported psychological and emotional stress as a leading cause of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation to children.

Education

Lack of infrastructure and resources, damaged buildings, overcrowding, and misuse of education facilities have negatively impacted the quality and safety of educational environments. The crisis in Northeast Nigeria has further weakened an already

fragile education system, resulting in increasing the number of out of school children. According to recent data shared by UNICEF, there are 1,627 government run schools in Borno of which only 684 are open. One-hundred per cent (20 of 20) of the school facilities assessed in Plan International Nigeria's assessment were closed down during the insurgency and 90 per cent (18 of 20) of school infrastructures/ temporary learning spaces were destroyed or damaged as a result. Twenty-five per cent (5 of 20) of sites reported that some of their schools or learning spaces were at one point used as collective shelters for IDPs. Large class sizes of around 100 students and insufficient classrooms to accommodate these students have been identified as main contributing factors impacting the quality of formal education (UN OCHA, 2016).

Teachers have been affected by violence, displacement and lack of training leading to a reduction in the quality of education provided. The Nigeria Union of Teachers, has reported that many teachers have left the profession due to personal death threats (UN OCHA, 2016). More than 2,295 teachers have been killed during the conflict and 19,000 displaced (UNICEF, 2017). In Plan International Nigeria's 2017 assessment, 30 per cent of schools (6 of 20) assessed had unqualified teachers, meaning teachers who are not formally registered trained teachers, working for them. In addition, 50 per cent (10 of 20 sites) reported teachers receiving less than 10 days of training. Where teachers have returned to work, challenges with delayed salary payments of government teachers is now leading to high rates of teacher absenteeism (UN OCHA, May 31, 2017). In 30 per cent (6 of 20) of the sites assessed it was reported that teachers received their last payment as more than 2 months ago, while in 50 per cent (10 of 20 sites) teachers had only recently received payments for the previous month. All other teachers (4 of 20 sites) have expressed that they received their payments on time. Teachers do not have learning materials to use during classes and must resort to using local materials to supplement teaching practices. Seventy per cent (14 of 20) of sites reported that teachers use some teaching materials but that they are local materials only, and 30 per cent (6 of 20) sites reported not using any teaching materials at all.

Excluded and out of school children have reduced access to quality education. For children living in areas recently targeted by insurgents, there are few educational opportunities. It is estimated that around 80 per cent of IDP children living in host communities receive little or no education, particularly in areas where schools are already congested. Children with special needs and disabilities, who even before the insurgency were poorly catered for in schools, have received no additional support (David Theobald, 2007). In addition, it has been reported that parents are reluctant to send their children to school for fear of abductions and safety concerns (UN OCHA, 2016). Despite signing the Safe Schools Declaration in 2015, security forces have continued to use primary and secondary schools, placing children at risk of (Bill Van Esveld, 2016). In addition to destruction of school and education-related materials, 75 per cent (15 of 20) of schools assessed confirmed the presence of military forces in the area - but not inside schools.

There is a high prevalence of violence against children in education. In Plan International Nigeria's needs assessment, multiple methods of punishment were reported in including corporal punishment - 85 per cent (17 of 20) sites reported bullying by teachers in school. From assessment findings, there is a clear difference between how children feel about female teachers vs. male teachers. When asking children aged 13-17, 95 per cent (19 of 20) children reported feeling positively about their female teachers. Only 1 cite reported feeling negatively about female teachers saying they felt "scared, they sometimes abuse and beat us." On the other hand, children reported feeling negatively about male teachers citing that they feared

them, they were harsh and hard on punishment, and bullies. In a different survey, forty per cent (8 of 20) sites reported feeling positively about male teachers citing they were friendly, and better teachers than females.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This assessment revealed the urgent need for **more targeted, holistic and long term programming** to effectively address the compounding vulnerabilities of children and their families in Borno and Adamawa States. It is therefore recommended to adopt an integrated, innovative and flexible programming approach which brings together child protection, education, nutrition, and economic strengthening actions.

Strengthen the protective environment around children at the home and within the community. Key findings reveal that children and youth already seek support from parents, caregivers, community and religious leaders and friends when they feel stressed, worried or upset. A key strategy to preventing violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation in the home and within the community is to reinforce positive social connections and trust between parents/caregivers, community and religious leaders and to equip children and youth with the information they need to support their friends and connect them to people and services that can help them.

Build capacity of community based structures to respond safely and confidentially to child protection and sexual violence survivors, and refer to appropriate service providers. It is clear from key findings that a culture of silence and fear of stigmatization and other cultural repercussions prevents many survivors of sexual violence from being able to seek support and services. However, when children and youth (both male and female) do report sexual violence, they are turning to security personnel (ex: police and military), community leaders and parents and caregivers for help. Interventions seeking to respond to survivors of sexual violence should integrate capacity building and accountability mechanisms for these community level responders. Therefore, this community driven help seeking behaviour should be reinforced as much as possible, and key stakeholders within the community, such as police, military personnel, community and religious leaders, teachers, and parents and caregivers provided with training accountability measures put in place to monitor community based responses to GBV and CP issues.

Provide more comprehensive GBV response services. Life-saving response to survivors of GBV includes psychosocial support (PSS), specialised health care - including clinical management of rape (CMR), access to justice, safety and security are included in the humanitarian response, but are lacking or non-existent in many LGAs (UN OCHA, 2016). Therefore, agencies should ramp up GBV responses and strengthen existing actions. GBV interventions should include the following: (UNFPA, 2015)

- Life-saving healthcare services, with an emphasis on clinical management of rape
- Mental and psychosocial support focused on healing, empowerment and recovery.
- Strengthened safety and security measures to prevent and mitigate GBV and protect survivors.
- Partner with legal and justice sectors to protect survivors' rights and support their access to justice.

- Distribute dignity kits to affected populations to reduce vulnerability and connect women and girls to information and support services.
- Target women and adolescent girls (especially survivors) with socio-economic support to mitigate the risk of GBV as part of a multi-sector response.

Promote access to gender and age appropriate integrated services for at-risk children and youth. Unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and children involved in the worst forms of child labour (ex: children currently/formerly associated with armed groups and forces, children engaged in transnational sex, and hard wage labour) should be identified and provided with holistic services to mitigate stigmatization and exclusion and to support their social, educational and economic reintegration into their communities.

Create a safe, conducive and non-violent teaching and learning environment. An investment in the safety of the teaching and learning environment is essential to contribute to increased access to and retention of students and teachers in education. This must start from the education infrastructure aligned with Safe School Guidelines but must also be complemented with soft interventions including school safety plans, codes of conduct, school related gender based violence prevention strategies and reporting mechanism. Sustainable school feeding approaches that are linked with local small-scale farmer production can improve child nutrition and education and increase retention of students.

Increase support for teachers and education personnel. Teachers and education personnel play an important role in enabling children's educational access and psychosocial wellbeing. Key education interventions should include certified professional development courses for teachers and education personnel covering the skills required to respond to the diverse learning needs of children caught in the middle of crisis, as well as to their psychosocial concerns. Specific measures should be identified and implemented in order to encourage the participation and retention in schools of female teachers and education personnel who are at greater risk of GBV.

Provide alternative and non-formal education opportunities for out of school children, adolescents and youth and support girls' participation and enrolment in school, in particular in remote areas. Flexible and age appropriate non formal and alternative education programmes including accelerated education, vocational training, apprenticeships complemented by life skills, literacy and numeracy can provide learning opportunities for children who have missed out on education because of the crisis and for out of school adolescents and youth. Measures to address the barriers to girls' education should be identified and implemented including specific measures to encourage the participation of adolescent girls including adolescent mothers associated with armed groups such as early childhood care and development services, parenting education programmes and referral to specialised services. Particular attention should also be paid to children and in particular girls located in remote areas with schools that accommodate large numbers of students as a result of displacement.

Advocate with state level stakeholders and community leaders to adopt policies, legislations and practices that address violence, abuse and neglect against children and to protect education from attack. The practice of child marriage is deeply

influenced by religious and cultural beliefs especially in the Northeast of Nigeria. Thus, it is recommended that programs aimed at addressing child marriage and other GBV related concerns develop targeted advocacy messages and capacity building interventions targeting religious and traditional leaders at the community level to influence their constituencies. Humanitarian actors should also work with the State Assembly and the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development to develop policies and legislations that outlaw child marriage and provide protection for children.

Improvements must be made toward active prevention messaging, including information and coordination with military on what you should do – how and where - to seek help should your child become a victim of becoming a “human bomb”.

Further advocacy measures should also be taken by NGOs Coalitions, Civil Society Organizations, Education Networks and Platforms to influence the Ministry of Education and other Government’s bodies to support measures to protect education from attack - including the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use During Armed Conflict.

Improve access to child protection and education services through provision of integrated mobile programming. Accessibility and insecurity have characterised the crisis. Static approaches typical to camp and refugee contexts fail to reach affected individuals across urban and rural communities and leave large areas un-reached by humanitarian aid. Individuals who find themselves far away from static service provision and unable to walk far distances due to insecurity or ability, may be missed entirely. Mobile services can provide life-saving protection, learning opportunities, nutrition and health response to affected children, youth and their families residing beyond the typical areas of operation for NGOs.

Conduct additional research on risks faced by children and youth in the Northeast. The following details potential areas for additional research given the key findings and recommendations above.

- Issues of **child labour**, including the worst forms of child labour (use in armed groups and forces and for sexual exploitation). As children, youth and their families continue to return to Nigeria from neighbouring countries, and as IDPs are encouraged to return to newly accessible areas, it will be prudent to understand how forced migration (including within Nigeria in relation to child separation to attend unregistered Quranic schools) influences child labour practices for girls and boys uniquely, and what can be done to prevent and respond to it in both the short and long term.
- While this assessment attempted to assess viable economic strengthening interventions and opportunities, it became clear during analysis that not enough data was available to present in this report. Therefore, it is recommended that a study on sustainable livelihood interventions – including cash transfer – will be conducted. This should be done at the community level, given that access to markets, money transfer modalities, and demand/supply of various trades varies greatly at the **community** level. The study should also examine any potential harm that could come to vulnerable households and communities as a result of cash injections.

KEY LINKS

The tools used in this assessment have been made available to support all government and humanitarian actors responding to the crisis in the Northeast to access helpful resources and methodologies. The tools can be accessed on the following [Link](#). For any questions or feedback please contact [Katharina Witkowski](#), Emergency Response Manager for Plan International Nigeria.

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About Plan International

Plan International is an independent child rights and humanitarian organisation committed to children living a life free of poverty, violence and injustice. We actively unite children, communities and other people who share our mission to make positive lasting changes in children's and young people's lives. We support children to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to claim their rights to a fulfilling life, today and in the future.

We place a specific focus on girls and women, who are most often left behind. We have been building powerful partnerships for children for more than 75 years, and are now active in more than 70 countries.