

## EVALUATION REPORT

December 2021



# Evaluation of UNICEF's coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations: Nigeria





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for every child

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# PREFACE



In 2018, UNICEF undertook an evaluation of the coverage and quality of its response to complex humanitarian emergencies, and as part of this developed 11 country case studies. The purpose was to generate, through robust and systematic analysis in a range of country contexts, information on how UNICEF could improve the coverage and quality of its humanitarian response. Both the evaluation process and its findings have contributed to a body of evidence and learning regarding the enablers and barriers to delivering high-quality humanitarian action in complex humanitarian emergencies; these have shown how such barriers have affected UNICEF's performance and its ability to reach the most vulnerable populations.

While the country case studies were internal documents, the Nigeria Country Office (NCO) was interested in expanding and updating its analysis to get an in-depth assessment of the coverage and quality of UNICEF's humanitarian response in the country, while identifying enabling and inhibiting factors and good practice. The decision to develop and update the 2018 country case study into a fully-fledged evaluation has proved a valuable one, including conducting the second data collection mission to Nigeria, which was made possible despite the constraints caused by Covid-19.

This evaluation reveals that UNICEF has been among the largest and most important providers of humanitarian assistance and protection in north-east Nigeria over the periods 2015–2018 and 2020–2021. UNICEF has been successful in meeting targets, and its generally pragmatic approach to programme quality has resulted in positive feedback from its beneficiaries. UNICEF's broad range of partnerships with both government and non-government partners, alongside its systematic and generally successful approach to resource mobilization, have put it in a strong position to deliver humanitarian programmes at scale. The report, however, also sheds light on areas that require improvement. These include: UNICEF's approach to target-setting, which provides little indication of actual performance vis-à-vis humanitarian needs; its siloed,

sector-oriented programming; limited and unsystematic community engagement practices; the complex and challenging issue of a government–United Nations strategy of restricted access to unsecured areas, which impacts on the equity principle for delivery of humanitarian assistance in conflict contexts; weak use of digital tools for collecting, analysing and visualizing monitoring data and information on coverage and quality; and delays in establishing and renewing partnership agreements, among others.

The evaluation was carried out by an independent team from Itad. On behalf of the Evaluation Office, I would like to thank Clemens Gros, the team leader, and Pierre Townsend, together with Monye Chinedu and Esther Igube, for their dedication, expertise and professionalism during the evaluation process, together with the Itad project management team that made this evaluation possible.

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Robert McCouch  
Director of Evaluation





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## TABLE OF ACRONYMS

<b>AAP</b>	Accountability to Affected Populations	<b>EQ</b>	Evaluation Question
<b>AAH/ACF</b>	Action Against Hunger	<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>AAWG</b>	Assessment and Analysis Working Group	<b>FO</b>	Field Office
<b>AWG</b>	Access Working Group	<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based Violence
<b>BAY</b>	Borno, Adamawa, Yobe	<b>HAC</b>	Humanitarian Action for Children
<b>C4D</b>	Communication for Development	<b>HACT</b>	Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers
<b>CCC</b>	Core Commitments for Children	<b>HC</b>	Humanitarian Coordinator
<b>CEF</b>	Consolidated Emergency Report	<b>HCT</b>	Humanitarian Country Team
<b>CHS</b>	Core Humanitarian Standard	<b>HNO</b>	Humanitarian Needs Overview
<b>CHTE</b>	Complex High-threat Environment	<b>HPD</b>	Humanitarian Programme Document
<b>CJTF</b>	Civilian Joint Task Force	<b>HPM</b>	Humanitarian Performance Monitoring
<b>CO</b>	Country Office	<b>HQ</b>	Headquarters
<b>Covid-19</b>	Coronavirus disease	<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan
<b>CRM</b>	Complaints Response Mechanism	<b>HRS</b>	Humanitarian Response Strategy
<b>CTG</b>	Committed to Good	<b>IASC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
<b>DHIS</b>	District Health Information System	<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>DO</b>	Designated Official	<b>IHL</b>	International Humanitarian Law
<b>EiE</b>	Education in Emergencies	<b>INGO</b>	International Non-governmental Organization
<b>EO</b>	Evaluation Office	<b>INSO</b>	International NGO Safety Organization
<b>e-PMV</b>	Electronic Programmatic Monitoring Visits	<b>IT</b>	Information Technology

<b>IYCF</b>	Infant and Young Child Feeding	<b>PSS</b>	Psychosocial Support
<b>JIAF</b>	Joint Inter-agency Assessment Framework	<b>PRC</b>	Partnership Review Committee
<b>KfW</b>	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (German Development Bank)	<b>RC</b>	Resident Coordinator
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview	<b>RC/HC</b>	Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator
<b>LHD</b>	Linking Humanitarian and Development	<b>RRM</b>	Rapid Response Mechanism
<b>M4R</b>	Management for Results	<b>RUTF</b>	Ready-to-use Therapeutic Food
<b>MSNA</b>	Multi-sector Needs Assessment	<b>SAM</b>	Severe Acute Malnutrition
<b>MRM</b>	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism	<b>SECTO</b>	Special Emergency Compressed Time-off
<b>MWASD</b>	Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development	<b>SitRep</b>	Situation Report
<b>NAF</b>	Nigerian Armed Forces	<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
<b>NCO</b>	Nigeria Country Office	<b>SRP</b>	Strategic Response Plan
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organization	<b>TA</b>	Temporary Appointment
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council	<b>TOR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>NSAG</b>	Non-state Armed Group	<b>TPF</b>	Third-party Facilitator
<b>OCHA</b>	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>OECD/DAC</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation Development/Development Assistance Committee	<b>UNDSS</b>	United Nations Department of Safety and Security
<b>ORE</b>	Other Resources Emergency	<b>UNEG</b>	United Nations Evaluations Group
<b>ORR</b>	Other Resources for Regular	<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
<b>OTP</b>	Outpatient Therapeutic Centre	<b>UNSG</b>	United Nations Secretary General
<b>PEA</b>	Political Economy Analysis	<b>UNSMS</b>	United Nations Security Management System
<b>PMV</b>	Programmatic Monitoring Visits	<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Aid
<b>PoLR</b>	Provider of Last Resort	<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
		<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
		<b>WHS</b>	World Humanitarian Summit



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction and context

#### Purpose of the evaluation

The objectives of the evaluation were to assess UNICEF's performance in achieving coverage and quality in Nigeria between 2018 and 2020. The evaluation aimed to identify internal and external enabling and inhibiting factors that influenced the delivery of high-quality humanitarian action, and to capture good practice and innovation.

#### Methodology

The evaluation was conducted in two phases. Nigeria was a case study for the global thematic evaluation of UNICEF's coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations (phase 1), which covered the period 2015–2017 and was published in 2018. In the second phase, conducted in 2021, the Nigeria case study was updated with a view to publishing a fully-fledged evaluation report. Throughout both phases, the team used a mixed-methods approach for

data collection and analysis. Qualitative data was gathered through a literature review, key informant interviews (KII) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with community members who had accessed UNICEF's humanitarian assistance. Quantitative data was drawn from UNICEF's situation reports (SitReps), and a U-Report text-message poll was conducted in 2020, receiving responses from 2,862 beneficiaries of UNICEF humanitarian assistance.

The following paragraphs summarize the key findings, which are reproduced below under each evaluation question.

## Coverage and quality outcomes

### Coverage

Over the past three years, UNICEF programmes in north-east Nigeria have been largely successful in meeting their targets. However, results vary sharply from year to year and across programmes. Inter-agency needs assessments in support of the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), in which UNICEF participates, have provided a solid foundation on which to base UNICEF's targeting. While data on people in need has improved, UNICEF continues to place its focus on sector targets and the number of people it reaches, making it difficult for the organization to determine its own coverage and actual performance vis-à-vis humanitarian needs. UNICEF's sector targets – subject to large variations from year to year

– are also the result of an ad hoc and intuitive approach to adapting to unforeseen changes in need, situational context, funding or partner capacity. The demands placed on humanitarian actors by the civilian and military authorities inhibit access, hinder needs assessments and constrain programme delivery, which severely affects UNICEF's coverage. An estimated 1 million people live in areas inaccessible to humanitarian actors. The 'Covid-proofing' of its entire humanitarian and development portfolio meant that UNICEF was largely successful in avoiding major disruptions in service delivery.

### Quality

UNICEF staff and its implementing partners displayed a good level of familiarity with the Core Commitments for Children (CCCs) and other standards. Across the sectors examined, proactive measures have been taken to communicate quality standards to stakeholders and to support the application of benchmarks. In practice, the evaluation found that approaches to quality among UNICEF staff were generally pragmatic rather than standards based. These approaches entailed an acceptance and understanding of what optimal quality looked like, given a unique set of enabling and limiting factors in the environment. Implicit in this view is the notion that quality is not finite and should always be improved upon when conditions allow. Section staff generally had a good sense of where room for improvement existed in their programmes and how to prioritize measures to strengthen quality on a responsive and opportunistic basis.

Beneficiaries generally view UNICEF's humanitarian assistance favourably. A U-Report survey was commissioned for this evaluation in June 2020. It attracted 2,862 responses from an opportunistic sample of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps and host community residents across Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states who reported having received humanitarian assistance in at least one UNICEF programme area. For each programme section, 77–87 per cent of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that UNICEF's programmes were delivered on time, were of high quality and met people's needs.

## How does UNICEF's approach affect programme coverage and quality?

### Programme approaches: integration, rapid response mechanism, third-party facilitators, and remote and mobile programming

While there is some evidence of integration between programme sections, there is scope to strengthen this significantly by addressing the underlying causes: siloed work plans and results frameworks that incentivize single-sector programming; an absence of in-depth, cross-sectoral needs assessments; and limited partner capacity to work in more than one sector.

UNICEF has played a key role in re-establishing the rapid response mechanism (RRM) in north-east Nigeria, but the first round of RRM implementation in 2021 highlighted several

challenges, partly due to insecurity and bureaucratic impediments imposed by the Nigerian Government and military, but also due to internal constraints. UNICEF's components of the response package (i.e., water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and nutrition) could not be deployed in time, partly due to the need to obtain military clearance for moving humanitarian cargo, but also because internal administrative procedures were not started soon enough or could not be completed quickly enough.

### Approach to gaining principled access

In the face of the Nigerian military's tight control over access to affected populations, the humanitarian community in Nigeria has struggled to develop a strategy to ensure principled humanitarian access or to create space for negotiation with all parties to the conflict, to the extent that this would be viable given their position. As a consequence, there has been little success in expanding coverage into areas not yet secured by the Nigerian military and to locations where IDPs have had to relocate after their camps had been closed by the Government. Faced with limited initiative from the UN's leadership in Nigeria, UNICEF is yet to develop its own strategy for principled engagement and approaches to expanding coverage.

### Security and risk management

UNICEF has taken significant steps to improve staff safety and security. At the same time, security staff in Maiduguri have been used

mainly to manage security rather than to work jointly with programmes to create an enabling environment for expanding humanitarian coverage. This has led UNICEF to become passively over-reliant on the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), interpreting its risk advisory as mandatory instruction on where and when not to travel, and thus contributing to widely held perceptions of UNICEF staff lacking field presence. Community engagement has also remained underutilized as an approach to cultivating acceptance and enhancing the safety of staff in the field, with the ultimate goal of gaining access and expanding coverage outside the relatively secure garrison towns. Going beyond Communication for Development (C4D), community engagement here refers to the 'active participation of people and communities in ways that mean their voices are heard and their active contribution to decision-making is safe, equitable and effective'.<sup>1</sup> This includes processes for listening to and communicating with people in order to better understand their needs, vulnerabilities and capacities, and gathering, responding to and acting on their feedback.

## **Partnerships and localization**

Government institutions and agencies have been UNICEF's main implementing partners for the humanitarian response, which has been effective in expanding humanitarian services

in some sectors. However, the Government's ability to respond to humanitarian needs is beset by challenges due to capacity, willingness and budget constraints, which negatively affect the quality of the response. The partnerships with local and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have enabled UNICEF to expand coverage because organizations are based in (or are willing to travel to) areas where UNICEF staff cannot go. Most of these NGOs have had limited humanitarian experience, resulting in variable programme quality. Recognizing these limitations, UNICEF has invested in strengthening specific technical partner capacities, but has overall fallen short on its Grand Bargain commitments on localization.

## **Programme monitoring**

UNICEF's emergency team has successfully institutionalized a robust humanitarian performance monitoring (HPM) mechanism, which periodically provides structured feedback on gaps and challenges on a sample of humanitarian interventions. The overall practices in respect of programme quality monitoring, which is the responsibility of programme sections, leave room for improvement. Indicators on programme quality were not tracked systematically, and partners indicated that there was limited follow-up with them on the quality of implementation, particularly because they rarely saw UNICEF

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<sup>1</sup> XXX

staff in the field. With coverage, quality and monitoring data all kept largely offline, the Country Office (CO) has not yet utilized the potential of modern IT solutions.

### **Maintaining relevance: analysis and accountability to affected populations**

Despite UNICEF guidance emphasizing the importance of context analysis and adapting programmes to contextual needs, the evaluation did not find evidence of regular context analysis of the programme in north-east Nigeria to ensure that it adapts approaches and delivery mechanisms to the changing context. This makes it difficult for UNICEF to have confidence that it is maximizing its potential to achieve coverage and quality. A comprehensive analysis of the context and political economy would also go a long way towards developing a holistic strategy for the north-east. UNICEF engages with affected populations in its humanitarian response in a number of different ways, but the variety of approaches lacks consistency, coherence and follow-up, meaning that the organization is still some way from meeting UNICEF's corporate aspirations and commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), which will soon become mandatory with the revised emergency procedures.

### **Advocacy and the monitoring and reporting mechanism**

The operational core of UNICEF's capability for advocacy in Nigeria is the monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM). The evaluation

found that the process of collecting and verifying evidence on alleged grave violations was rigorous and systematic, albeit limited to areas currently accessible to humanitarian actors. Despite capacity and coverage constraints, the MRM is widely thought to contribute meaningfully to an enabling environment for child protection in north-east Nigeria. The MRM draws on some of UNICEF's core areas of expertise and allows it to demonstrate its added value in the United Nations response. Beyond the MRM, UNICEF senior management was perceived to be measured yet steadfast and consistent in its advocacy for principled humanitarian action. At the local level, UNICEF has registered notable successes in advocating on behalf of its partners, for example to ensure the timely deployment of government staff, such as health and nutrition workers or female teachers, to NGO partner intervention sites.

### **How do UNICEF's inputs affect programme coverage and quality?**

#### **Human resources**

The Nigeria Country Office (NCO) and Maiduguri Field Office (FO) have phased out surge deployments and invested substantially in staff well-being. Overall, this has led to greater continuity among staff. However, most personnel in the Maiduguri FO appear to have significantly more experience in development programming than in humanitarian assistance. This determines the range of UNICEF's capacity and options for conducting context analysis, developing strategies and designing



effective programmes. Attracting a diverse field of candidates regarding gender-balance and nationalities has been challenging.

### **Resource mobilization**

Despite significant fundraising efforts, UNICEF has seen a steady decline in Other Resources for Emergency (ORE) over the years, broadly in step with the decreasing inflow of Other Resources for Regular (ORR) programming. Underlying this trend appears to be a certain level of donor fatigue, although the total volume of incoming funding is still significant and UNICEF has been able to finance sectoral responses consistently, on average, at 50–60 per cent of Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) requirements. UNICEF's inability to access United States Agency for International

Aid (USAID) funding because of a conflict of principles is of concern and should be taken up by the Office for Emergency Programmes (EMOPS).

### **Policies and procedures**

There has been no improvement in the slow pace of processes to establish new or to renew expired partnership agreements since the 2018 evaluation raised this as a significant concern for the coverage and quality of the response. Delays in partnership processing, often of between two and eight months, have created frustration among staff, partners and donors and have led to breaks in humanitarian service delivery. Three years on, there is a pressing need to address this now. The supply and logistics functions have generally performed well in the

humanitarian response, with UNICEF being a major contributor to the WASH and nutrition ‘common pipelines’, and procurement not having emerged as a significant constraint. Yet, concerns were raised about the timeliness of off-shore procurement processes.

## Conclusions and recommendations

### Coverage and quality outcomes

UNICEF has been among the largest and most important providers of humanitarian assistance and protection in north-east Nigeria, having to balance and manage programme delivery with significant risk to its own staff and partners. It has mostly been successful in meeting targets, but targets are set by balancing estimations of needs against a forecast of the operational capacity that can realistically be mustered to address them. Therefore, programme coverage relative to targets provides little indication of actual performance vis-à-vis humanitarian needs. UNICEF Nigeria can strengthen its targeting and monitoring of programme coverage, as well as its accountability, by using ‘people in need’ as a consistent reference point.

The pragmatic approach to programme quality has resulted in overall favourable feedback from UNICEF’s beneficiaries, although there are prominent opportunities to strengthen quality management through enhanced field presence of staff, follow-up with implementing partners, systematic quality monitoring and data management. Given the protracted nature

of the crisis in the north-east, this points to the need for UNICEF to develop a vision and strategy for programming in the BAY states, including for humanitarian access.

### Ways of achieving outcomes

Siloed, sector-oriented approaches still predominantly characterize UNICEF’s humanitarian portfolio, which affects programme quality. Multi-sector partnerships have only recently come into focus and are one of several steps that can be taken to strengthen integration. Contingency partnerships provide a viable option for improving readiness, but cannot address the CO’s underlying difficulties in processing partnerships in a timely manner. UNICEF’s broad range of partnerships with both government and non-government partners have put it in a strong position to deliver humanitarian programmes at scale, but investments in capacity are required to ensure quality and to contribute to localization. Overall, there is room for UNICEF to engage more proactively in risk management to increase its field presence, together with more systematic community engagement within UNICEF programmes beyond C4D to cultivate acceptance and to make the organization’s humanitarian response more consistently relevant, inclusive and accountable. TPFs can play an enabling role in this, as well as in monitoring programme quality, which must be led more systematically by programme sections. The use of digital tools for collecting, analysing and visualizing monitoring data and information on coverage and quality – currently largely absent – is overdue and will significantly

enhance UNICEF's management of the response.

humanitarian operation that is entirely within its control.

## Inputs

UNICEF's relative continuity in FO staffing and its significant – albeit steadily declining – emergency funding provide strong foundations for operating a large-scale response. However, the delay with which UNICEF establishes and renews partnerships constitutes the single biggest obstacle to a more agile, responsive

## Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the coverage and quality of UNICEF's humanitarian programming and the lessons highlighted in the report, the evaluation makes the following recommendations. Additional detail for each recommendation is provided in section 6.2 of the report.

#	Recommendation	Action to be led by?
1	Calculate targets and report coverage based on an assessment of people in need and apply this across all clusters led by UNICEF. Changes in targets should be consistently monitored and transparently reported. This will provide the strongest evidence for advocating adequate resources for humanitarian response.	Emergency Manager
2	Introduce a user-friendly digital tool and use it to monitor humanitarian programme performance data on coverage and quality across all programme sections and implementing partners; the software will generate visual dashboards and a community-level map of operational presence.	Deputy Rep., with support from Chief of M4R and ICT; in consultation with EMOPS
3	Strengthen programme integration with granular cross-sectoral needs assessments and by incentivizing programme sections to establish multi-sector interventions, by building integration into performance reviews and developing multi-sectoral results frameworks as part of the country programme and annual planning processes.	Representative
4	Strengthen the CO capacity for context and conflict analysis; undertake and regularly update an in-depth analysis of the context and political economy of (a) the humanitarian operating environment in the north-east and (b) opportunities for principled access.	Emergency Manager
5	Develop a UNICEF strategic vision and plan to guide the humanitarian response and efforts to connect humanitarian, development and peacebuilding-oriented programming in the north-east, based on the insights generated from recommendation #4.	Representative, with support from Chief of FO; Emergency Manager
6	Secure a more direct role alongside OCHA in the UN's operations-level engagement in civil–military coordination with the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) in Maiduguri, geared specifically to advocacy in support of easing the bureaucratic impediments to the response and enabling faster RRM deployment.	Representative, with support from Chief of FO and Emergency Manager
7	More broadly, UNICEF Nigeria should develop its own access strategy that identifies opportunities and specifies roles and responsibilities for the organization, while continuing to use its influence and advocacy through the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and other coordinated United Nations mechanisms.	Representative, with support \ from Emergency Manager and Chief of FO

#	Recommendation	Action to be led by?
8	Establish a systematic mechanism for AAP, implementing UNICEF's corporate global guidance on AAP.	Representative with support from Emergency Manager
9	Strengthen localization by (a) mapping actors, their capacity and presence; and (b) defining a capacity development strategy for local and national implementing partners, considering the Government's current constraints on capacity and political will.	Chief of Maiduguri FO, with support from Emergency Manager
10	Streamline the process for establishing and renewing partnership agreements and set a maximum target duration, for example 60 days from advertisement to signature by UNICEF; concrete steps include the restructuring of the 'advisory' Partnership Review Committee (PRC) in Maiduguri and increasing the CO threshold for PRC reviews from USD 100,000 upwards.	Deputy Representative, Chief of M4R, Chief of FO
11	Consider the establishment of an internal contingency funding facility to enable small, but rapid and unconditional disbursements to pre-selected partners on a 'no-regrets' basis, to support responses to localized, sudden-onset emergencies. This can build on and be justified with the new emergency procedures, which will introduce 'start-up funding' for new partners, although this should also be possible for existing partners.	Deputy Representative, supported by Chief of Operations
12	Ensure that UNICEF staff involved in the humanitarian response have the requisite skills and experience in humanitarian action. This would include make experience in humanitarian programming a core requirement when recruiting to staff positions involved in the response, establishing mentoring arrangements for less experienced staff, and offering periodic refresher training and orientations on systems and processes relevant to the response, which should be mandatory for all new staff.	Chief of People and Culture, with support from Chief of FO and Emergency Manager



## 1. INTRODUCTION

This section introduces the evaluation, summarizes its purpose and objectives, and provides an overview of the methodology.

## 1.1 Evaluation purpose, objectives, scope and target audience

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide evaluative insights and practical recommendations to improve the coverage and quality of UNICEF's humanitarian response in north-east Nigeria.

The evaluation had three objectives:

- Assess UNICEF's performance in achieving coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations, including identifying internal and external enabling factors and challenges to UNICEF's performance;
- Identify internal and external enabling factors and challenges to UNICEF's fulfillment of its protection mandate and role in complex humanitarian situations, including its designated role in the MRM resulting from United Nations Security Council resolutions on Children Affected by Armed Conflict;
- Capture good practice and innovations that are improving humanitarian action and analyse their potential for more general application by UNICEF.

The evaluation was conducted in two phases. In 2018, the UNICEF Evaluation Office (EO)

commissioned a thematic evaluation of UNICEF's coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations (referred to as 'phase 1' in this report). Nigeria was one of 11 country case studies prepared for the evaluation, which covered the period from 2015 to 2017. Findings, lessons and good practice from the Nigerian context informed the global synthesis report.<sup>2</sup>

The final Nigeria country case study report was submitted in January 2019. In April that year, the NCO prepared an internal management response that indicated overall agreement and outlined follow-up actions to the seven recommendations that had been made (see Annex 5).<sup>3</sup> A decision was subsequently made for the evaluation team to return to Nigeria to expand and update the Nigeria case study and publish the report as a fully-fledged evaluation report (referred to as 'phase 2').

This report builds on the phase 1 evaluation and sets the temporal scope primarily on the time period after the phase 1 report, i.e. from 2018 until 2020 (see Table 1). Relevant developments in 2021 are considered insofar as they occurred until the country mission in September 2021 and had a direct bearing on the evaluation findings and recommendations.

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2 UNICEF Evaluation Office (2019), Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies: Volume One, Main Evaluation Report, January 2019.

3 Annex 5 of this report summarizes the phase 1 recommendations and shows that most follow-up actions were in fact not implemented, potentially because the phase 1 report was seen as a pilot case study to inform a global evaluation report.

**TABLE 1**

Scope of the evaluation

Evaluation scope	Description
<b>Temporal scope</b>	The evaluation focused on UNICEF's humanitarian response from 2015 to 2020. The phase 1 report covered the period from 2015 to 2017. This report (phase 2) builds on phase 1, but focuses primarily on the period of 2018 to 2020.
<b>Geographic scope</b>	The geographic scope of this evaluation is north-east Nigeria, primarily Borno State and, to the extent that humanitarian interventions are operational there, Adamawa and Yobe States. The evaluation team acknowledges that a humanitarian situation is beginning to unfold in north-west Nigeria; however, this could not be covered by this evaluation.
<b>Thematic scope</b>	The evaluation did not focus on any particular sector. Instead, it explored the two focal areas of coverage and quality of humanitarian action across all UNICEF's sectors, as stipulated in the terms of reference (TOR). This breadth in thematic scope meant that no single programme sector could be covered comprehensively and in depth.

The evaluation is targeted primarily at the UNICEF NCO and Maiduguri FO, particularly senior leadership within the CO, field operations and emergency staff, and key programme sections. It should also have relevance for UNICEF staff working in other COs in complex humanitarian contexts, UNICEF regional staff, headquarters divisions, the EO, affected populations, donors and the wider humanitarian sector.

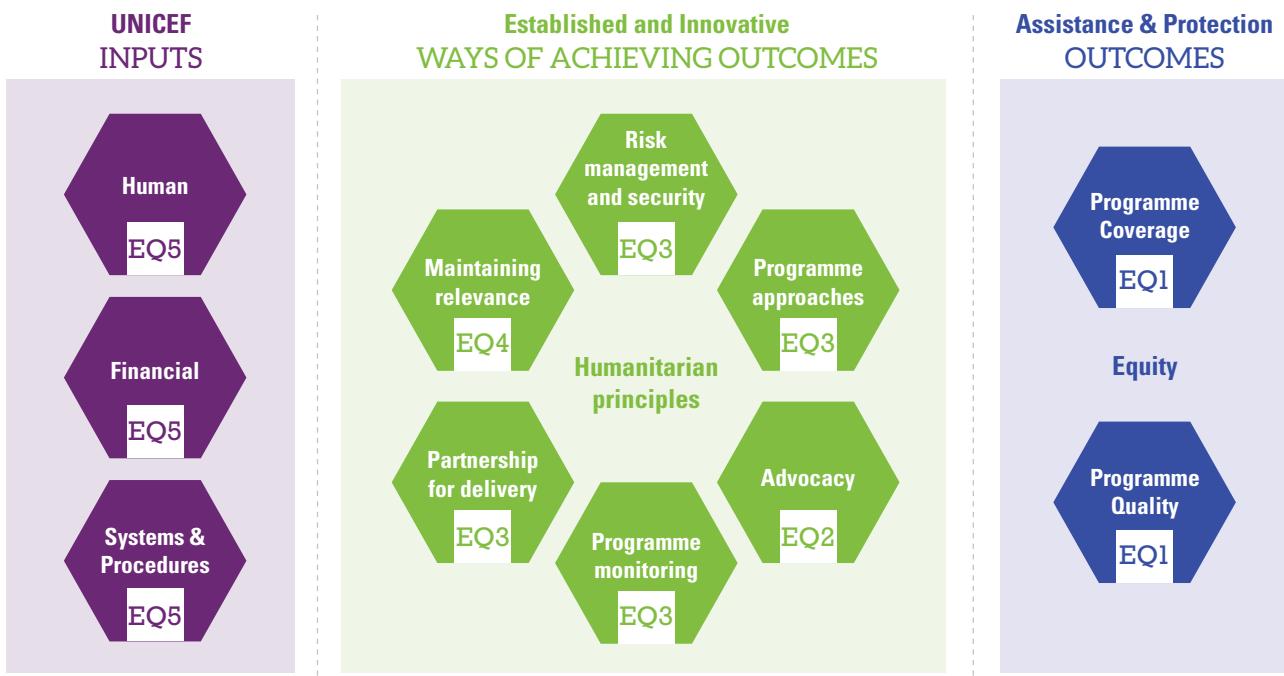
## 1.2 Analytical framework

Given the primary focus of this evaluation on practical solutions rather than theory, the analytical framework articulates the critical building blocks and enablers of success for UNICEF to achieve coverage and quality in its humanitarian response (see *Figure 1*).



**FIGURE 1**

Analytical framework for the evaluation



In line with the TOR for the evaluation exercise, coverage is defined as 'the extent to which major population groups facing life-threatening suffering are being (or were) reached by humanitarian action'.<sup>4</sup> For UNICEF, the concept of coverage also includes the extent to which UNICEF is identifying and reaching the most vulnerable, and is addressing differences in

vulnerability due to, for example, age, gender and disability.

The quality of humanitarian response does not have a unified definition in UNICEF. For the purposes of the evaluation, the assessment of quality is understood to be the degree to which UNICEF is adhering to the benchmarks set out

<sup>4</sup> ALNAP/ODI (2016), Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide, p114.

in its Core Commitments for Children (CCC) in complex high-threat environments (CHTEs), and also supplementary commitments the organization has made to (a) the Core Humanitarian Standard;<sup>5</sup> (b) technical standards for humanitarian programming (primarily the Sphere standards<sup>6</sup> and INEE minimum standards<sup>7</sup>); (c) Accountability to Affected Populations;<sup>8</sup> and (d) commitments made by UNICEF at the World Humanitarian Summit, especially within the Grand Bargain.<sup>9</sup> In assessing performance, the evaluation will recognize that this list represents a mixture of well-established and new commitments by UNICEF.

### 1.3 Evaluation matrix and questions

Based on the analytical framework set out above, an evaluation matrix consisting of five headline evaluation questions (EQs) and 16 evaluation sub-questions was used to assess performance and to identify how good practice and innovations at the field level contributed to coverage and quality outcomes.

- **EQ1 – Outcomes:** To what extent is UNICEF UNICEF achieving coverage and quality in its humanitarian action, in an equitable

way; and what good practice, lessons and practical solutions can be identified to inform improvements across UNICEF's response?

- **EQ2 – Ways of achieving outcomes:** In what ways and how effectively has UNICEF influenced others to strengthen protection and to increase the quality and coverage of humanitarian action?
- **EQ3 – Ways of achieving outcomes:** What programme approaches and partnership strategies has UNICEF employed at the field level to gain principled access and improve coverage and quality, and with what success?
- **EQ4 – Ways of achieving outcomes:** To what extent is UNICEF's humanitarian response designed to be relevant and is adapted to ensure its ongoing relevance to evolving needs and priorities?
- **EQ5 – Inputs:** To what extent do UNICEF's human and financial resource management, and systems and procedures support an effective response in complex humanitarian situations?

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<sup>5</sup> <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.spheredproject.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, <http://www.ineesite.org/en/minimum-standards>.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF (2020), Accountability to Affected Populations: a handbook for UNICEF and partners, Geneva: EMOPS, June 2020.

<sup>9</sup> <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/working-group/documents-public/grand-bargain-shared-commitment-better-serve-people-need>.

The evaluation matrix is included in Annex 2 of this report and includes the evaluation questions and sub-questions, alongside indicators, and methods and tools for data collection and analysis.

## 1.4 Overview of methodology and data collection tools

A mixed-methods approach was used for data collection and analysis, as listed below.

### 1.4.1 Document and literature review

Over both phases of the evaluation, the team conducted a review of internal and external documentation relating to the coverage and quality of humanitarian assistance in Nigeria (see *Table 2* and Annex 4).



**TABLE 2**  
Summary of documents reviewed

Type of document	Description	Internal	External
<b>Documents cited in this report</b>	UNICEF reports, HNOs, HRPs, CERs	30	43
<b>Access-related</b>	Access strategies, reviews, analysis	3	5
<b>General strategy and analysis</b>	Context analysis, policy papers	7	9
<b>Policies and procedures</b>	Corporate, emergency, logistics and supply, finance	5	0
<b>Programme-related</b>	CP, WASH, education, health, nutrition	27	8
<b>Security and risk</b>	Security policies, risk management, programme criticality	3	2
<b>Situation reports</b>	UNICEF, OCHA, UNSG reports	36	14

## 1.4.2 Semi-structured key informant interviews

Semi-structured KIIs were conducted during both phases of the evaluation. Informants included country-level staff, United Nations agency staff, government partners, NGOs and donor representatives (see *Table 3* and Annex 3).

## 1.4.3 Community engagement and focus group discussions

Sex- and age-disaggregated FGDs were conducted with community members in three IDP camps around Maiduguri in September 2021 (see Table 4). In phase 1, FGDs were also

conducted with community members in two humanitarian hubs in north-east Nigeria (Gwoza and Ngala) and in Muna Garage IDP camp on the outskirts of Maiduguri. The purpose of these was to explore perceptions of the quality and coverage of UNICEF interventions.

## 1.4.4 Humanitarian coverage and quality assessment

During phase 1 of the evaluation, a coverage and quality analysis tool was developed to generate quantitative and qualitative data on UNICEF's performance in accessing those in greatest need of assistance. The tool harvested coverage and quality data from UNICEF's SitReps against the CCCs and

**TABLE 3**

Summary of key informant interviews conducted during the evaluation

Informant	Description	# in phase 1	# in phase 2	Total
<b>UNICEF, Abuja</b>	UNICEF staff based in the Abuja office	8	12	20
<b>UNICEF, Maiduguri</b>	UNICEF staff based in Maiduguri	25	28	53
<b>UNICEF implementing partners: NGOs</b>	Local, national and international UNICEF partners and third-party consultants in the BAY states	11	20	31
<b>UNICEF IPs: government</b>	Agencies and institutions supported by UNICEF to implement humanitarian interventions	0	6	6
<b>Other United Nations agencies</b>	United Nations agencies and NGOs working in Borno State	6	6	12
<b>Donors</b>	Donor representatives based in Abuja	3	5	8
<b>Total</b>		<b>53</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>130</b>

**TABLE 4**

Summary of community consultations during phase 1 of the evaluation

Location	Description	Male FGDs		Female FGDs	
		15-24 yrs	25 yrs+	15-24 yrs	25 yrs+
<b>Maiduguri, phase 2 (Teachers' Village, Custom House, Elmiskin Centre IDP camps)</b>	1 x adolescent women, 1 x adolescent men, 3 x older women, 3 x older men, 1 x community leaders	10	28	10	26
<b>Maiduguri, phase 1</b>	2 x older men, 2 x young men, 1 x women	0	10	10	10
<b>Gwoza</b>	1 x young men, 2 x older men	9	30	0	0
<b>Ngala</b>	1 x older men, 1 x older women, 1 x young women	0	10	10	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>46</b>

benchmarks. It was disseminated to section staff in Nigeria before the phase 1 and phase 2 country missions for validation and discussion. Each section was also asked multiple-choice questions on achieving coverage with equity, and on managing trade-offs between coverage and quality, while also asking respondents to identify key factors that enabled or inhibited coverage and quality.

The results of the self-assessment tool were discussed during interviews with sector staff and triangulated during interviews with partners and community members. The data

captured through the tool provided a platform to explore the different factors that enabled or inhibited the attainment of the standards.

#### **1.4.5 U-Report text-message poll among beneficiaries of UNICEF humanitarian assistance**

U-Report is a text-messaging platform and data collection mechanism developed by UNICEF. The U-Report system operated by UNICEF Nigeria has over 3.95 million registered users, one of the biggest U-Report instances worldwide.<sup>10</sup> Over 55,000 of the total

10 <https://nigeria.unicef.org/engagement/>

subscriber base indicated that they reside in the BAY states and are therefore potential beneficiaries of UNICEF's humanitarian response. Therefore, following a suggestion by the UNICEF EO in New York, the evaluation team worked with the EO and the NCO to prepare a U-Report survey to obtain direct feedback from beneficiaries on the interventions they had benefited from and the perceived timeliness and quality of these programmes.

Text messages inviting U-Reporters to participate in the poll were sent out starting on 27 May 2020. Since U-Report participants are self-registered, meaning their identities and demographic profiles cannot be confirmed, the survey started with screening questions to determine whether respondents identified as IDPs living in camps or in host communities, or as 'regular' host community members. Screening questions were also used to filter out responses from people who had not benefited from any humanitarian interventions by UNICEF. Out of the total 25,205 responses that were received from across the three conflict-affected states by 10 June 2020, a subset of 2,862 respondents indicated that they had benefited from UNICEF humanitarian programmes in at least one sector. Out of these, 44 per cent lived in Borno State and the rest were spread equally across Adamawa and Yobe States. Further, 33 per cent of respondents were female, 29 per cent were camp-based IDPs, and the remainder were either IDPs or permanent residents in host communities.

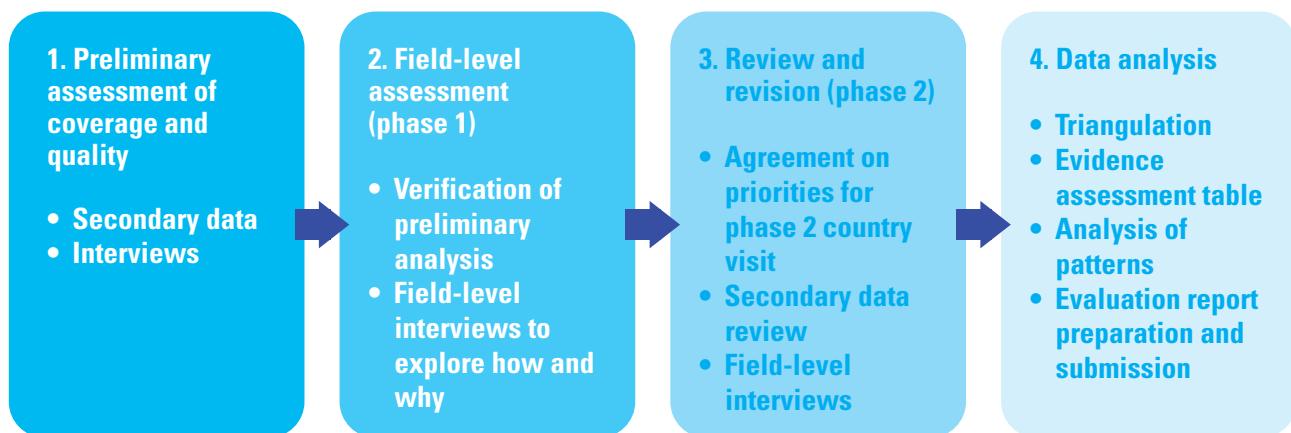
When the U-Report survey was commissioned in May 2020, the expectation was that the evaluation team would undertake the field mission in autumn 2020. This was eventually rendered impossible by the global Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, which led to a postponement of the mission to September 2021. Therefore, at the time of writing this report in autumn 2021, the survey data was over a year old. However, resources and staff capacity did not allow for a re-run of the survey in 2021. Nevertheless, the direct feedback from nearly 3,000 beneficiaries constitutes a valuable source of insights for this evaluation, as reported in section 3.2.3 of this report. A caveat applies, in that IDP and beneficiary status are self-reported and could not be independently verified by UNICEF or the evaluation team.

## 1.5 Data analysis and synthesis

The evaluation team used an inductive approach to data collection and analysis, and to assessing UNICEF's contribution to results. To achieve this, a three-step process was designed to systematically and transparently gather data on how and why UNICEF has been able to overcome challenges to deliver coverage and quality in its humanitarian assistance in a way that sought to minimize bias. This was complemented by the adoption of a pragmatic but systematic approach to analysing a substantial volume of qualitative and quantitative data and evidence (see *Figure 2*).

**FIGURE 2**

Four-step process for systematic evidence-gathering and analysis



An evidence assessment table was prepared that summarised key evidence against each of the five evaluation questions. These summaries were then reviewed to identify emerging issues, common themes and patterns. These formed the basis for the final evaluation report. The phase 1 Nigeria case study report was used as the basis for the updated evaluation report.

## 1.6 Ethics, confidentiality and quality assurance

### 1.6.1 Ethical considerations and confidentiality

This evaluation was undertaken in line with the relevant UNICEF and United Nations Evaluations Group (UNEG) guidance on evaluation ethics, specifically the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluations;<sup>11</sup> the UNEG

11 UNEG (2008), UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, March 2008.

Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the United Nations System, which commits signatories to independence, impartiality, proper disclosure of conflicts of interest, honesty and integrity, among other principles;<sup>12</sup> and the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis.<sup>13</sup>

The evaluation team recognized the importance of including the views of affected populations, including children. Therefore, FGDs composed of members of communities accessing UNICEF's humanitarian programmes were conducted in both phases of the evaluation. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was sought from all focus group participants. Separate meetings were organized with groups of adolescent boys and girls (aged 15–24 years). The guidance on Ethical Research Involving Children was strictly adhered to and permission and informed consent were obtained from the children and their parents or legal guardians.<sup>14</sup>

Initial interviews during the inception period of phase 1 highlighted sensitivities regarding information about access negotiations and humanitarian principles. It was agreed that phase 1 country case study reports would remain internal to mitigate risks for participants



and to enable the evaluation to gain access to relevant information, while balancing the requirement of the TOR for COs to receive written reports.

For the purposes of publishing the phase 2 report, it was agreed that analysis would be carefully decontextualized to avoid disclosure where it was considered to be sensitive and the CO would guide the evaluation team on any particular sensitivities. Interviews were undertaken based on agreement that details would not be attributed to a specific person or agency. A similar approach was taken for the community FGDs. Notes from the interviews and FGDs were kept digitally in secure online storage. Informed consent was obtained from all evaluation participants.

12 UNEG (2008), UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the United Nations System, March 2008.

13 UNICEF (2015), UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis, 1 April 2015.

14 Graham, A., Powell, M., Taylor, N., Anderson, D. & Fitzgerald, R. (2013), Ethical Research Involving Children. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research - Innocenti.

## 1.6.2 Quality assurance

**Itad's role:** The evaluation was carried out by an independent evaluation team from Itad. To ensure the quality of results, the evaluation team applied the UNICEF Global Evaluation Report Oversight System (GEROS). The evaluation report was peer reviewed by Itad's Evaluation Manager. The evaluation team integrated comments from the CO into the final report.

**UNICEF's role:** The evaluation was overseen by an Evaluation Manager from UNICEF's EO, with practical support and guidance provided by the NCO Evaluation Manager and Emergency Manager. A Reference Group formed of CO-based staff reviewed and commented on the evaluation report.

## 1.7 Limitations

The main limitations are listed below.

- **Lack of staff continuity:** It proved challenging to interview CO staff present for the entire period under evaluation due to high staff turnover. For this reason, many interviews with people in key positions were repeated during phase 2 of the evaluation. It was possible to partially mitigate this through the use of different sources of information, including document review and KIIs.
- **Breadth of the TOR:** The evaluation covers a wide range of topics, functions and processes within the work of the CO (see

Annex 1). During the inception phase, the evaluation team engaged with the CO to identify and prioritize key issues for more in-depth investigation and analysis. Some complex areas and topics that could justify dedicated evaluation exercises in and of themselves (for example, the conflict sensitivity of UNICEF's programmes) are only superficially covered in this evaluation, given the need for brevity within the evaluation report.

- **Partner consultation:** Time constraints also limited the extent to which the evaluation team could consult with UNICEF's partners during phase 2 of the evaluation. A small number of partners (both governmental and non-governmental) were identified as interlocutors for phase 2, and interviews with a wider set of partners from phase 1 of the evaluation were re-reviewed for their relevance.

## 1.8 Structure of the report

- **Section 1** of the report provides an introduction and background to the evaluation. It summarizes the purpose and objectives of the evaluation and outlines the scope.
- **Section 2** examines the context of the humanitarian response in Nigeria during the period under evaluation (2015–2020, with particular emphasis on the last three years). In so doing, it highlights and analyses the significant external factors that have played a part in enabling or constraining programme coverage and quality.

- **Section 3** identifies and analyses the range of coverage and quality outcomes or results that have been produced by UNICEF's humanitarian programme in the BAY states. It provides an indication of the coverage and quality achieved by each of the different programme sections. It includes a summary of how UNICEF has made decisions in its relative prioritization of coverage and quality.
- **Section 4** focuses on the relevance and effectiveness of different approaches and ways of achieving coverage and quality outcomes that UNICEF has adopted in its humanitarian programme. As such, it critically reviews how UNICEF's ways of working either enable or constrain the delivery of high-quality programmes at scale and within given timeframes.
- **Section 5** examines how UNICEF's organization and management of its people and funds have supported or hindered the relevance and effectiveness of UNICEF's coverage and quality in north-east Nigeria. It includes an assessment of human resources, resource mobilization, and policies and procedures.
- **Section 6** synthesizes the findings from the evaluation to draw conclusions on UNICEF's effectiveness in reaching those in greatest need with programmes that meet quality standards. Based on the conclusions, recommendations to strengthen coverage and quality are made.

To share more of the rich data underlying this report, it includes direct quotes from key informants who were interviewed for the evaluation and from UNICEF beneficiaries who engaged in FGDs during the evaluation field mission. Sources are not identified by name or designation to safeguard their anonymity; the type of respondent is indicated instead. All quotes follow the same formatting to allow the reader to distinguish them from the writing of the evaluators:

**'This is the verbatim quote from a key informant or focus group participant'.**

*- Type of respondent (e.g. UNICEF implementing partner)*



## 2. THE CONTEXT OF THE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN NORTH-EAST NIGERIA

This section examines the context of the humanitarian response in Nigeria. It highlights and analyses significant external factors that have enabled or constrained programme coverage and quality.

## 2.1 The humanitarian crisis in north-east Nigeria, 2015–2020

The conflict between non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and the Nigerian military dates back to mid-2009, although the Government did not declare a state of emergency in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe (BAY) states until 2013. The situation escalated rapidly in 2014 and 2015 as Boko Haram took control of large parts of the three north-east states, leading to the displacement of over half of the population of north-east Nigeria. By early 2015, it was estimated that there were more than 1 million IDPs in the city of Maiduguri alone, with numbers continuing to increase throughout the year as the conflict intensified (*see Table 5*).

In the early years of the humanitarian response, capacity was limited, with only a small number of NGOs and United Nations agencies having an existing presence in the north-east. The bombing of United Nations House in 2011, which killed 25 staff members, had a profound effect on the humanitarian community both in Nigeria and globally. Yet, the engagement of humanitarian agencies increased slowly over time, with 62 organizations operating in the areas by 2016,<sup>15</sup> growing to 73 by 2018,<sup>16</sup> and peaking at 117 by the end of 2019.<sup>17</sup> The

number of humanitarian actors engaged in the response stabilized at around 100 thereafter (102 agencies by the end of 2020, and 109 by mid-2021).<sup>18</sup>

After over a decade of armed conflict, the humanitarian crisis in Nigeria's north-east BAY states continues to severely affect an estimated 8.7 million people in need in 2021, subjecting them to new or continued displacement, impoverishment and threat of violence. This includes 1.7 million IDPs and 1 million people living in areas inaccessible to humanitarian actors.

Since mid-2019, the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) have moved to concentrating troops in 'super camps'. With most IDP camps located within the garrison towns, this NAF strategy has affected the security and protection of IDPs and other civilians outside these areas. It has also contributed to a highly volatile operating environment for humanitarian actors, particularly in Borno State, where all the major roads – including humanitarian supply routes – have become dangerous for civilians and specifically for aid workers, humanitarian cargo and assets. Humanitarian hubs and aid organizations' offices suffered regular attacks in 2020.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> United Nations (2015), 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan: Nigeria.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations (2017), 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan: Nigeria.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations (2019), North-East Humanitarian Operational Presence, October–December 2019.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations (2020), North-East Humanitarian Operational Presence, October–December 2020; United Nations (2021), North-East Humanitarian Operational Presence, March–June 2021.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations (2021), Humanitarian Needs Overview: Nigeria, February 2021.

Beginning in 2019, the humanitarian community pivoted to preparing a multi-year Humanitarian Response Strategy (HRS), with the first one covering the period 2019–2021, in addition to annual response plans.<sup>20</sup> This follows the recognition that north-east Nigeria is now in complex and protracted crisis, with both acute and chronic needs, and requiring a more strategic approach and holistic response by international and local actors. The HRS provides the framework for planning and coordinating the delivery of humanitarian assistance that can also catalyze early recovery and long-term development. The strategy facilitates increased engagement and synergies between humanitarian and development programmes to address the structural drivers of the crisis. It is aligned to support the recognized capacity of the Nigerian Government to own and lead the response and development efforts.

The Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development was newly established in 2019 by the Government of Nigeria to enhance its leadership and coordination of humanitarian assistance. The mandate of the ministry is to provide increased visibility to government plans, activities and financial commitments to allow international organizations to better support those in

need and to avoid duplication. In addition, the new ministry is tasked with overseeing the scaling up and better streamlining of the Government's humanitarian response through the strengthening of internal coordination among the many government entities involved. However, nearly two years since its establishment, the extent to which the ministry has played a constructive role in strengthening coordination and the Government's own humanitarian interventions remains unclear. The 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) presents a sobering stock-take in stating that the ministry 'continues to grapple with operationalization of systems and frameworks underpinning its mandate, inclusive of those agreed with the international community'.<sup>21</sup>

The global Covid-19 pandemic reached Nigeria in February 2020. To date, Nigeria has registered over 200,000 confirmed cases of the disease. The BAY states have also recorded Covid-19 cases, including in IDP camps. The pandemic has deepened humanitarian needs and complicated the response in the north-east, further impacting weak basic service infrastructure.

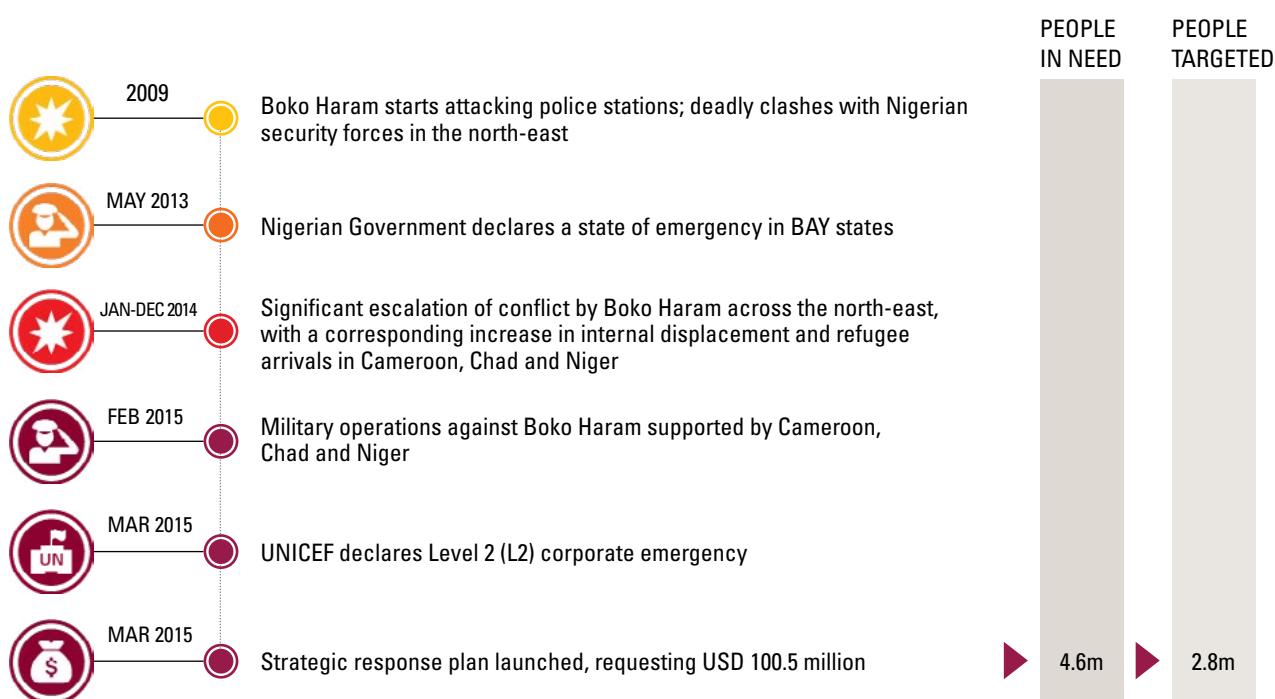
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20 United Nations (2018), Humanitarian Response Strategy: Nigeria, January 2019–December 2021, published December 2018.

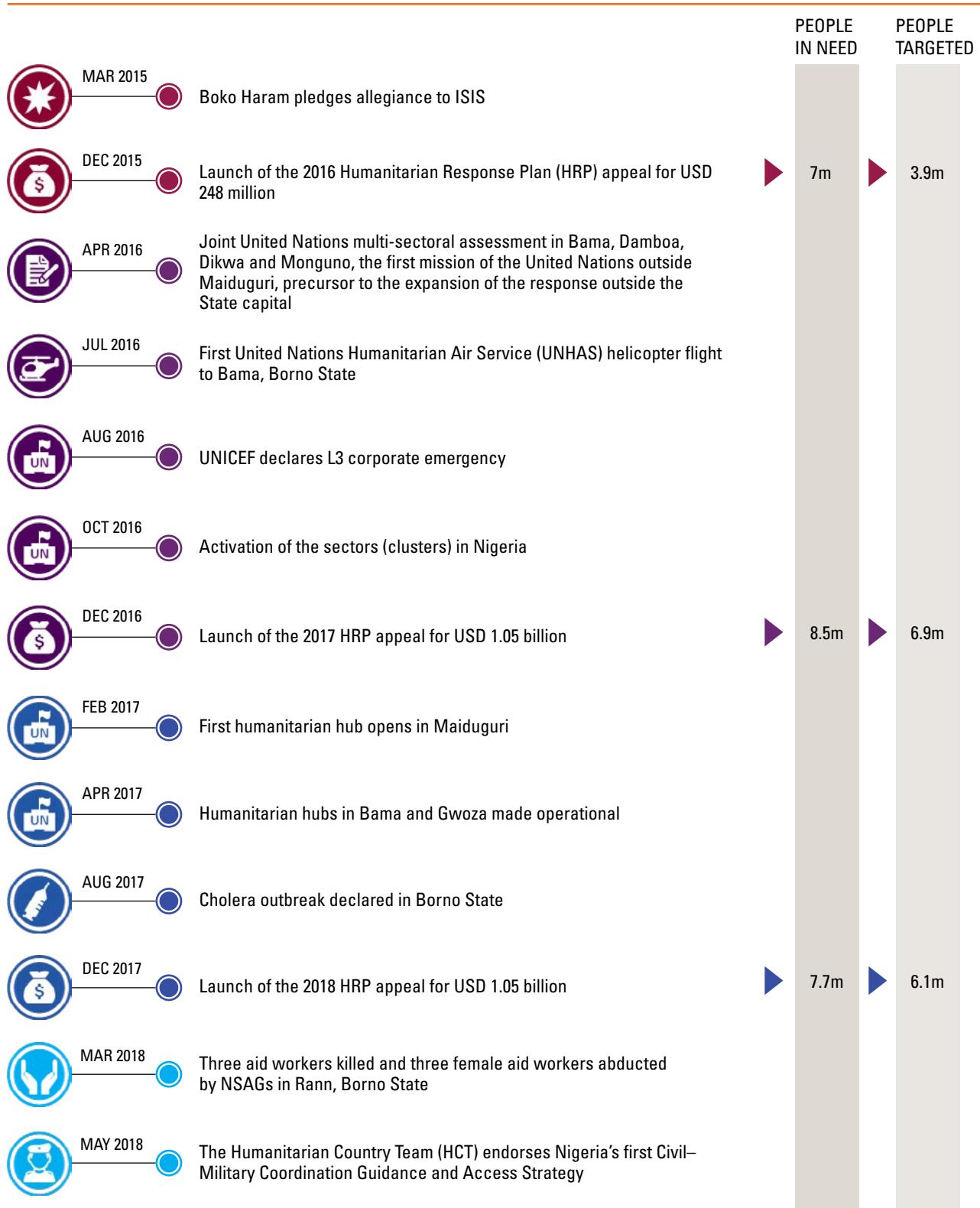
21 United Nations (2021), Humanitarian Response Plan, issued February 2021.

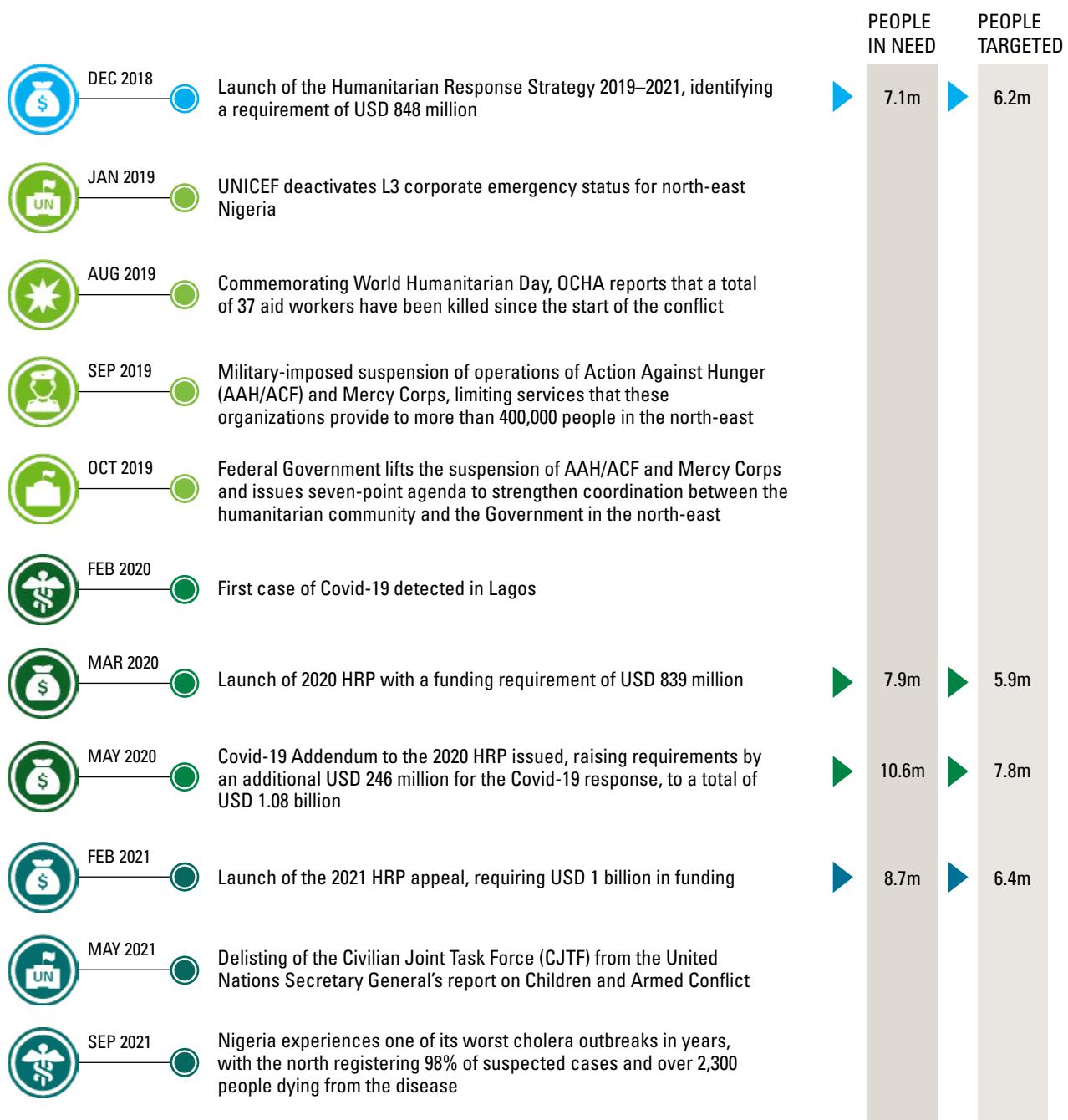
**'During the Covid-19 lockdown when there was restriction of movement, we needed a pass [from the Government] to get to the community, but only few select organizations were granted community passes. Some organizations who got the pass started to exploit the situation by requesting that we hire their vehicles with a pass to be able to access the communities where we needed to intervene.'** - UNICEF implementing partner (Nigerian NGO)

Moreover, the Nigerian economy has suffered from the fall in global oil prices and from measures to curtail the spread of the virus. The consequent impairment of livelihoods has led to loss of income and purchasing power, with acute effects on the already vulnerable and food insecure. Operationally, Covid-19 measures to keep humanitarian staff and beneficiaries safe consume time and resources.

**TABLE 5**Timeline of key humanitarian, political and security-related events<sup>22</sup>

22 Dates, events and numbers of IDPs are taken from the United Nations Strategic Response Plan (SRP) and Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).





## **2.2 An overview of external factors affecting humanitarian coverage and quality**

Several contextual factors have influenced and continue to influence the coverage and quality of UNICEF's humanitarian response in north-east Nigeria. While the conflict began in 2009, and the humanitarian response started gaining momentum from 2016 onwards, it is important to emphasize that many of the contextual factors pre-date the conflict. These factors are not specific to UNICEF's response, but affect the ability of the national and international humanitarian system to deliver effective assistance, and therefore provide important context for the findings of the evaluation.

### **2.2.1 Long-term underdevelopment as an underlying cause of the conflict**

Prior to the start of the open conflict in 2009, north-east Nigeria was already plagued with high levels of poverty, inequalities (including gender), underdevelopment, unemployment, poor governance, weak justice systems and ecological degradation.<sup>23</sup> The latest data (2018) indicates that 40 per cent of Nigerians – over 83 million people at the time – live below the poverty line.<sup>24</sup> Compared to other areas in

Nigeria, the north-east has historically seen few development and investment initiatives, including in education and health.<sup>25</sup> Access to education has been historically low, with more than one-third of children in BAY states out of school. Of those who attend school, 72 per cent are unable to read upon completion of sixth grade.<sup>26</sup>

Long-term marginalization has perpetuated cycles of deprivation and further eroded social and economic structures: at the end of 2020, Nigeria's national unemployment rate stood at 33 per cent, while youth unemployment (people aged 15–24, just entering the labour market following education) registered a staggering 53 per cent. The three north-east BAY states ranked among those with the highest unemployment rates in Nigeria: 55 per cent in Adamawa, 53 per cent in Yobe and 43 per cent in Borno State. There is recognition that the radicalization of NSAGs stems from these deep-rooted issues of political marginalization and socio-economic grievances.

The BAY states' limitations on human and financial capital help to explain why the capacity of public administration and services was, and continues to be, overwhelmed by the humanitarian needs. It also goes some

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23 United Nations (2018), Humanitarian Response Strategy: Nigeria, January 2019–December 2021, published December 2018.

24 World Bank data portal, Nigeria: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/nigeria>

25 World Bank (2014), Nigeria Country Partnership Strategy 2014–2017.

26 United Nations (2018), Humanitarian Response Strategy: Nigeria, January 2019–December 2021, published December 2018.

way towards explaining the challenges that international humanitarian actors have found in forging effective partnerships with government departments that have long suffered capacity gaps. These dynamics underscore the importance of linking humanitarian, development and peace initiatives to achieve results towards resilience.

### **2.2.2 NSAG are uninterested in engaging with humanitarian actors, and target people and assets**

Unlike in other country contexts, the Nigerian Government forbids humanitarian organizations or anyone else to engage with other parties to the conflict, be it for negotiating for humanitarian access or otherwise. In addition, based on the Terrorism Prevention Amendment Act 2013, which criminalizes engagement with groups the Government lists as terrorist, the military has restricted aid organizations from operating outside government-controlled areas.

Even if the Government's policy were more permissive, all available evidence and reporting suggest that the NSAGs have been uninterested in talking to humanitarian organizations. On the contrary, armed groups have specifically targeted assets and personnel of aid organizations. In 2020, five aid workers were killed and more abducted. In the first half

of 2021, humanitarian hubs and convoys in and around north-east garrison towns such as Damasak, Ngala and Dikwa have been attacked repeatedly. The offices of partner NGOs, their vehicles, equipment and even facilities providing humanitarian services, such as a nutrition stabilization centre, were destroyed. It was reported that some NSAGs had conducted house-to-house searches, reportedly looking for civilians identified as aid workers.<sup>27</sup>

The hostility of NSAGs towards humanitarian actors, their unwillingness to engage in dialogue and the Government's outright ban on any activity in this direction have left approximately 1 million people in need without humanitarian assistance in inaccessible areas. While UNICEF and others have been able to forge practical agreements at different levels to gain humanitarian access to people in need in complex crisis contexts such as Afghanistan and Syria, this has not been possible in north-east Nigeria.

### **2.2.3 A strong state with limited will to acknowledge the severity of the crisis and needs**

Both prior to and after the election of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, the Nigerian Government did not seem to want to recognize the severity of the displacement crisis in the

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<sup>27</sup> United Nations (2021), Northeast Nigeria violence forces 65,000 to flee, humanitarians targeted by armed groups, United Nations News, 14 April 2021.

north-east. Nigeria had been free of any major complex humanitarian crises stemming from conflict since the Biafra war in the 1960s. Prior to 2015, the narrative around the north-east tended to be framed around the security and counter-terrorism aspects of the crisis, rather than the humanitarian needs of the conflict-affected population.

It is symptomatic that, in mid-2020, the Borno State Government issued a 25-Year Development Framework & 10-Year Strategic Transformation Plan that does not acknowledge the vast humanitarian needs, despite Borno State being the epicentre of armed conflict and displacement in the north-east. Instead, the document calls for the voluntary resettlement of IDPs into their local government areas (LGAs) of origin, a practice that has been 'promoted' by the Borno State Government since 2020, in many cases without the active engagement of humanitarian organizations. In practice, this means that humanitarian actors lose access to IDPs who are moved to inaccessible LGAs due to insecurity and NSAG activity.<sup>28</sup> One national NGO implementing partner who was interviewed for this evaluation described the consequences:

**'Returning IDPs are frequently confronted with challenges in gaining full access to return areas because of insecurity. Most then opt to either settle in new makeshift camps in the safest towns closest to their original places of residence, or they try to return back to their former IDP encampments, which have been closed.'** - UNICEF implementing partner (Nigerian NGO)

The desire to appear in control and the Government's portrayal of the situation as a domestic security matter, to be dealt with by the military, have had significant implications for humanitarian access, as discussed below, and for the humanitarian space in which local and international actors can engage more broadly.<sup>29</sup>

Even though the federal Government appears to have signalled some political will to address the humanitarian crisis, as witnessed by the establishment of the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development in 2019, and the North-East Development Commission in 2017, it is still

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<sup>28</sup> United Nations (2021), Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021, published February 2021.

<sup>29</sup> Roiron, V. (2017) A Square Peg in a Round Hole: The Politics of Disaster Management in North-East Nigeria, in *Humanitarian Exchange*, Issue 70, October 2017, Humanitarian Practice Network/Overseas Development Institute. McIreavy, P & Schopp, J. (2017) A collective shame: the response to the humanitarian crisis in north-east Nigeria, in *Humanitarian Exchange*, Issue 70, October 2017, Humanitarian Practice Network/Overseas Development Institute.



unclear whether and to what extent this has made a difference in driving the Government's humanitarian and development interventions in BAY states.

#### **2.2.4 The pre-eminence of development, and difficulties in bringing in and maintaining a humanitarian cadre**

Prior to the conflict in Nigeria's north-east, international assistance was largely focused on development. The mix of long-term presence and programmes resulted in a development community that had close relations with the federal and state governments. Despite widespread underdevelopment, lack of infrastructure and extreme poverty of the northern states, only a few programmes were focused on these areas, limiting the presence and engagement of development actors in this region. This history meant that the international community was poorly placed to acknowledge or respond

to the humanitarian crisis when it first emerged. The lack of significant humanitarian programming in Nigeria meant that there was limited staff capacity and a lack of meaningful preparedness-planning in place. Over time, and especially since 2017, UNICEF and other humanitarian actors have significantly increased the staff and financial capacity of their response, including with surge deployments. However, as the crisis in the north-east has become protracted and a sustainable resolution of the conflict is nowhere in sight, it is important to note that interviewees during the September 2021 country mission sensed that the profiles of UNICEF staff in BAY states had begun to change. An increasing number of staff members were perceived to have mostly 'development profiles' and only limited experience in managing large-scale humanitarian interventions, despite the continuing high needs.



Figure 3 provides an overview of UNICEF's coverage by section over the period of the evaluation (2018–2020). The data was compiled by the evaluation team using the 'coverage and quality analysis tool' in MS Excel and reviewed by UNICEF sections. The tool uses data from the HRP and UNICEF's SitReps to show the number of people in need of assistance by section and CCC commitments, together with UNICEF data on the number of people that UNICEF targeted and those it reached with assistance. A system of colour coding has been used to indicate UNICEF's percentage coverage

against target (the darker the colour, the higher the percentage). Funding is often cited as a key factor that influences both coverage and quality, and therefore funding information was extracted from the SitReps to indicate the percentage of required funding that each section received in each of the three years. In the coverage and quality analysis tool, UNICEF staff were also asked a series of qualitative questions to rate their achievements and share reflections on determinants of coverage and quality. These insights have informed the evaluation findings presented in section 3.



### 3 . COVERAGE AND QUALITY OUTCOMES

This section identifies and analyses the range of coverage and quality outcomes or results that have been produced by UNICEF's humanitarian programme in BAY states. It will seek to look across the different programme sections to build an overall picture of coverage and quality. It will include a summary of how UNICEF has made decisions in its relative prioritization of coverage and quality.

## KEY MESSAGES

- UNICEF programmes in north-east Nigeria have been largely successful in meeting their targets, which provides little indication of actual performance vis-à-vis humanitarian needs because coverage is not reported against the number of people in need.
- Risk is not consistently factored into targeting processes. Therefore, UNICEF sector targets vary widely from year to year and do not reflect possible shortfalls in operational resources or capacity, or contextual obstacles to delivery. These include insecurity, funding and implementing partner capacity, but also the demands placed on humanitarian actors by the civilian and military authorities, some of which are incompatible with humanitarian principles.
- The quality of UNICEF programmes in north-east Nigeria is viewed favourably by beneficiaries, despite severe contextual obstacles to adhering consistently to formal quality standards. The proportion of nearly 2,900 survey respondents who agreed that UNICEF's programmes were delivered on time, were of high quality and met people's needs was consistently high, between 77 per cent and 87 per cent for each programme section.
- Approaches to quality among UNICEF staff were generally pragmatic and incremental rather than standards based. Implicit in this view is the notion that quality is not finite and should always be improved upon when conditions allow. Section staff generally had a good sense of where room for improvement existed in their programmes and how to prioritize measures to strengthen quality on a responsive and opportunistic basis.
- UNICEF Nigeria does not consolidate, aggregate or visualize information on the coverage of its humanitarian response or indicators of quality across programme sections. Digital tools are suitable and available for use.

### 3.1 Humanitarian coverage

#### 3.1.1 Achievements against targets

**Over the past three years, UNICEF programmes in north-east Nigeria have been largely successful in meeting their targets. However, results vary sharply from year to year and across programmes. In itself, programme coverage relative to**

**targets provides little indication of actual performance vis-à-vis humanitarian needs.**

In terms of coverage against annual targets, sector programmes have generally performed well in the three years covered by phase 2 of this evaluation (2018–2020).<sup>30</sup> On average, across the country programme's five sectors, 90 per cent of all beneficiaries targeted were reached with assistance during the three years

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<sup>30</sup> The figures quoted in this section are based on the data collected using the coverage and quality analysis tool (see Figure 3). These figures are either quoted directly, or averaged across programme sectors or implementation years.

under review. Coverage against targets varies sharply from year to year, with 68 per cent reached in 2018, and targets exceeded the following year, with 116 per cent reached. In 2020, total country programme coverage stood on average at 84 per cent of that year's targets.

Coverage also varied by programme sector, with the health sector registering an average of 125 per cent coverage over targets in the three years under review. Education and child protection registered 56 per cent and 72 per cent respectively during the same period, while WASH and nutrition achieved 89 per cent and 97 per cent coverage respectively.

An overall observation on the number of people reached vs. those targeted across all years is the seeming disconnect between the rate of achievement and the proportion of required funding received. Some sections reported coverage rates of 150 per cent and more in years when they were only resourced for 20–40 per cent. UNICEF's overachievements stand in contrast to OCHA's humanitarian dashboard, which reported year-end results for people reached vs. targeted between 50 per cent and 80 per cent for most sectors and years. The inter-agency underperformance suggests that UNICEF's high coverage rates in some sectors are the result of under-targeting, among other factors. If UNICEF were to take on a greater share of the total sector target and thereby try to close the coverage gap, its own coverage results would likely decrease proportionately.

It is emphasized that UNICEF's average results are against targets that were reviewed and modified annually on the basis of a range of variables other than the level of assessed humanitarian needs. Notable among these were changes and fluctuations in the CO's programme resources, number of partners and level of access to vulnerable groups. In themselves, therefore, these results are not reflective of programme performance. Rather, they may be a better reflection of programme capacity, and should be interpreted in the light of their operational context.

In many cases, target adjustments in a given year have caused relative coverage to either rise or drop, even as it remained constant or even showed an inverse trend in absolute terms. For example, this was the case in the nutrition sector, where the target for children under five years admitted to therapeutic care was raised almost threefold in 2020. Although coverage in absolute terms almost doubled during that period, coverage against the new target showed a moderate decline. Conversely, in the WASH sector, a reduction in the target for access to safe water in 2019 strongly contributed to an increase that year in coverage against this measure.

Notwithstanding this caveat, coverage figures do provide a sense of the scale of UNICEF programmes in north-east Nigeria. The following is a summary of coverage achieved by sector between 2018 and 2020:



## Nutrition

Over the three years under review (2018–2020), the number of women and children accessing appropriate infant and young child feeding (IYCF) services in affected areas rose steadily in absolute terms, from 285,450 to 389,400.<sup>31</sup> Owing to the fact that coverage targets were lowered consecutively during the same period, these targets were exceeded by a wide margin in 2019 and 2020.

In 2018, the total number of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) cases admitted to therapeutic care stood at 224,020. It declined to 139,380 the following year, then rose sharply in 2020 to 272,800. Despite this increase in

absolute terms, coverage in 2020 did not meet the target, which almost trebled that year to 455,620.

During the period under review, the number of under-five children receiving micronutrient powder showed a steady decline in absolute terms, from 244,100 to 128,940. Relative to annual targets, however, coverage remained broadly stable.

## WASH

The number of people given access to safe water<sup>32</sup> stood at 233,970 in 2018. Coverage in absolute terms dropped to 169,390 the following year, then increased sharply to

<sup>31</sup> Figures are rounded to the nearest tenth.

<sup>32</sup> From 2019 onward, the indicator was modified to the ‘number of people gaining access to adequate safe water facilities and services as per sector’s standard through new construction and rehabilitation of water systems’.

316,760 in 2020. The target for this indicator was set excessively high in 2018, when it stood at 1,050,000 and caused relative coverage to amount to no more than at 22 per cent. The target was then lowered significantly the following year, to 149,800, then adjusted 250,000 in 2020. These adjustments caused coverage relative to annual targets to increase sharply in 2019 and 2020, to 113 per cent and 126 per cent respectively.

During the same period, annual targets for access to improved sanitation remained broadly stable, with a minor increase in 2019, from 250,000 to 300,000. Coverage in absolute terms increased sharply over this period, from 94,150 to an impressive 342,100. Coverage against targets rose commensurately, from 38 per cent in 2018 to 114 per cent in 2020.

## **Health**

In 2018, the number of children vaccinated against measles totalled 310,130. This number peaked to 1,395,10 the following year, then declined sharply in 2020 to 277,050. Over the period under review, the target for this indicator showed an inverse trend. It was set at 2,025,050 in 2018, then lowered the following year to 720,230; in 2020, the target was adjusted upward to 1,186,000. This explains sharp fluctuations in coverage relative to annual targets, from 15 per cent in 2018 to a peak of 193 per cent in 2019, followed by a sharp drop to 23 per cent in 2020.



In 2018, the number of people reached with emergency primary healthcare services stood at 3,321,770. It increased the following year to 3,969,670, then declined slightly to 2,627,540 in 2020. Again, annual targets showed an inverse trend, dropping from 2,340,000 in 2018 to 1,140,000 in 2019, and rising again in 2020 to 3,713,100. As a result, coverage against target peaked from 142 per cent in 2018 to 348 per cent the following year, then dropped sharply to 70 per cent in 2020.

## ***Education***

The number of children given access to school or temporary learning facilities increased at a rapid and steady pace over the three years under review, starting at 55,990 in 2019 and reaching 587,820 in 2020. This trend does not reflect annual targets, which were far above coverage actually achieved in 2018 and 2019, and were then adjusted downward to a level significantly below coverage achieved in 2020.

For the number of children attending education in a classroom, and those reached with learning materials, coverage approximately doubled from 2018 to 2019, then declined by about one-third and slightly more than one-half respectively. At its peak in 2019, coverage in absolute terms was 821,630 children reached by learning materials, and 307,480 attending education in a classroom. That year, coverage relative to targets for these two indicators was 78 per cent and 96 per cent respectively.

## ***Child protection***

Over the three years under review, the number of unaccompanied and separated children supported by UNICEF declined in absolute terms. The same is true of children who received psychosocial support (PSS). For the first group, peak coverage was 11,230 children assisted in 2018; for the second, peak

coverage was achieved in 2019 with 358, 960 children receiving PSS. For both these groups, coverage dropped sharply in 2020, to 1,490 and 146,270 respectively. Given downward adjustments in target levels in 2019, coverage relative to target does not reflect this decline. At its peak, coverage against targets for these two groups was 107 per cent and 143 per cent respectively.

In absolute terms, the number of children receiving mine education also dropped, from 211,420 in 2018 to 10,340 in 2019; none received mine education in 2020. At its highest in 2020, coverage against target was 120 per cent.

It is important to highlight that the global pandemic has affected all humanitarian actors and complicated the response since early 2020. Movement restrictions imposed by the Government led to temporary disruptions in programmes in mid-2020. UNICEF has taken a pragmatic approach of 'Covid-proofing' its entire humanitarian and development portfolio instead of creating a separate work stream that would have isolated the Covid-19 response from programmatic interventions. This appears to have been successful. UNICEF and partners who spoke on the issue noted the temporary disruptions, but overall did not raise any major breaks in humanitarian coverage that would have been attributable to the pandemic.

### **3.1.2 Needs assessments as a basis for determining coverage targets**

**The collective way in which needs are assessed affects how UNICEF sets the scope of its programme coverage. This must be considered when attributing results in programming and target-setting. Inter-agency assessments, and UNICEF's strong role as cluster lead, have so far provided a strong foundation for UNICEF programming.**

As for all responses in protracted emergencies, UNICEF Nigeria's decisions on the scope of its coverage are taken in the broader context of the annual response-wide HRP planning cycle. The HRP process is mediated through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) inter-agency coordination system, which involves a broad range of participants other than UNICEF. The evaluation found that the collective nature of HRP planning and decision-making, and the system of governance that underpins the UN-wide humanitarian response, have an indirect but profound impact on the way in which the scope of UNICEF programme coverage in Nigeria is ultimately set. These effects are hard to attribute in detail, given the range and complexity of causal pathways that lead to them. Nonetheless, they should be acknowledged in any attempt to assess UNICEF's programme coverage in north-east Nigeria.

There are essentially two broad areas in which inputs and processes external to UNICEF contribute to setting the scope of its programme coverage. The first relates to data collection, needs assessments and target-setting. The second touches on policy-making and stakeholder engagement, most notably with regard to setting the parameters of the UN's relationships with governmental and military authorities. This latter area is examined in more detail in sections 3.1.6 and 4.1 below; the rest of the current section focuses on data collection and assessments.

Respondents in the evaluation were unanimous in saying that significant progress had been made in the past three years in assessing humanitarian needs in Nigeria. In large part, they attributed this to the early roll-out of the UN-wide response of the Joint Inter-agency Assessment Framework (JIAF), which was piloted in Nigeria in 2017 and 2018.<sup>33</sup> The JIAF provides a clear outline for needs assessments and prescribes a set of detailed processes for the response-wide collection and analysis of relevant data. UNICEF's participation in these processes is primarily in its capacity as cluster lead in nutrition and WASH, co-lead in education, and as sub-cluster lead in child protection.

UNICEF's leadership across these sectors means that it plays a predominant role in the

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<sup>33</sup> Okular Analytics (2018), Basic Needs Assessment Guidance and Toolbox, Part 1: Background and Concepts.

HRP process and in the needs assessments that precede it. It is telling of UNICEF's centrality in the process that three of the six indicators used to forecast additional people in need in the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview were taken from sectors over which it has leadership. Nonetheless, UNICEF's role in the assessment and targeting process is not exclusive. Other actors contribute substantively to assessment data, and to decisions on how this data should inform the HRP. Key among these is the Assessment and Analysis Working Group (AAWG), which is composed of multiple United Nations and other actors, including UNICEF, and is chaired by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). AAWG's role is to oversee system-wide data collection, to ensure that it complies with methodology prescribed by the JIAF and, where needed, to adapt this methodology to the Nigerian context.

From an evaluative point of view, UNICEF's shared responsibility in planning and conducting assessments that inform decisions on the coverage of its programmes raises questions of attribution. One should note that alongside UNICEF, a range of other actors are collectively accountable for ensuring that the most acute humanitarian needs are appropriately captured in the scope of its coverage, and in the rationale for prioritization that underpins it. The outcome

of this work feeds directly into UNICEF's programming.

The quality of collective assessment work done in each of the three annual planning cycles examined was demonstrably well above average. In Nigeria, as in most United Nations responses, much of the information used in programme planning is drawn from multi-sector needs assessments (MSNAs), which are coordinated by OCHA. Respondents in the evaluation were in general agreement as to the high quality of MSNAs conducted in Nigeria in the past three years. This favourable opinion is echoed in two reviews of MSNAs carried out in 2018 and 2020 by ECHO<sup>34</sup> and USAID<sup>35</sup> respectively. The USAID review, in particular, gives high scores to MSNAs conducted in Nigeria in the period 2018–2020, and describes the latest of these as a model of 'best practice'.<sup>36</sup> Some of the raw data that fed into these assessments originated in sectors in which UNICEF has contributed substantially to building the required capabilities. This is the case, for example, with Sentinel site sampling and community nutrition screening, used in the nutrition sector to generate timely data on the nutrition status of vulnerable groups.

34 Sorensen, C. (2019), Review of 2018 MSNAs, ECHO, 2018.

35 Okular Analytics (2021), Technical Review of 2020 MSNAs in Protracted Crises.

36 Ibid.

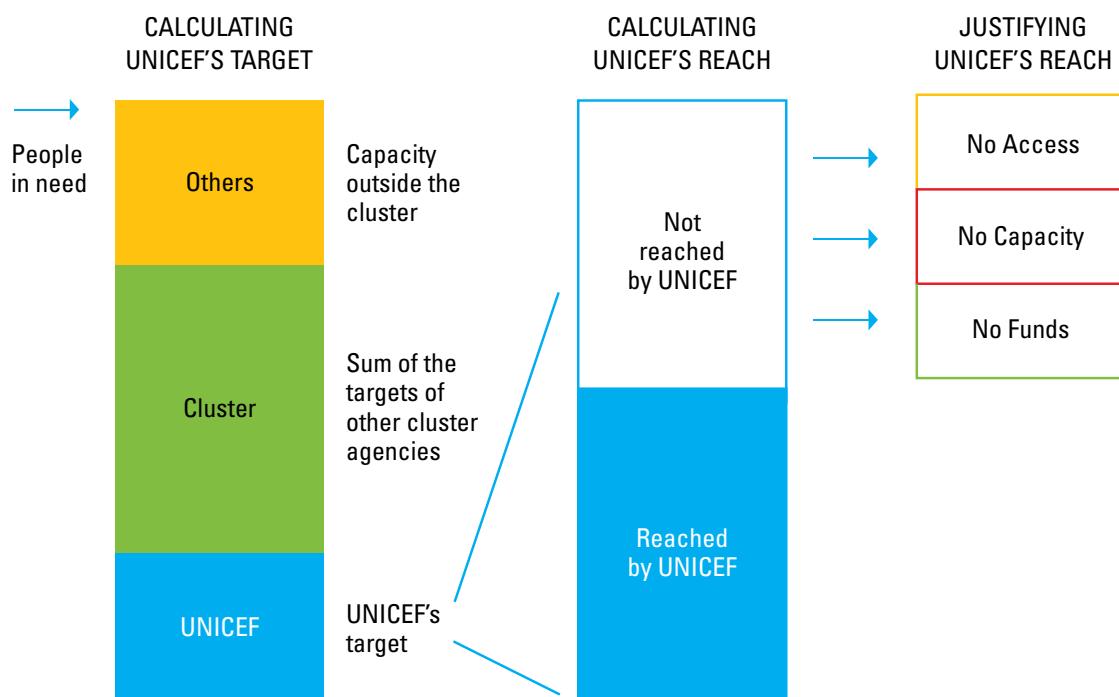
### 3.1.3 UNICEF's approach to setting targets

**There is a lack of uniformity in approaches to setting sector targets. While considerable progress has been made in assessing needs, no standard approach exists to balancing needs, responsibilities and opportunities, and to factoring risk into targeting processes. As a result, sector targets are set in a way that does not consistently reflect possible shortfalls in operational resources or capacity, or contextual obstacles to delivery.**

A striking feature of annual targets across the five UNICEF programme sectors examined is how widely they vary from year to year. Overall, these variations are generally more pronounced than variations in the number of people in need. Given the time constraints, the evaluation team could not investigate these variations in depth. Nonetheless, the evidence collected does allow it to conclude that fluctuations in humanitarian need alone cannot explain them satisfactorily. At least in part, these variations in targets are corrective, and are due to persistent difficulties in forecasting

**FIGURE 4**

Understanding the meaning of 'targets met' in relation to the number of people in need and UNICEF's role in the cluster system



conditions and capacity for programme delivery from one year to the next.

When questioned on the rationale for target-setting, UNICEF and other respondents acknowledged a lack of uniformity in approaches used. They described a process in which targeting essentially aims to balance estimations of need against a forecast of the operational capacity that can realistically be mustered to address them. However, it remains extremely difficult to forecast the volume and geographical spread of humanitarian needs at the outset of an annual planning cycle. This is due in large part to the fluidity of the situation on the ground. Although they can be mitigated, gaps and inconsistencies in the data collected remain inherent to the assessment process. Another important factor, analysed in phase 1 of this evaluation<sup>37</sup> and also found here, is that no standard approach exists to setting programme targets in sectors in which UNICEF has leadership.

The setting of sector targets is based as much on assessed needs as on ad hoc operational considerations. For example, target decisions are heavily influenced by the presence of cluster members on the ground, as reflected in 5Ws,<sup>38</sup>

and their capacity to take on a share of assessed needs. In the case of MSNAs conducted for the 2021 planning cycle, data collected served to inform sector-specific severity ratings and helped to determine the number of people targeted by a given sector. After this was done, the task remained to allocate sector caseloads among cluster members in each sector led by UNICEF. By default, targets for UNICEF's own programmes are often set with the aim of covering the balance of these needs. Figure 4 illustrates the cascade of needs, targets and number of people reached and puts UNICEF's contribution into the cluster perspective.<sup>39</sup>

### **3.1.4 Limited use of risk and contextual information to guide coverage objectives**

**The evaluation found limited evidence of UNICEF systematically appraising the risks related to unforeseen changes in need, situational context, funding or partner capacity. Instead, the widely varying sector targets are the result of an ad hoc and intuitive approach of adapting to emerging issues. Where cluster members are unable to honour their commitments, UNICEF aims to extend its coverage beyond its original**

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37 UNICEF Evaluation Office (2019), Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies: Volume One, Main Evaluation Report, January 2019.

38 The 5W data process is designed to provide essential information regarding which organizations (Who) are carrying out which activities (What), in which locations (Where), in which period (When), and for which beneficiaries (Whom).

39 Source for Figure 4: UNICEF Evaluation Office (2019), Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies: Volume One, Main Evaluation Report, January 2019, p.53.

**targets using its existing partners, to fill the gap on a Provider of Last Resort (PoLR) basis. However, its local implementing partners, often on site and best placed to respond to sudden-onset events, perceive the rigidity of UNICEF's partnership agreements as an obstacle to delivering an agile response – a missed opportunity for expanding coverage.**

The quality of response-wide assessments in recent years has helped UNICEF to capture the most acutely vulnerable groups in its programme targets. However, it emerged during interviews that routine risk analysis has not consistently informed the process of setting programme targets. Rather, there is evidence that participants in the process have tended to appraise risk in an ad hoc, intuitive and often approximative manner. As a result, targets do not consistently reflect risk linked to shortfalls in resource mobilization or capacity deployment, or to contextual obstacles in programme delivery.

Unforeseen events and unpredictability in the funding of cluster members have made it difficult to plan sector-wide coverage reliably. The process typically involved cluster members making offers to take on a share of the target caseload, based on their respective capacities

at the time of planning. UNICEF then took on the remaining balance, which usually amounted to 60–70 per cent of the total, according to interviewees.

The approximative nature of the exercise added to the inherent uncertainty of the target-setting process: where cluster members are unable to honour their commitments, UNICEF aims to extend its coverage beyond its original targets, to fill the gap on a PoLR basis.<sup>40</sup> UNICEF staff understood the PoLR role broadly in line with IASC operational guidance,<sup>41</sup> as the commitment of cluster leads to do their utmost to ensure an adequate and appropriate response. For UNICEF, the gaps in coverage that can result from shortfalls in cluster resources are an added hurdle in preparing for and responding to relatively localized emergencies, such as the successive population influxes that took place into Bama town between May and August 2021.

Given security and access constraints, UNICEF's local on-site implementing partners are often the first to respond to sudden-onset events, which have regularly occurred over the past three years. In interviews, multiple IPs stated that the resources they had received from UNICEF were too rigidly target based,

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40 Funding shortfalls are not the only reasons for cluster members' inability to maintain coverage. In September 2019, Action Against Hunger and Mercy Corps were ordered by the Nigerian Armed Forces to close a number of their field offices, pending an investigation into charges that they had abetted the insurgency. In that instance, too, UNICEF filled the gap as provider of last resort.

41 IASC (2008), Operational guidance on the concept of 'provider of last resort'.

and gave them no latitude to address additional needs resulting from these events. The process of reassigning budgets or securing new funding was unwieldy, according to these sources, and did not allow for the rapid responses that these events required. Two interviewees stated that, as a last resort, they had engaged in an ad hoc process of consultation with other national NGOs active in their area, to agree on a way of allocating the excess caseload that their UNICEF budget could not accommodate.

**'Project targets and geographical locations are fixed under the UNICEF grant and there is no room for contingency funds for situations where there is an increase in target groups (...). When we have an increase in our target groups, we talk to other local and international partners (...) to help out and cover emergency needs while we engage UNICEF for additional support.' - *UNICEF implementing partner***



Among the key predictors of a programme's capacity to deliver, insecurity and funding were cited by respondents as the most critical. As noted above, access in north-east Nigeria is heavily constrained. In Borno State, 22 of the 26 LGAs are partly or entirely inaccessible.<sup>42</sup> Problematically in terms of target-setting, security conditions are also fluid and unpredictable, as shown by the disruptions caused to relief operations by multiple security incidents, including attacks on humanitarian assets in Ngala and Dikwa in 2020 and 2021. The influence of security and risk management is discussed in more detail in section 4.2.

### 3.1.5 Other determinants of UNICEF's ability to meet targets

**Insecurity, funding and implementing partner capacity affect the extent to which UNICEF can meet its coverage targets.**

42 United Nations (2021), Humanitarian Needs Overview - Nigeria, Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2021.

*'During the project, there was an attack in Dikwa LGA where we implemented interventions. Because of the attack, all actors pulled out for over a month, including the community nutrition mobilizers who do the screening and enrolment into the nutrition programme. So we could not meet the numbers we were supposed to enrol for that period.'* - *UNICEF implementing partner*

Unpredictable funding streams are the other key constraint to coverage. In the five sectors examined by the evaluation, insufficient funding was cited as one of the main reasons for missed targets in 2019.<sup>43</sup> That year, funding gaps in the nutrition programme caused the closure of three stabilization centres in Bama and Mafa LGAs in Borno, and Jakusko LGA in Yobe.<sup>44</sup> The same year, funding shortfalls nearly caused a breakdown in the supply of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF).<sup>45</sup> In 2020, low funding continued to pose a risk to life-saving nutrition activities. At the end of that year, there was a 44 per cent funding gap in the UNICEF humanitarian programme.<sup>46</sup>

In these conditions, covering the extra costs of a programme response to an unforeseen emergency can sometimes come down to a zero-sum game. In 2020, UNICEF could only finance its response to a measles outbreak by redirecting development funds towards emergency activities.<sup>47</sup> Overall funding and resource mobilization trends are discussed further in section 5.2 below.

Among other impediments to programme delivery, it is worth mentioning the co-dependence that exists between UNICEF and its government or community partners. Multiple respondents in the evaluation acknowledged that efforts aimed at building local partner capacity have not kept pace with needs on the ground. This is discussed further in section 4.3 below.

The constraints above were sometimes compounded where co-dependence exists across distinct programme strands. For example, while two respondents in interviews acknowledged UNICEF's efforts to build gender-appropriate sanitation facilities in schools, they noted that the pace of progress in this area was still modest and cited the continued scarcity of these facilities as one of the reasons for low school attendance among girls in some LGAs.

43 UNICEF Nigeria (2019), Humanitarian Situation Report, December 2019.

44 UNICEF Nigeria (2019), Humanitarian Situation Report, February 2019.

45 UNICEF Nigeria (2019), Humanitarian Situation Report, July 2019

46 UNICEF Nigeria (2020), Humanitarian Situation Report N. 12, January-December 2020.

47 Ibid.

When questioned on the subject, UNICEF staff in the WASH sector explained that other, more pressing priorities, most notably in IDP sites, imposed limits on how extensively sanitation requirements could be addressed in schools.

### **3.1.6 Access constraints and restrictions imposed by civilian and military authorities limit needs assessment and coverage**

**The demands placed on humanitarian actors by the civilian and military authorities inhibit access, hinder needs assessments and constrain programme delivery. The United Nation's posture vis-à-vis these demands may compound obstacles to programme coverage.**

The system of governance of the Nigeria response conforms with the standard IASC model, in which policy decisions are taken collectively by the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), under the final authority of a Resident/ Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC). Again, this multilateral model of governance raises issues of attribution and accountability in some of the policy outcomes impacting the coverage of UNICEF programmes.

Humanitarian operations in north-east Nigeria take place in a highly restrictive environment. While insecurity is undoubtedly the most constraining factor for humanitarian actors in the north-east, the restrictions placed on humanitarian operations by the civilian and military authorities come a close second, as further discussed in section 4.1 below. There

was broad agreement among respondents in the evaluation that the type of relationship that the authorities are attempting to impose on their United Nations counterparts is based largely on military stabilization principles and aims to leverage aid as a force multiplier in the counter-insurgency effort. According to this conception of aid, assistance should not be dispensed to populations perceived to be sympathetic to NSAGs, or should be used strategically to win hearts and minds in areas where the state authority might gain from broader acceptance by the population.

This understanding of aid is incompatible with humanitarian principles. It assumes that aid should be subordinated to political and military efforts to defeat the insurgency. By doing so, it precludes an approach to aid based on humanitarian need alone, and potentially exposes humanitarian actors to greater risk by preventing them from operating in a neutral and independent manner. By increasing risk to aid actors on the ground, it also potentially constrains their ability to access vulnerable groups in conflict-affected areas.

Given the absence of a counterfactual, it is difficult to establish exactly whether and how a better application of humanitarian principles might be conducive to broader access in the context of north-east Nigeria. What can be stated with more certainty is that the administrative and logistical restrictions placed by the Borno State Government and the Nigerian military on the operational independence of the United Nations do, on the whole, inhibit humanitarian access. By extension, they are also inhibitive



of UNICEF programme coverage. This is discussed in further detail in sections 4.1 and 4.2 below.

The evidence collected suggests that the net effect of government restrictions on the conduct of humanitarian operations in north-east Nigeria is twofold. First, it limits the feasibility of needs assessments and programme delivery outside areas controlled by the Government. An estimated 1 million people live in these areas.<sup>48</sup> This group has been included in the 2021 HRP estimate of people in need, yet cannot so far be included in programme targets. Given the absence of basic services in out-of-reach areas, levels of vulnerability in this group are assumed to be extremely high.

Second, the restrictions imposed on humanitarian operations considerably limit

their responsiveness and capacity to adapt to changing circumstances on the ground. This has immediate implications for UNICEF, for example, given its lead role in the RRM, for which a lead time of four to six weeks to obtain clearance from NAF for the movement of goods is a significant obstacle, as discussed in section 4.1.2.

There was unanimous concern among respondents about the demands imposed on them by the civilian and military authorities. There was a widely held view that more should be done to assert the United Nations' independence from the Nigerian authorities, and that doing so would be directly conducive to improvements in access and coverage. The extent to which this might indeed be the case is discussed further in section 4.1.3 below.

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48 United Nations (2021), Humanitarian Response Plan – Nigeria: 2021.

## 3.2 Programme quality

### 3.2.1 Efforts to introduce and maintain quality standards

**Quality considerations are integral to UNICEF programme planning and implementation. Across the sectors examined, proactive measures have been taken to communicate quality standards to programme staff and stakeholders, and to support the application of benchmarks. The supervisory support provided by UNICEF to its partners is well received, but remains constrained by the limitations on the field presence of UNICEF staff. Given the complexity of the context in north-east Nigeria, the evaluation found that staff considered programme quality as a matter of professional ethics and culture at least as much as it was about programme tools and processes.**

UNICEF personnel interviewed for the evaluation displayed a good level of familiarity with the CCC and how these apply in their respective sectors. The notion of quality as a professional value was viewed as especially relevant, given the contextual challenges involved in implementing more process-based approaches to programme quality. In line with this, high value was placed on person-to-person approaches to quality. In particular, supervisory support and mentoring were viewed by both UNICEF staff and their counterparts as the best medium for conveying and maintaining quality standards. Conversely, the limited

feasibility of person-to-person engagement was acknowledged a major impediment to programme quality.

*'When UNICEF visit the field, they offer us advice on how to improve quality and they also come with us when we do distributions in the community. Sometimes they invite us to their office to discuss difficulties and they provide mentorship support.'* - *UNICEF implementing partner*

Across the sectors, the evaluation found that specific measures have been adopted to support quality in programme delivery. For example, responses provided by UNICEF staff using the coverage and quality analysis tool suggest that disaggregating assessment data is now an established practice, and that this disaggregation does inform programme approaches to reaching the most vulnerable groups in targeted populations. Humanitarian performance monitoring (HPM) has been used as a mechanism to strengthen quality, as well as programmatic monitoring visits (PMV), albeit to a lesser extent, as discussed in section 4.4 below.

At sector level, there is good evidence that as the response has become protracted, more deliberate investments in time and resources have been made to ensure the quality of services whose provision is now clearly understood to be set in the long term. In

some cases, such as in WASH and education, quality standards and approaches have evolved accordingly. In WASH, minimal standards in daily water supply per person have been raised, where improved systems for delivery allow. The design of sanitation facilities has also been standardized, in view of the need to ensure broader compliance with standards. In education, staff stated that the overall teacher-student ratio had improved significantly in areas covered by UNICEF programmes. The gradual mainstreaming of the 'Teaching at the Right Level' approach has continued, where possible, with the aim of ensuring that the schooling provided can be more specifically targeted to the various groups of children covered by the programme. In health, management and reporting practices aimed at quality have been mainstreamed. While the health-related indicators used at field level are not designed to track programme quality per se, they nonetheless offer a basis for substantive quality monitoring.<sup>49</sup> These indicators provide context for quarterly meetings held with health facilities at LGA level. They allow UNICEF staff or TPFs to get a sense of whether good practice is adhered to, and what remedial measures are called for in the event of quality shortfalls.

The evaluation found that programme sections have worked consistently to communicate quality standards to partners and local

counterparts, and to help build local capacity to monitor and report on these standards. In the education sector, for example, several hundred quality assurance officers and mentors have been trained to disseminate knowledge on quality standards, and to support their application.

In all sectors, programme quality was found to be integral to the provision of training to community and government workers. In nutrition, refresher courses are periodically conducted for government health workers and community nutrition mobilizers. In education, training provided to teachers covers thematic areas inherently geared to quality, such as classroom management and PSS. In the child protection sector, government, community and implementing partner staff are trained to apply quality norms set out in UNICEF guidance and standard operating procedures. Adherence to these standards is supported by their use of dedicated case management tools. In nutrition, likewise, the evaluation found that quality benchmarks were widely known and understood by government and community workers. A majority of IPs stated that in their estimation, community nutrition mobilizers are, in general, appropriately trained and supported to meet standards in nutrition screening and enrolment.

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<sup>49</sup> These indicators included metrics on stocks, morbidity, number and profile of patients treated and staff attendance.

Across all sectors examined, the volume of training provided by UNICEF was substantial, given the contextual constraints. Multiple implementing partners expressed the view that training activities were aimed on a priority basis to government and community workers, with too little provided to non-governmental implementing partners. They had concerns that this might eventually give rise to a disparity in competencies between them and their government or community counterparts. Another recurrent comment was that training was too narrowly focused on programme activities, and did not cover broader aspects of programme management, as discussed in more detail in section 4.3.2.

**'I will score UNICEF 100 per cent in the training of health workers for the effective delivery of clinical services; but I will score them about 40 per cent for institutional or agency-wide capacity development.'**

**- UNICEF implementing partner**

These observations notwithstanding, the prevailing view among government and NGO partners interviewed was that UNICEF's training and support geared towards programme quality were satisfactory, and measurably informed implementation practice. In health and nutrition, there was a sense that this support was systematic; management and reporting mechanisms were stated by several implementing partners to be well structured and clearly established. In education and child protection, project site visits were

also conducted on a regular basis, in locations where this was possible. While access and coverage limitations in the deployment of TPFs were widely acknowledged, a majority of implementing partner sources nonetheless stated that their working relationship with facilitators was helpful and well received.

### **3.2.2 Contextual obstacles undermining the application of quality benchmarks**

**Despite sustained and deliberate efforts to achieve programme quality, contextual obstacles severely undermine the consistent application of quality benchmarks in UNICEF interventions, most prominently in issues related to insecurity, lack of access, funding shortfalls, unpredictability in the scale of needs, and low or uneven capacity among LGA-level counterparts.**

Despite the measures and approaches described above, UNICEF sector staff recognized in interviews that, given a highly adverse operating environment, quality standards could not be consistently maintained across the range of locations covered by their programmes. A recurrent observation was that although CCC and other quality standards were attainable in the right conditions, whether or not they were in fact achieved depended heavily on the operating environment. Although the usefulness of these standards in providing clarity on 'what good outcomes look like' was widely acknowledged, interviewees were more guarded on their potential use for summative or accountability purposes.



Their perspective in that respect is more nuanced than that reflected in responses to the quality and coverage analysis tool (see *Figure 3*). In the questionnaire, programme sectors generally rate the quality of their interventions favourably, with four of the five sectors stating that they had ‘mostly’ succeeded in maintaining CCC and other quality standards. In interviews, sector staff caveated this positive self-assessment. The majority acknowledged that a range of contextual factors hampered the maintenance of quality standards, both geographically and over time.

There was a shared recognition across the sectors of the challenges inherent in quality monitoring, and in the maintenance of quality standards in north-east Nigeria. The

impediments to quality most often mentioned in interviews were lack of access, funding shortfalls, unpredictability in the scale of needs, and low or uneven capacity among LGA-level counterparts. Among these obstacles, the latter was generally viewed as the most challenging. Other obstacles, such as lack of access or funding, were considered problematic mostly in their ultimate effect of constraining UNICEF support to local counterparts, and the localization of the aid effort. In much of 2021, for example, hostilities in Dikwa and Mobbar caused these LGAs to become temporarily inaccessible, with prolonged interruptions in UNICEF supply lines and supervisory support to community and government workers involved in aid programmes in these areas. This adversely impacted nutrition and WASH activities in these localities, according to UNICEF staff.

According to multiple UNICEF implementing partners interviewed in Maiduguri, the forced relocation of IDPs from camps to remote and often unsafe areas, which began in late 2020, has had a significant impact on programme quality. In multiple cases, dedicated training provided to government and implementing partner staff who were due to be assigned to camps was lost, as insecurity and a need for security clearance for access to IDP relocation sites caused staff to be both unwilling and unable to redeploy there. In the education sector, programme quality was generally the most consistent in host communities, according to staff, as activities there could rely on better community engagement and a more stable base of local government counterparts.

'The Government's policy on camp closures affected our ability to reach children initially, because most of the learning centres were set up in IDP camps. Insecurity limited the possibility of expanding learning centres to communities outside of Maiduguri town.'

*- UNICEF implementing partner*

In the WASH sector, according to UNICEF staff, quality standards were often more readily attainable in IDP camps than in other sites, given the presence there of implementing partners, and the availability of camp management capabilities that could be drawn on for quality control and maintenance. Conversely, multiple sources, including UNICEF and implementing partner staff, stated that it was very difficult to sustain quality standards in areas to which IDPs had been relocated, given access constraints and the absence in these areas of a strong enough network of local counterparts.

### 3.2.3 Pragmatic perspectives on programme quality and beneficiary perceptions

**Given the contextual constraints to the consistent maintenance of standards, UNICEF staff approach quality pragmatically. An underlying assumption among UNICEF interviewees was that quality could always be improved upon, regardless of the standards met. At least in part, this**

**programmatic mindset likely accounts for the high level of satisfaction recorded among UNICEF beneficiaries.**

Given the constraints detailed above, approaches to quality among UNICEF staff interviewed were generally pragmatic rather than standards based. These approaches entailed an acceptance and understanding of what optimal quality looked like, given a unique set of enabling and limiting factors in the environment. Several of these sources referenced the 'good enough' principle, which posits that the first priority of humanitarian programmes is to address the immediate requirements of crisis-affected groups, rather than to deliver an elaborate response to their needs. Implicit in this view is the notion that quality is not finite and should always be improved upon when conditions allow. However, other UNICEF staff were concerned that 'nearly 12 years after the start of the crisis we should be way past the "good enough" approach', suggesting that there should have been sufficient time to professionalize and standardize the quality of the response.

The evaluation found that UNICEF section staff generally had a good sense of where room for improvement existed in their programmes, and knew how to prioritize measures to build quality on a responsive and opportunistic basis. The advocacy work done by UNICEF sector staff on behalf of their implementing partners, mentioned in section 4.6 below, is a good example of this.

At least in part, this pragmatic outlook may explain why, despite severe contextual obstacles to adhering consistently to formal quality standards, UNICEF programmes in north-east Nigeria are viewed favourably by their beneficiaries. This positive outlook is captured in a U-Report survey of self-reporting beneficiaries in June 2020 (see section 1.4.5).<sup>50</sup>

Among all respondents, health (26 per cent) and education (25 per cent) were the services most frequently received, followed by nutrition (16 per cent), coronavirus information (12 per cent), WASH (9 per cent) and child protection (4 per cent).<sup>51</sup> The beneficiaries were asked to what extent the assistance delivered in the respective programme area was timely, of satisfactory quality, and whether it met their needs (see Figure 5).

In health, the provision of drugs (39 per cent), other support (14 per cent) and medical consultations (12 per cent) were the services more frequently provided. In total, 85 per cent of the respondents agreed that the services provided had been of good quality, 81 per cent agreed that they had been timely, and 81 per cent agreed that they had met needs.<sup>52</sup>

In nutrition, the services most frequently received were treatment for SAM (39 per cent), IYCF (17 per cent), and micronutrient powder (7 per cent). In total, 80 per cent of the respondents agreed that the services provided had been of good quality, 78 per cent agreed that they had been timely, and 77 per cent agreed that they had met needs.

**'They give us maganin tamuwa (RUTF) to give the children and they also teach us how to prepare food that will make them grow well.'** -FGD participant

In education, the provision of learning materials (61 per cent), regular access to school/teachers (13 per cent) and the provision of school uniforms (8 per cent) were the services most frequently received. In total, 86 per cent of the respondents agreed that the services provided had been of good quality, 87 per cent agreed that they had been timely, and 79 per cent agreed that they had met needs.

50 The polling period ran from 27 May 2020 until 10 June 2020. A total of 25,205 responses were received across the three states. Analytical report: UNICEF (2020), U-Report North-East Nigeria Humanitarian Evaluation, analysis by A.O. Toasa, September 2020, re-analysed and updated by C. Gros, September 2021.

51 These figures should be interpreted in light of the fact that some respondents or their household members may not have been aware of assistance they received from UNICEF. For example, this is particularly likely to be the case in WASH and Child Protection.

52 Responses presented here conflate 'somewhat agree' and 'strongly agree' responses made in the survey.

*'I made sure my children attended school every day because I didn't have to worry too much knowing that they had at least one meal a day. The school feeding programme helped us to save money to solve other important problems that we had.'* -FGD participant

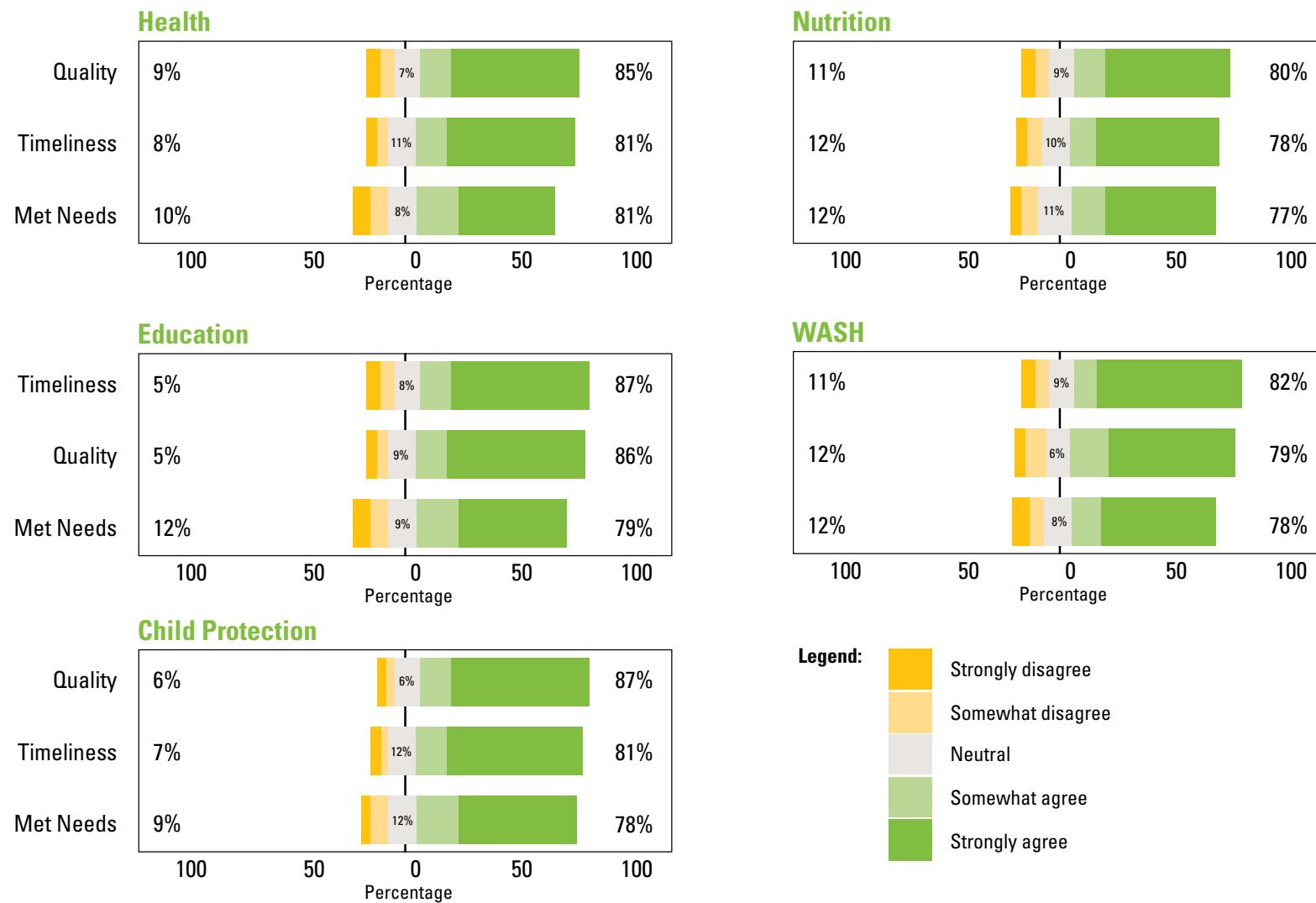
*'The water points are not close to our homes for all of us. It depends on where you live. For my family, we get a wheelbarrow to carry jerrycans of water from the waterpoint to the house because it is not so close.'* -FGD participant

In WASH, the services most frequently received were water for drinking/cooking (26 per cent), WASH kits (19 per cent) and water treatment (14 per cent). In total, 78 per cent of the respondents agreed that the services provided had been of good quality, 82 per cent agreed that they had been timely, and 79 per cent agreed that they had met needs.

In child protection, child-friendly spaces (21 per cent), PSS (20 per cent) and family reunification (15 per cent) were the services most often received. In total, 87 per cent of the respondents agreed that the services provided had been of good quality, 81 per cent agreed that they had been timely, and 78 per cent agreed that they had met needs.

**FIGURE 5**

Summary of U-Report results, beneficiary perceptions of quality, timeliness and needs met by programme section



### 3.3 UNICEF's approach to prioritizing coverage and quality

#### 3.3.1 Balancing coverage and quality

**The evaluation found limited evidence of a clear rationale to inform trade-offs between coverage and quality, and to prioritize one over the other on the basis of objective factors such as access. Rather, it found that coverage was ultimately dictated by ad hoc contextual and operational constraints and imperatives, often independently of targets set. In those areas where coverage was achieved, quality tended to be uniformly pursued through a standard set of measures and approaches. The success of these measures was variable; however, there was some evidence to suggest that quality improved over time if access and coverage could be maintained.**

The evaluation could discern no clear rationale used to prioritize either coverage or quality in UNICEF's interventions on the ground. An assumption might have been that quality was proactively pursued on a priority basis in easily accessible areas, while coverage was prioritized in areas where access was difficult to maintain. Although this might be true to some extent, it was less the result of a deliberate choice, and more a function of operational circumstances on the ground.

There is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that all other things being equal, the quality of UNICEF programming will normally improve

over time in areas where regular access is possible. In these areas, which include IDP camps and host communities, quality is a function of programme processes that develop incrementally: successive assessments improve the quality of knowledge fed into programming; programme infrastructures are rolled out and gradually firmed up; partners and counterparts are selected, trained and mentored; monitoring and supervisory support mechanisms are slowly bought into by stakeholders; and accountability mechanisms become better honed and enable the broader participation of affected groups in programming processes. More often than not, however, this ideal-case scenario is disrupted by adverse events: the capacity developed in IDP camps is periodically strained by new influxes; training invested in government workers is lost in rapid turnover; budget lines are cut; and quality in the delivery of implementing partners ebbs and flows.

Despite these adverse events, beneficiary feedback captured in the U-Report survey suggests that the quality of UNICEF programming, defined here as the degree of satisfaction among intended beneficiaries, is good. At the least, this appears to be true in the two types of locations covered by the survey; that is, IDP camps and host communities. Although the evidence to support this is limited, it can probably be assumed that the satisfaction of beneficiaries in these two locations is due, at least in part, to the fact that they are readily accessible to UNICEF programme staff.

Conversely, there is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that the maintenance of programme quality is significantly more difficult to achieve in areas where regular access is compromised. As noted above, for example, UNICEF staff and implementing partners both reported that the quality of programme delivery in Bama and Dikwa suffered as a result of interrupted access to these areas in 2021. Notably, erratic access also adversely affected coverage.

In the context of north-east Nigeria, the notion of prioritizing either coverage or quality is problematic, as it presumes that these options are a matter of choice. The evidence suggests otherwise. Where security enables access, the acuteness of humanitarian needs is usually such that it will dictate an expansion of coverage. In turn, where coverage is possible, the low baseline from which capacity-building must usually begin requires that sustained focus be placed at the outset on the rapid development of quality. Where constrained access impedes quality, it is often the case that coverage is also compromised.

In line with this observation, the evaluation found that in conflict-affected areas of Borno State, UNICEF section staff generally dedicated a uniform level of attention to quality wherever coverage was possible. The outlook was more nuanced with regard to areas on the periphery of the humanitarian emergency, in Yobe and Adamawa States. In these locations, humanitarian needs in a number of LGAs are less acute and do allow for more deliberate decisions on the desirable scope of coverage and the quality of programming to strive for.

**'UNICEF is providing all the necessary support, but the question is: what happens if, for whatever reasons, the funding and support stops? How do we sustain the scale and quality of interventions?"**

*-Governmental implementing partner of UNICEF, Borno State*

In these areas, UNICEF's dual mandate does require it to explore options for more development-oriented interventions ultimately aimed at improving the quality of basic services available to the local population. An indication of the possible dilemmas implied in this is provided by interviews held with local government actors in Borno State, where UNICEF's cooperation with the local government is much more advanced. These interviews make clear that in its pursuit of quality, UNICEF can engage in partnerships that are so close as to entail a form a substitution with local governments. The depth and extent of these partnerships raise questions about their sustainability, the dependencies created, and the feasibility of exit strategies for UNICEF in the long-term.

**'I do not see UNICEF as a partner, [but] rather like a department in [a government agency]. This is how close the working relationship is. They work with us like we are an extension of UNICEF, and we work with them like an in-house department.'**

*-Governmental implementing partner of UNICEF, Borno State*

### **3.3.2 UNICEF's approach to managing data on coverage and quality**

**UNICEF and its partners contribute to LGA-level mapping of operational presence through the cluster system. Internally, UNICEF Nigeria does not consolidate, aggregate or visualize information on the coverage of its humanitarian response or indicators of quality across programme sections. There is currently no map showing the communities within which UNICEF's programmes operate, nor the number of people they serve. The underuse of more granular data constitutes a missed opportunity because it could help UNICEF and its implementing partners to better understand the geographic footprint of the response better, and the locations of people in need and underserved areas. More detailed data would also enable better access to important indicators on programme performance.**

OCHA regularly updates an LGA-level map of the humanitarian presence in north-east Nigeria, which shows a 'heat map' of the number of partners per sector per LGA. This includes UNICEF implementing partners. Some UNICEF programme sections have facility-level data, for example, the health section draws on information from the web-based District Health Information System (DHIS). The evaluation did not find evidence of sub-LGA-level information on programme presence being shared

systematically between sections. Similarly, indicators on programme performance are not tracked in a digital, harmonized manner that would allow for aggregation, disaggregation, analysis and visualization of information, as discussed further in section 4.4.3 on programme monitoring.

One reason for the limited digitalization and use of data visualizations (customizable dashboards, maps etc.) for programme decision-making may be that the CO has been waiting for UNICEF's corporate suite of e-Tools to incorporate the requisite features. Despite indications from headquarters (HQ) that such functionalities were coming 'soon', COs are still waiting and have been for years. Meanwhile, user-friendly data analysis and visualization have been standard components of off-the-shelf web-based monitoring and reporting solutions.

However, one NGO implementing partner who was interviewed cautioned: 'Please don't put us on a map – it would make us easy targets for armed groups.' UNICEF Nigeria could take this important concern seriously by putting in place appropriate data security measures and only grant role-based, personalized access to trusted users. Given the possibilities offered by modern IT solutions for monitoring, reporting and data visualization, UNICEF stands to gain from investing in more systematic, digital management of coverage and quality data in order to inform decision-making within its humanitarian programmes.

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53 See for example: United Nation (2021), Nigeria: North-east Humanitarian Presence, April - June 2021, published 5 August 2021.



## 4. HOW DO UNICEF'S WAYS OF ACHIEVING OUTCOMES ENABLE OR CONSTRAIN PROGRAMME COVERAGE AND QUALITY?

This section focuses on the relevance and effectiveness of different approaches and ways of achieving coverage and quality outcomes that UNICEF has adopted in its humanitarian response. It critically reviews how UNICEF's ways of working either enable or constrain the delivery of high-quality programmes at scale and within given timeframes.

## KEY MESSAGES

- Integrated programming could strengthen the quality and coverage of the response, but structural disincentives and limited partner capacity for multi-sector interventions have meant that UNICEF has not pursued integration systematically.
- The humanitarian community in Nigeria, including UNICEF, has struggled to develop a strategy to ensure principled humanitarian access to affected populations, which is tightly controlled by the Nigerian military. The authorities have also created bureaucratic impediments that hinder UNICEF and others in responding rapidly. Government institutions and agencies have been UNICEF's main implementing partner in the response, which has been effective in expanding services in some sectors, but has also affected programme quality.
- Partnerships with local and national NGOs have enabled UNICEF to expand coverage. Many partners credited UNICEF with helping to strengthen their technical capacity, but say they require more systematic development of their institutional capabilities.
- Humanitarian performance monitoring has been successfully institutionalized and periodically provides structured feedback on gaps and challenges on a sample of humanitarian interventions. These monitoring 'snapshots' include some feedback on quality aspects, but cannot replace more systematic programme quality monitoring, for which the evaluation found limited evidence.
- The evaluation did not find evidence of regular context analysis of programmes in north-east Nigeria to ensure that UNICEF adapts its approaches and delivery mechanisms to the changing context.
- UNICEF engages with affected populations in its humanitarian response in a number of different ways, but the variety of approaches lacks consistency, coherence and follow-up, as required by UNICEF's corporate commitments.
- The Nigeria CO has successfully strengthened the MRM. The evaluation found that the process of collecting and verifying evidence on alleged grave violations was rigorous and systematic, albeit limited to areas currently accessible to humanitarian actors.

### 4.1 Programme approaches to strengthen coverage and quality

UNICEF has used a number of strategies to achieve greater coverage of its humanitarian response in the north-east, and to strengthen the quality of its interventions. This section reviews and assesses approaches with the potential to unlock opportunities for enhancing coverage and quality.

#### 4.1.1 Programme integration and convergence

**Integrated humanitarian programming can deliver better outcomes and therefore quality. In north-east Nigeria, UNICEF has implemented some geographical convergence of its health, nutrition and WASH interventions, while programmatic integration by outcome has remained**

**limited. The evaluation identified three main underlying causes: incentives from siloed work plans and results frameworks, the absence of granular, multi-sector needs assessments, and limited partner capacity to work across multiple sectors. Integration through multi-sector partnerships is a promising avenue for which some early examples exist.**

Integration is understood as ‘the intentional combining of one or more sector interventions to achieve improved humanitarian outcomes’.<sup>54</sup> Several approaches to integration are in use across UNICEF offices: by consolidation, by convergence, by contribution, and by outcomes. A 2014 UNICEF study identified convergence – the geographical co-location of services – as the most common understanding of integration within UNICEF.<sup>55</sup> This is also true for the humanitarian response in north-east Nigeria.

UNICEF’s humanitarian programming in BAY states has focused mainly on the convergence of health, nutrition and, to some extent, WASH activities, but not systematically and not at scale. The health and nutrition sections have also used the Communication for Development (C4D) network of community volunteers for outreach and to ensure that those in need of services avail themselves of these. Also,

in some locations, the education section has worked with the WASH section on securing WASH facilities in schools, and with the child protection section to operate child-friendly spaces in schools.

UNICEF and partner interviewees for this evaluation provided a range of examples where the absence of integrated programming negatively affected programme quality. For example, the nutrition section runs outpatient therapeutic centres (OTP) sites where children are meant to pass an ‘appetite test’ during screening. Safe drinking water is required for this test, but there are UNICEF-run OTP sites without water so the test procedure cannot be followed. Other examples include UNICEF-supported schools without sanitation facilities; health posts meant to be offering treatment of SAM that had RUTF in stock but not the drugs required according to SAM protocol; and health facilities where patients evidently practised open defecation in the immediate vicinity because there were no toilets. As one UNICEF staff member interviewed for this evaluation put it: ‘We talk about integration a lot, but it does not happen in the field.’

The evaluation has identified three main underlying causes for the lack of systematic programme integration:

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54 UNICEF (2014) Study on Integrated Programming in UNICEF Humanitarian Action, February 2014.

55 Ibid.

- 1.** Many interviewees indicated that programme sections still work in relative isolation, failing to share information across various sector-based boundaries. Their work plans and result frameworks are sector-specific, so they have an incentive to deliver only on the objectives set for their own programme section.
- 2.** Integrated programming would be greatly facilitated by integrated needs assessments, yet there is a noticeable absence of such cross-sectoral analytical efforts, beyond the robust but higher-level MSNA that feed into the HRP. Interviewees confirmed that UNICEF currently neither assesses needs with a view to identifying multiple or overlapping deprivations, nor tracks coverage in a way that would generate information on whether a child has been reached by one, two or more sectoral interventions.
- 3.** Many implementing partners only have capacity in one sector. Even if UNICEF wanted to pursue integrated programming, it faces a supply constraint, insofar as integration is unlikely to be implemented by a single partner: it would require the coordination or a consortia of multiple partners, which could be time-consuming for UNICEF to manage.

There is undoubtedly strong interest among UNICEF management and staff to operationalize programme integration to strengthen the quality of the humanitarian response. Multi-sector programme partnerships are evident steps in the right direction. In September 2021, the CO advertised a call for expressions of interest for partnerships that can deliver integrated WASH, nutrition and health interventions in Rann, the administrative capital of Kala-Balge LGA in Borno State. Admittedly, integration in only one municipality in one out of 27 LGAs in Borno State is a humble start, but it could serve as an opportunity for learning and ideally scale-up elsewhere. However, the previous evaluation in 2018 noted similar attempts to implement multi-sector pilots, such as a DFID-funded, one-year intervention to integrate nutrition, child protection, education and WASH services. This does not seem to have caught on.

Given the nature of the access that UNICEF has to displaced people, which is most frequently either in camp situations or in a mix of camps and host communities in LGA headquarter towns, there are considerable efficiencies to be gained from delivering integrated programmes. By combining its service delivery, UNICEF also has the greatest potential to strengthen the effectiveness of its interventions. There is thus a strong argument for making integrated programming the norm.

#### **4.1.2 Rapid Response Mechanism**

**UNICEF has contributed to a significant overhaul of Nigeria's RRM, building on the lessons of past experience to establish a multi-partner, multi-sector mechanism that is intended to respond to early warnings of arising needs. The first round of RRM implementation highlights several challenges. Given the difficult access and security context, the RRM has the potential to expand coverage in newly accessible areas, while inaccessible areas remain out of reach.**

The RRM has its basis in the strategic objectives of successive Nigeria HRPs to support life-saving activities and alleviate suffering through integrated and coordinated humanitarian response that focuses on the most vulnerable people. In mid-2016, OCHA had coordinated a first attempt to set up an RRM structure for north-east Nigeria, with UNICEF as one of the partners involved. However, the approach soon faltered and fell dormant.

In 2021, UNICEF – together with the World Food Programme (WFP) and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) – presented the findings of a critical review of why the previous attempt to establish an RRM had failed. They concluded that the 2016–2017 RRM produced

mostly single-agency response efforts that were difficult to distinguish from regular programming. In addition, the participating agencies did not pursue a multi-sectoral approach, and nor were their interventions informed by early warnings or an alert system. A dedicated, multi-sector RRM stand-by team did not exist.

Building on these lessons, UNICEF has been a driving force behind the re-establishment of the RRM in mid-2021. It is envisaged as a multi-partner, multi-sector approach, with the overarching objective of delivering a timely, life-saving response package for food security, nutrition and WASH. A humanitarian early warning system across BAY states is meant to produce alerts that trigger (a) rapid multi-sectoral follow-up assessments and, where needed; (b) life-saving integrated interventions 'to highly vulnerable populations living in accessible and hard to reach areas when there is no operational capacity on the ground (...) within a reasonable timeframe'.<sup>56</sup> The RRM aims to deliver the response 'within two to four weeks' of receiving the alert.<sup>57</sup>

The recent, first activation of the RRM did not quite follow these short timeframes, although it might have been considered a trial run. The first warning signs were detected in October 2020, and the alert was finally raised in April

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54 UNICEF/WFP/NRC (2021), NE Nigeria RRM Approach, internal approach paper dated 7 October 2021.

55 Ibid.



2021, when high rates of SAM in Gubio LGA, Borno State, indicated an emergency food security situation. WFP eventually responded as part of the RRM with a general food distribution in early September 2021, five months after the alert. The UNICEF and Action Against Hunger (AHH) components of the response package, for WASH and nutrition, could not be deployed in time, partly due to the need to obtain military clearance for moving humanitarian cargo.<sup>58</sup>

This points to two related contextual barriers for the RRM in north-east Nigeria: the inaccessibility of people in need due to insecurity, and the requirement to obtain

military clearance for humanitarian cargo movements. Some interviewees for this evaluation suggested that the utility of the RRM will likely be limited to urban areas only, and more specifically to garrison towns. In the event of an influx of IDPs into these locations, humanitarian actors usually have access without being constrained by their own organization's or the military's security clearance system. For deep-field locations, the lead time required by NAF to provide an armed escort or clearance through the Humanitarian Cargo Movement Notification System can consume two weeks or more from the 'rapid' response time window (see Box 1).

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<sup>58</sup> UNICEF Nigeria/RRM Nigeria (2021), NE Nigeria Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) Regular Meeting, 21 September 2021, meeting minutes, unpublished.

## **BOX 1**

### The military-imposed Humanitarian Cargo Movement Notification system: providing security or hindering humanitarian operations?

Nigeria's military imposed the Humanitarian Cargo Movement Notification system in 2019, in the light of the scale-up of the response, recurrent attacks and looting of humanitarian convoys. The justification was that the notification system would allow the military to provide escorts or mobile patrols where required.

The system stipulates that all humanitarian cargo movements within BAY states that are bound for locations outside the state capitals of Borno (Maiduguri), Adamawa (Yola) and Yobe (Damaturu) should be notified to NAF using the Humanitarian Cargo Movement Notification form. Transport routes, volumes and days must be specified exactly. The haulage of fuel, communications equipment or fertilizer is subject to additional clearance requirements and restrictions by NAF. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) indicate that military clearance will be given within 48 hours.<sup>59</sup>

Interviews for this evaluation and research by other agencies suggest that in practice, the notification system is a sign of the deep mistrust that security forces harbour for humanitarian actors, and that it is used to bring response activities under military control.<sup>60</sup> This in turn has implications for how principled humanitarian interventions can be. In its 2021 HRP, the Humanitarian Country Team and partners concluded that 'the Nigerian Armed Forces tightly control movements of food, fuel, fertilizer and cash, among other goods. This is a major cause of deficiencies in IDP camp conditions and services, despite years of effort.'<sup>61</sup>

### **4.1.3 Approach to gaining principled access to people in need**

**The humanitarian community in Nigeria has struggled to develop a strategy to ensure principled access, as already diagnosed in phase 1 of this evaluation in 2018. The humanitarian response in the north-east**

**continues to be implemented largely in militarized zones, often with clearly defined security perimeters and restrictions enforced by the Nigerian military. In this context, access has generally been determined by the military and the NSAGs, who appear to consider humanitarians as legitimate targets for attack.**

59 Nigeria Logistics Cluster (2021), Standard Operating Procedures, Humanitarian Cargo Movement Notifications, WFP, published 12 February 2020.

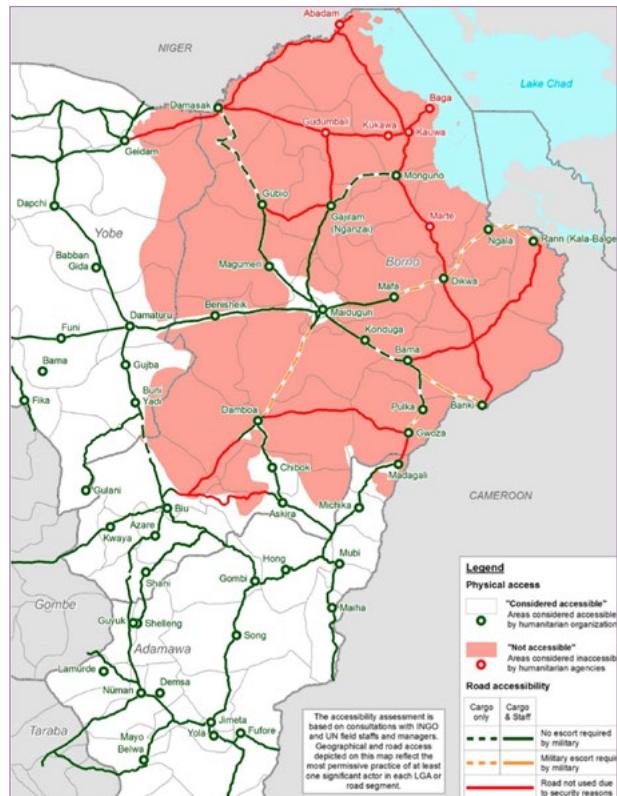
60 Human Rights Watch (2020), Nigeria: Army Restrictions Stifling Aid Efforts, 4 March 2020.

61 United Nations (2021), Humanitarian Response Plan 2021, issued February 2021.

De facto, the military currently controls both access of those who need assistance to humanitarian organizations, and access of humanitarian organizations to those in need of assistance. For the former, the military's super-camp strategy has directed them into garrison towns, where NAF contends that it is easier to defend and assist communities, leaving large areas exposed to NSAGs and criminal activity. For the latter, the military has permitted access to areas that are either under its control or that it considers have been 'cleared' of NSAGs. Humanitarian actors therefore find themselves in a difficult access situation, characterized by a dwindling number of safe roads and 'an operational dependence on armed forces who prioritize combat operations over humanitarian convoy escorts' (see *Figure 6*).<sup>62,63</sup> Even experienced national NGOs find it difficult to deliver assistance given the insecurity:

**'Before 2018, we implemented programmes in Dikwa and Mungono, but due to the insecurity in these areas and the increasing difficulty [in] moving staff, equipment and supplies to insecure areas, we have pulled out and now implement mostly within Maiduguri. This has implications for our ability to ensure adequate coverage of humanitarian assistance to everyone in need.' - UNICEF implementing partner, Nigerian NGO**

**FIGURE 6**  
Mapping physical access of humanitarian organizations



This context has proved extremely challenging for humanitarian agencies to make a distinction between needs-based, neutral and independent humanitarian assistance and the political and military objectives of NAF and the Government. Responding to the urgent

62 United Nations (2021), Humanitarian Response Plan 2021, published March 2021.

63 United Nations (2020), Humanitarian Situation Update, January 2020 edition. A more recent map, published in the HRP Periodic Monitoring Report for January–June 2021, shows that the inaccessible area has increased in some parts. However, the map used in this report illustrates road accessibility and the role of garrison towns more clearly.

humanitarian needs of civilians seeking refuge from violence in IDP sites around the north-east, the humanitarian community has frequently used military defence assets, which has blurred the distinction between humanitarians and the Nigerian security forces. This has made it extremely difficult to promote humanitarian assistance as neutral or impartial.<sup>64</sup>

It took members of the humanitarian community in Nigeria a long time to reach consensus about a common interpretation of how they can use humanitarian principles as a means of accessing those most in need. It was only in 2018, nine years into the conflict, that a first Humanitarian Access Strategy was negotiated and ultimately endorsed by the HCT. However, the adoption of the strategy never translated into tangible steps by the United Nations RC/HC, the HCT or other humanitarian actors in order to try to expand access.

Interviewees for the evaluation suggested that the 2018 strategy had lacked the realism that could have guided agencies and staff. In addition, the RC/HC – in post since 2017 – appears to have prioritized alignment with the Government over confronting barriers to humanitarian access – admittedly a highly sensitive and politically risky task. At the same time, the UN's senior leader in Nigeria expressed

frustration at the humanitarian community's calls for expanded and principled access to people in need in accessible areas, while the quality of the response in accessible areas was 'poor'. Instead, he seemingly favoured an approach of handing over humanitarian goods and resources to the military for it to deliver assistance in areas deemed inaccessible to humanitarian actors. While problematic from the perspective of humanitarian principles, he indicated that 'this approach has not been piloted yet'. As one senior UNICEF staff member put it: 'There has been no real strategic direction for the north-east – not from the UN, not from government, and not from donors.'

In 2020, a new Access Working Group (AWG) was formed, co-chaired by OCHA and the International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) Forum, to promote principled humanitarian action by developing common analysis of humanitarian access constraints and their impact on humanitarian programmes, and by formulating specific inter-agency response and advocacy plans in support of the HCT.<sup>65</sup> The AWG core team meets every other week in Maiduguri. UNICEF is an active contributor and has helped to draft a new Access Strategy 2021.<sup>66</sup> This new strategy document appears to have found the previously lacking realism. The It spells out

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64 United Nations (2018), HCT Humanitarian Access Strategy for North-east Nigeria.

65 United Nations (2020), Terms of Reference: Humanitarian Access Working Group, endorsed by HCT 2020.

66 United Nations (2021), Access Strategy 2021, AWG Draft 1, 2021, unpublished.

specific access constraints and analyses their causes, including bureaucratic impediments, the lack of a joint approach by the humanitarian community, and the propagation of an 'anti-humanitarian narrative' by all parties to the conflict, leading to widespread acceptance of such attitudes among the population.

Two features of the 2021 draft access strategy are particularly noteworthy: first, the document invokes international humanitarian law (IHL) and argues, albeit implicitly, that the Nigerian Government's ban on talking to NSAGs goes against the internationally agreed norms governing armed conflict. The strategy asserts that 'humanitarian actors have a responsibility to liaise with all relevant parties, including non-

state armed actors, to avoid compromising their neutrality, impartiality and independence (...), and in turn humanitarian access'. Second, the draft document identifies community engagement, building community acceptance and sensitization on IHL at all levels, including the military, as key mechanisms to counter the spreading anti-humanitarian narrative and ultimately to strengthen access.

It is a promising sign of progress that the HCT has publicly recognized the most pressing access issues with unprecedented candour in the 2021 HRP. The current response plan has also identified key ingredients for a reinvigorated access effort (see *Box 2*).

## BOX 2

### Key elements of a comprehensive access strategy for the north-east, as identified in the Humanitarian Response Plan 2021<sup>67</sup>

It will (...) be a priority for the humanitarian community in the north-east to reinvigorate a comprehensive access strategy that mitigates the worst aspects of the current and potential access constraints, and identifies some contingency options in case security and access decline further. Key elements are likely to include:

- proactive engagement with local communities and traditional leaders on humanitarian action, to bolster acceptance and open lines of communication on potential threats
- sensitization of NAF to the nature of humanitarian operations and partners to civil–military guidelines

<sup>67</sup> United Nations (2021), Humanitarian Response Plan 2021, issued February 2021, p.34.

- high-level, strategic engagement with Government and security forces on humanitarian principles, IHL and access, and on reducing bureaucratic impediments to access
- identification and implementation of new operational modalities and strategies to deliver humanitarian assistance in hard-to-reach locations and to improve access to currently reachable locations
- joint work with Government to prioritize returns to areas of origin that are secure for civilians and accessible to international humanitarian actors.

(...) Bureaucratic impediments to humanitarian action will have to be overcome, and this a key advocacy point for the HCT. A negative narrative about international humanitarian action has been taking shape, in which aid organizations are said to be inherently ineffective, or even interested in prolonging the crisis out of some sort of self-interest. To the extent that such perceptions contribute to a mind-set in which impeding humanitarian action bureaucratically is justified, these become a self-fulfilling prophecy: humanitarian actors cannot be effective if they are obliged to contend with an administrative environment that is in some ways less than conducive.

It remains to be seen whether the HCT will stay the course and be willing to harness its political clout in support of a coordinated, comprehensive access effort. The indications given in the 2021 HRP, and the re-formation of the AWG and its draft strategy are positive signs of resolve, but implementing the access strategy will almost certainly require confronting the Nigerian Government and military on long-entrenched positions and policies.

The record of the United Nations and its leadership in Nigeria suggests that this is unlikely to happen. In the three-year Humanitarian Response Strategy published in late 2018, the HCT had already declared its commitment to pursuing expanding

'access through acceptance and principled engagement',<sup>68</sup> yet little has been done in this regard. Moreover, there is a significant risk that the Government will reject this strategy. Its success or otherwise will largely depend on the vigour with which international humanitarian leaders in Nigeria, with support from bilateral donor country missions, are willing to defend the principles that enshrine humanitarian action.

In the present context, UNICEF could add the greatest value by supporting a strategic, collective push for principled access, both within the HCT and in engagement with the Government.<sup>69</sup> However, the evaluation also recognizes the difficulty of confronting a strong

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<sup>68</sup> United Nations (2018), Humanitarian Response Strategy 2019-2021, published December 2018.

<sup>69</sup> Section 4.6 of this document reviews to what extent UNICEF has used broader advocacy efforts in support of humanitarian access.

state, and the significant challenges that exist in liaising with NSAGs in Nigeria.

In the event of a collective humanitarian approach failing or stalling, UNICEF should consider defining its own access strategy, as it does in other emergency contexts. The organization's child-centred mandate implies that the objective of access is to deliver results for children, and not merely to enable UNICEF's programmes. UNICEF's draft Access Field Manual provides actionable guidance and practical tools.<sup>70</sup> An analysis of access gaps and existing needs will be required. While considerable information on needs in inaccessible areas already exists, UNICEF and others have not yet invested in assessing the political economy of the conflict with a view to mapping actors, positions, interests, relationships, networks and entry points for engagement. The Access Field Manual also gives pointers on this, and UNICEF is well positioned and resourced to lead on this analytical and strategic effort.

#### **4.1.4 The use of third-party facilitators to expand coverage and manage quality**

**TPFs have been key in scaling up and maintaining UNICEF's humanitarian programme in the north-east since 2016.**

**In 2021, UNICEF has taken an important strategic step in reviewing and reorganizing the management and deployment of TPFs, addressing concerns diagnosed in the 2018 evaluation and shared by many staff and consultants. With the overhaul of the TPF mechanism only a few months old, there may be room to further strengthen the coherence and strategic definition of functions performed by TPFs to maximise their effect on coverage and quality.**

The Nigeria CO has significant experience of using TPFs across programmes and field offices since 2013, and at a large scale since 2016. In October 2020, the Nigeria Country Office (NCO) had a total of 472 TPFs under third-party contract. Of these, 125 worked under the supervision of the Maiduguri FO.<sup>71</sup> The TPFs are consultants contracted through a third party that is responsible for all administrative and financial matters. The TOR for the deployment of TPFs are set by UNICEF's programme sections, whose staff manage the facilitators, and their programmatic tasks and movements.

TPFs are deployed in a range of functions to provide flexible humanitarian response capacity. They have been used both to deliver programmes and to monitor the effectiveness of delivery. UNICEF staff interviewed for this

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70 At the time of writing, the evaluation team only had access to a 2018 draft version of UNICEF's Access Field Manual. See UNICEF (2018), Access Field Manual, draft 0, UNICEF, EMOPS, August 2018.

71 UNICEF Nigeria (2020), Presentation on use of field facilitators. Unpublished.

evaluation have characterized them as ‘our ears and eyes on the ground’, ‘the only thing that keeps our programmes running’, ‘indispensable support for service delivery where we work through the government’. However, some – including external partners – also remarked on the mixed skill sets that TPFs bring, with some being considered highly experienced and technically skilled, while others seen as generalists who had difficulty following more thematic or technical discussions and instructions.

In 2020, the CO commissioned an independent in-depth review of the TPF mechanism, which confirmed and expanded upon concerns already raised in phase 1 of this humanitarian evaluation.<sup>72</sup> The problematic issues identified arose both from within UNICEF and the contracting third party, which was Deloitte at the time. On UNICEF’s side, management of TPFs was overly complicated and lacked strategic direction, factors exacerbated by a lack of understanding and supervision of TPF roles and responsibilities by UNICEF staff. On the part of the contractor, the evaluation and later the independent review found significant administrative flaws (especially delays in salary payments, and in performance and workload management) and stark neglect of the duty of care and risk management support (one facilitator was killed and two were kidnapped on duty).

To implement the lessons learned and recommendations from the comprehensive review, the CO developed new ‘SOP for the Management of Facilitators’ and TOR for TPFs. The new framework documents provide more clarity on management oversight, roles and responsibilities, and security management (see Box 3). A generic job description outlines the main responsibilities for the two categories of TPF to be engaged: LGA facilitators and state facilitators (the latter also carry out expert advisory tasks). The specific functions to be performed by a given facilitator are up to each programme section to define. Therefore, their overall calibre does not appear to have changed significantly since the new contractor, Committed to Good (CTG), took over in mid-2021.

At the time of writing, this new arrangement was just a few months old. Therefore, the evaluation was not yet able to assess the extent to which the new contractual and managerial framework has translated into practical changes on the ground and at scale. However, based on a review of the new SOP, TOR and job descriptions, and interviews with current TPFs and UNICEF staff, two issues that were meant to be addressed after the comprehensive review still seem to leave room for improvement: facilitator empowerment in the field, and risk management.

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72 Fisher, Benjamin S. (2020), Use of field facilitators: a review. Unpublished.

**BOX 3****Roles and responsibilities of UNICEF's third-party facilitators**

The TOR for CTG define the roles and intended use of facilitators in the broadest terms as:

*Support UNICEF's work in **monitoring implementation** of initiatives and tasks in areas which are not accessible to UNICEF staff, or where there is lack of capacity in government structure. Depending on the context and need, facilitators might be required to **undertake operational requirements**. At times, also depending on the nature of work required, facilitators might be required to undertake '**hands-on' implementation of tasks** and activities. When this happens, it will be clearly articulated in the individual terms of reference before hiring. The key considerations determining the use of facilitators are **access constraints, capacity of the government structure** and the **capacity of FO staff** to cover hard-to-reach areas.<sup>73</sup>*

The generic job descriptions for LGA and state facilitators further specify the main responsibilities:<sup>74</sup>

- 1) Coordinate UNICEF-supported activities at LGA level with relevant authorities
- 2) Undertake regular situation monitoring in specific areas based on specific requests
- 3) Undertake regular field visits to monitor projects/programmes (implementation against agreements; verify supplies and works) and **monitor the overall performance of project/programme implementation**
- 4) Verify and validate data
- 5) **Communicate and coordinate programme activities**, if required, with implementing partners, in consultation with the respective UNICEF Chief of Field Office or his/her delegate
- 6) Any other programme-specific related task assigned by a supervisor

In addition, state facilitators are expected to provide expert technical support to implementing partners, ministries, departments and agencies and counterparts in the respective subject matter area, to ensure effective and efficient implementation of UNICEF-supported programmes, in consultation with UNICEF.

73 UNICEF Nigeria (2021), Terms of Reference: Third Party Management of Field Staff (Facilitator) in Nigeria. Unpublished. Emphasis (**highlighting**) added.

74 UNICEF Nigeria (2021), Job Descriptions for LGA and State Level Facilitators. Unpublished. Emphasis (**highlighting**) added.

These job descriptions put TPFs in a position to coordinate the work of UNICEF's implementing partners and to monitor progress – tasks that are supervisory in nature even when not communicated in this way. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that several interviewees indicated that they still face issues with facilitators wanting to be seen as UNICEF staff and creating the impression of speaking for UNICEF in the field, which poses reputational and potentially operational risks to UNICEF. Yet 'SOP for the Management of Facilitators' clearly states that 'under no circumstances shall facilitators be considered as employees of UNICEF' and they should not speak on behalf of UNICEF<sup>75</sup>

In the light of this, several cluster leads and implementing partners questioned the utility of having facilitators participate in LGA-level coordination meetings when they were not empowered to speak on behalf of UNICEF. Partners also expressed frustration that the facilitators did not appear to have the required direct link back to UNICEF staff when needed to make commitments, as for example when partners were urgently looking to UNICEF for information or action such as the deployment of supplies.

This points to a need for the NCO to define a more granular typology of tasks and accountabilities that facilitators can or should

be given, or must not be charged with. This should extend to the responsibilities of the supervising UNICEF staff members who must remain attentive and responsive to ensure that facilitators can work effectively in the field.

On risk management and the duty of care, the SOP only indicate that UNICEF will review the group life insurance for the facilitators. The contractor, CTG, is tasked with ensuring that all TPFs receive adequate security training. UNICEF staff and facilitators also said that they maintained WhatsApp groups for sharing information, including on security risks. It remained unclear to this evaluation whether and how UNICEF or CTG systematically supported facilitators with security information (for example, by including them in the UNDSS messaging system) and evacuation assistance in extreme circumstances. One interviewee recounted a security incidence in Dikwa LGA, Borno State, where TPFs were denied access to an evacuation flight. It is suggested that UNICEF and CTG clearly define and communicate security risk management support, roles and responsibilities.

#### **4.1.5 Remote programming and alternative approaches**

**Several UNICEF programme sections have successfully piloted remote and mobile programming approaches, some at**

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75 UNICEF Nigeria (2021), SOP for the Management of Facilitators - UPDATED Aug 2021. Unpublished.

**scale, to expand coverage to underserved populations due to insecurity or movement restrictions. While remote programming has limited potential to strengthen acceptance, it is a pragmatic approach, given current constraints, and should be explored further.**

Remote programming is understood to be programming without the presence of UNICEF staff due to unacceptable security risks or denial of access by authorities.<sup>76</sup> UNICEF guidance recommends that remote programming be used as a 'last resort' approach.<sup>77</sup> This is because where humanitarian assistance becomes invisible, it does not contribute to increasing the acceptance of humanitarian actors, which is linked to communities seeing concrete benefits from the presence of humanitarians: 'Under normal circumstances, our proximity to affected populations and understanding of local contexts maximise the sustainability and accountability of the programmes we deliver.'<sup>78</sup>

Several of UNICEF's programme sections have used innovative means to establish remote programmes and manage partners remotely, given the highly constrained access environment in the north-east, which was temporarily exacerbated by Government-imposed movement restrictions due to

Covid-19 in 2020. For example, during the school closures of the Covid-19 pandemic, the UNICEF education team helped to develop a remote learning model called 'last-mile learning' for non-formal education (see Box 4). Similarly, UNICEF trained its national NGO partners on remote and mobile programming (such as mobile and online case management and support services), which partners reported had enabled them to migrate programming with displaced populations who were at risk of losing access to humanitarian assistance as a result of IDP camp closures and their movement to areas inaccessible to UNICEF staff.

There is room for UNICEF to explore in which other sectors remote programming and management and mobile interventions can be used to expand humanitarian coverage to underserved populations in need. However, this should be done cognizant of the risk that the potential 'invisibility' of remote approaches poses to acceptance and humanitarian access, and should therefore be focused on specific intervention areas or pockets of need.

76 UNICEF (2012), Remote programming in humanitarian action, EMOPS programme guidance, New York.

77 UNICEF (2020), Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action - The Humanitarian Review: Findings and Recommendations.

78 UNICEF (2012), Remote programming in humanitarian action, EMOPS programme guidance, New York.

#### **BOX 4**

#### **Lessons from other UNICEF emergencies: A remote learning approach for Education in Emergencies (EiE)**

UNICEF helped to develop last-mile learning for non-formal education in 2020, responding to the closure of schools that took place due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The approach is essentially a radio learning programme, consisting of pre-recorded lessons that are presented by a teacher. The content is aired on radio and television on three days a week for one hour a day.

To reach children and communities without access to radio, television or electricity, UNICEF established reading hubs. Teachers are given USB drives and solar-powered speakers. Each teacher gathers 15–20 children in a hub and shares the programme via the loudspeaker.

The Nigerian Teachers' Union was quick to support remote learning. UNICEF has worked to scale up the approach to reach additional areas that are currently beyond humanitarian coverage. A UNICEF staff member estimated that 1.1 million children had been reached via the remote learning programme across BAY states in 2020, although it was difficult to confirm the accuracy of these figures.

## **4.2 The influence of security and risk management on coverage and quality**

The security environment in north-east Nigeria has remained extremely complex. Since the start of the conflict in 2009, more than 35,000 people have been killed,<sup>79</sup> more than 1,000

children have been abducted since 2013,<sup>80</sup> and nearly 2.2 million people have remained internally displaced as of August 2021.<sup>81</sup> Borno State remains the epicentre of the humanitarian crisis, with dozens of conflict incidents reported each month. Humanitarian organizations and their staff have been declared legitimate targets of attack by NSAGs (see section 2.2.2 above).

79 UNDP (2020), Assessing the impact of conflict on development in north-east Nigeria.

80 UNICEF (2018), More than 1,000 children in northeastern Nigeria abducted by Boko Haram since 2013, Press Release, 13 April 2018.

81 UNHCR (2021), Operational Data Portal: Nigeria Situation. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/nigeriasituation>. Accessed on 27/10/2021.

#### **4.2.1 UNICEF's safety and security management within the United Nations system context**

**While UNICEF has taken significant steps to improve staff safety and security, it has not yet explored the full potential of its own security staff and capability to take a proactive approach to risk assessment and management – beyond what UNDSS advises – that would aim to create an enabling environment for expanding humanitarian coverage.**

While often thought to have a security-only mandate, the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS), the Designated Official (DO) and the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) are tasked with the dual objectives of (a) enabling the conduct of United Nations system operations and creating a conducive environment for humanitarian assistance; and (b) ensuring the safety, security and well-being of personnel and the security of United Nations premises and assets.<sup>82,83</sup> Decisions about where United Nations staff and partners can go, how they travel and whether they are seen using armed escorts or not will affect their access and acceptance among affected populations. Therefore, the approach adopted

by UNICEF and United Nations systems to managing security and risk has an impact on UNICEF's humanitarian access, coverage and ability to manage quality in the field.

UNICEF has worked diligently to improve staff safety and security; protective strategies have included increasing compound security for the UNICEF office, building dedicated and secure compounds for staff, investing in armoured vehicles and radio equipment, and using the common United Nations VHF communications service. For its Maiduguri staff, UNICEF has also made significant efforts to support staff well-being.

There was near unanimity among staff and implementing partners interviewed for the evaluation that UNICEF was passively over-reliant on UNDSS and has tended to interpret the latter's risk advisory as mandatory instruction on where and when not to travel. This has contributed to rather broadly held perceptions of UNICEF lacking field presence and having become 'comfortable in their offices'.

UNDSS was seen to be overly dependent on the Government and the military for risk intelligence. This led some interviewees to characterize UNDSS as 'out of touch and out of context' in the north-east. Rather than providing

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82 UNDSS (2020), DO and SMT Handbook: A guide for Designated Officials for Security and Security Management Teams, new edition.

83 IASC (2016), Safety and Security: Creating an Enabling and Conducive Environment for Humanitarian Assistance. White Paper circulated at the IASC Principals Meeting, 24 November 2016.

situation and risk context analyses, its advisory releases were described as 'amounting to a list of security incidents', which were appreciated but not what humanitarian programme managers were looking for.

Interviewees suggested that UNICEF's security staff in Maiduguri were being used solely to manage security rather than to work jointly with programme staff to explore options for strengthening access. The interviews further revealed consensus among United Nations agencies and implementing partners that the mandatory use of military escorts on some roads – generally discouraged by the IASC except as a last resort<sup>84</sup> – has further complicated movements and discouraged acceptance of humanitarian actors among affected populations.

*'Military escorts impact on the humanitarian principles. Especially INGOs have tried to find different ways of moving around. Where the military requires you to use an escort, they provide an erratic service at best. They sometimes delay, sometimes their vehicles break down, and you never know when the military is really ready and when the convoy will move.'*

*- United Nations agency staff partnering with UNICEF*



The Government's ban on engaging with other parties to the conflict, to the extent that this would even be feasible given its position, has removed access negotiations as a means to strengthen security and coverage for the humanitarian community. This leaves several options to strengthen security and access open, none of which has been explored extensively by UNICEF or other United Nations agencies, as far as the evaluation is aware: for example, cultivating greater acceptance, low-profile approaches, and remote programming and management (see Box 5).

84 IASC (2013), IASC non-binding guidelines on the use of armed escorts for humanitarian convoys.

**BOX 5****LESSONS from other UNICEF emergencies: Negotiation of modalities within the United Nations security management system to support low-profile missions**

Low-profile missions that use local vehicles and staff (including security officers) and that are not UNICEF-branded have played a key role in enabling UNICEF staff to support and monitor programmes throughout Somalia and in Afghanistan.

**In Somalia**, low-profile missions are identified by the Zonal Offices; these are then entered into an online system for approvals, which has played an important role in enabling UNICEF staff to quickly turn around requests, and also helps the Representative to understand the mission and take a decision about accepting the risk. Travel authorization can then be finalized and security clearance agreed with the UNDSS Chief Security Advisor using the Programme Criticality Framework as a key frame of reference. In Mogadishu, there are two or three low-profile missions a day. In the South Central Zone, there are one to three low-profile, deep-field missions a week. These missions allow UNICEF to maintain a good understanding of the situation and offer a feedback loop back to UNDSS.<sup>85</sup>

**In Afghanistan**, blanket travel authorizations are sought for routine journeys in insecure parts of the country for six-month periods, in addition to ad hoc authorizations for travel to new areas. In some regions, there are up to three low-profile missions a day: these may be complemented by low-profile, deep-field missions. These missions allow UNICEF to maintain a good understanding of the situation and to provide hands-on support to its partners, and they also strengthen acceptance of UNICEF's presence among communities.<sup>86</sup>

Personality, experience and seniority across UNICEF and UNDSS were considered to be essential ingredients for the success of the approach.

85 UNICEF (2019), Evaluation of the Coverage and Quality of the UNICEF Humanitarian Response in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies, Volume One, Main Evaluation Report. UNICEF Evaluation Office, New York.

86 UNICEF (2020), Evaluation of UNICEF's coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations: Afghanistan. UNICEF Evaluation Office, New York.

UNICEF's 2020 Humanitarian Review confirmed that, in most emergency contexts, the organization's presence, its network of local partners, its breadth of programming and its popular mandate give it multiple entry points with communities and actors through which to attain information that is relevant to risk management. 'UNICEF should be able to use this comparative advantage to better support UNDSS in developing accurate situational analyses and in improving safety and security, which can result in improved access'.<sup>87</sup>

#### **4.2.2 Engaging with communities to strengthen acceptance, and with it, security and access**

**There is significant potential for UNICEF to manage risk and expand coverage by cultivating acceptance through engaging with affected populations, an approach that has been underused thus far because a systematic approach to community engagement has not been institutionalized, and UNICEF staff have limited field presence.**

FGDs with communities highlighted that UNICEF has significant visibility, especially through its WASH interventions, but also through education, nutrition and health programmes, as illustrated by the quotes

below. People rely on UNICEF services and appreciated efforts to engage them through these services. This is a potential foundation for strengthening community understanding of UNICEF's mission and acceptance more broadly, although this aspect of community engagement appears to have been overlooked.

*'Every section of the community has several and enough waterpoints to get water from and so there is no crowding like it used to be before the UNICEF support.' - Male FGD participant, Teachers' Village IDP camp, Borno State*

*'Before UNICEF built this school for us, our children used to sit under the tree to learn and it was always too hot and uncomfortable. When it rained, they could not study, but now they have classrooms with a roof, and they learn even when the sun is very hot, or the rains are heavy.' - Female FGD participant, Elmiskin Centre IDP camp, Borno State*

*'Before we had just one teacher, sometimes two for the entire six forms of primary school, but through the UNICEF support programme, we now have at least one teacher per form.'*  
*-Male FGD participant, Custom House IDP camp, Borno State*

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<sup>87</sup> UNICEF (2020), Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action - The Humanitarian Review: Findings and Recommendations, p.65.

NGO interviewees spoke of how they had engaged in actor mapping to identify which stakeholders might be affected by their programmes and what allies they might secure by developing acceptance with them. This was used as part of a broader strategy to promote acceptance that sought to communicate values and explain the agency's mandate, and in so doing, proactively project an identity as an independent and impartial provider of assistance. The purpose was ultimately to strengthen acceptance of their presence and programming and to increase access, within the humanitarian hubs, in the communities outside them and on the roads.

UNICEF itself has not operationalized a systematic approach to engaging with communities and accountability to affected populations (AAP), as discussed further in section 4.5.2 below. Staff face limitations of travelling to the field because of security risks and UNICEF's approach to risk management, and there is limited follow-up by staff on the community engagement carried out by partners.

Although UNICEF's TPFs provide important humanitarian services, UNICEF is not currently using them strategically to build acceptance or explore how to increase access. This fails to maximize the potential of UNICEF's workforce to exploit links with communities in areas that are currently inaccessible to it. UNICEF could do more to position itself to take a more proactive approach to managing an enabling security environment by building acceptance, gaining

access and expanding its coverage outside the relatively secure garrison towns (see section 4.5.2 below).

### **4.3 The effect of UNICEF's partnerships on coverage and quality**

UNICEF Nigeria works with two main types of partner to implement its humanitarian response: government and non-governmental organizations(NGOs). Each of these partnerships has played a different role in contributing to programme coverage and quality, and each has had different trade-offs that UNICEF has had to manage and balance. The contributions and trade-offs are summarized below, accompanied by an analysis of how UNICEF has sought to strengthen localization and the capacity of its partners, as well as the transfer of risk to its implementing partners. Section 5.3 discusses UNICEF's management of partnerships from an administrative and contractual perspective.

#### **4.3.1 Partnership with Government**

**Government institutions and agencies have been UNICEF's main implementing partners for the humanitarian response, which has been effective in expanding humanitarian services in some sectors. However, the ability of the Government to respond to humanitarian needs is beset by challenges due to capacity, willingness and budget constraints, all of which negatively affect the quality of the response.**

For reasons of sustainability, UNICEF's long-standing approach to humanitarian and development programming has been to work with and through the Government. In Nigeria, the CO has invested in strengthening systems to improve the coverage, quality, efficiency and effectiveness of social services for a long time. This approach has been maintained in UNICEF's humanitarian response in the north-east with a view to providing basic health, nutrition, education and child protection services to IDP and host communities. It was the primary partnership used for delivering humanitarian services in the early stages of the response until 2016–2017.

UNICEF Nigeria has devoted significant resources to strengthening the capacity of government institutions and staff by providing training and hands-on implementation support through consultants or TPFs, including specifically for the humanitarian response. This is anchored in the Nigeria CO's commitment to local-level capacity development. The latter is one of its programme priorities in the current country programme document (CPD),<sup>88</sup> in line with the Grand Bargain commitment to 'making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary'.<sup>89</sup>

UNICEF staff and partners from all sections shared a variety of examples of capacity

development initiatives relevant to the coverage and quality of the response, including:

- training 375 education administrators on Education in Emergencies (EiE) and developing risk-informed education plans
- facilitating training courses for social workers on case management for gender-based violence (GBV) and child safeguarding
- training government, NGOs and private sector contractors on solar borehole design and installation
- providing on-the-job support and supervision for healthcare facility staff in maternal care and for nutrition counselling.

The support is generally well appreciated by partners.

*'UNICEF was the first partner to establish health facilities in camps, renovate health facilities in communities, train health workers and provide drugs and commodities to provide and expand access to health services.'*

*- UNICEF implementing partner (State Government agency)*

<sup>88</sup> UNICEF (2017), Country Programme Document: Nigeria, 2018–2022, E/ICEF/2017/P/L.30, 17 July 2017.

<sup>89</sup> Australian Aid et al. (2016), The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need, 23 May 2016.

In the health, nutrition and child protection sectors, UNICEF has had some success in incentivizing government staff to work in areas to which they have been displaced, in places that are considered hard-to-reach or in IDP camps, as 'volunteers' that receive a stipend. This has been less successful with teaching staff, partly because UNICEF has taken the decision not to pay top-up stipends to teachers, but also because of the perceived threat to schools and staff from NSAGs. In some LGAs, the reach of government services was said to be very limited outside garrison towns because of security concerns and staff not being able or willing to work in remote locations.

The general underdevelopment of the north-east, linked to the lower educational standards, combined with limited government capacity and willingness to take responsibility for service delivery have meant that it has been problematic to deliver quality standards through the partnership with the Government. Interviews with a range of internal and external informants raised concerns about this. While UNICEF has sought to provide technical support and training, it has proved difficult to entirely address these limitations, which require long-term solutions. This should come as no surprise, given the difficult context under which the partnership is performing, but it does limit the potential for effective programme delivery.

UNICEF staff, but also INGO partners contracted to provide capacity development support to the Government raised concerns about several factors that negatively affect the coverage and quality of interventions delivered



through the Government. First, the high turnover among government staff means that, periodically, capacity gains are lost and training has to start again, which raises questions about the sustainability advantage of working through the Government. Second, although UNICEF advocates for the Government to make minimum budgetary commitments to basic service delivery by sector, key informants indicated that budget lines might be created on paper, but are rarely met with financial allocations in practice, resulting in under-resourced or poor-quality interventions. The interviewees for this evaluation suggested that UNICEF should take a stronger stance with the Government to fulfil its responsibilities in the response. Third, many informants considered the willingness of some government institutions, and especially the Borno State Government, to acknowledge the magnitude of humanitarian needs and to allocate commensurate resources for an appropriate response to be limited.

### **4.3.2 Partnerships with local, national and international NGOs**

**Partnerships with local and national NGOs have enabled UNICEF to expand coverage because organizations are based in, or willing to travel to, areas where UNICEF staff cannot go. However, most of these NGOs have had limited humanitarian experience, resulting in variable programme quality. Initially, INGOs were relatively slow to establish a presence in BAY states. With their increased presence in recent years, they have offered UNICEF a mechanism to deliver greater coverage with a level of quality that the CO has found difficult to achieve through other partnerships. Overall, there is an opportunity for UNICEF to invest more systematically in localization to strengthen response capacity and connect to longer-term perspectives.**

#### **Capacity and capacity development for localization**

As outlined in section 2 above, humanitarian experience and capacity have been limited in Nigeria and so, while local and national NGOs have participated in development programming, they are far less experienced in humanitarian response. Interviews with UNICEF staff and peer agencies suggested that programme quality was variable as a consequence, although a small number of NGOs were considered to have greater capacity. The concern here was that the NGOs with the greatest capacity also have the greatest demand for their services, which places an additional burden on them and

risks stretching their capacity to the limit. With targeted capacity development and technical support, interviewees suggested that local and national NGOs were able to deliver good-quality programmes, albeit on a limited scale.

UNICEF has recognized the limitations that exist when working with local and national NGOs. Its approach has been to focus on strengthening technical capacity and, to a lesser extent, project and financial management. Several of the NGOs interviewed spoke of having received training on specific technical areas, and on the CCCs and Sphere standards, and were familiar with UNICEF's approach to monitoring and reporting requirements. A number have now worked with UNICEF for several years in the north-east and therefore have greater familiarity with its work.

*'The partnership with UNICEF has been fantastic. The communication is very good, and there is a great deal of mutual understanding and respect.'*

*-UNICEF implementing partner (Nigerian NGO)*

All Nigerian NGOs interviewed considered that there was considerable scope to strengthen capacity development, with a view to obtaining support that went beyond programme implementation and technical capacity. However, the evaluation team found little evidence of UNICEF investment in supporting institutional capacity-building. The TOR for the evaluation made specific reference to

UNICEF's contribution to advancing Grand Bargain commitments on localization, which are also a part of its Global 2018–2021 Strategy. While UNICEF has advanced this through its partnerships with Government, there is significant scope to do so in its partnerships with local and national NGOs. NGO partners also confirmed a common pattern across UNICEF COs that was highlighted in the 2020 Humanitarian Review: 'UNICEF's bureaucratic procedures often delay and complicate partnerships with local civil society organizations and national NGOs and give the relationship a contractual nature, leaving little space for discussions with local partners on programming approaches.'<sup>90</sup> This is discussed further in section 5.3.

With the conflict in Nigeria now in its twelfth year, beyond UNICEF's strategic commitments, there are very practical reasons for it to engage strategically with NGO partners that can play an important role in strengthening both the coverage and quality of UNICEF's response in future years.

INGOs are generally thought to have the capacity required to deliver good-quality services. Interviews for this evaluation endorsed this perception. Most INGOs have resources to provide training to their staff, who generally have a greater awareness of issues linked to quality standards, principled programming and project management. The

INGOs' partnership agreements with UNICEF often include capacity development tasks for national NGO and government implementing partners.

INGOs may be able to deliver quality at scale, but they are also considered to be less cost-effective than their local and national counterparts. Some sub-contract the implementation of UNICEF interventions to Nigerian NGOs, adding a further layer of administration and overhead. Moreover, several UNICEF staff and partners characterized the INGOs involved in the response to have become 'big and UN-like'; attributes that were associated with limited flexibility and a perceived level of risk aversion that meant INGO staff rarely travelled to deep-field locations.

## Risk management and risk transfer

Regarding security and risk management, INGOs can draw on support from the International NGO Safety Organization (INSO). United Nations and INGO staff gave positive feedback about the engagement, assistance and analysis of INSO, which was also considered to benefit from good networks with the Nigerian military and other security actors. Many INGOs also have their own security staff to advise on security and risk management and who are responsible for supporting staff and building local networks.

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<sup>90</sup> UNICEF (2020), Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action - The Humanitarian Review: Findings and Recommendations, p.67.

National NGO partners said that UNICEF had occasionally passed on security information, which they found extremely helpful, but this did not happen systematically and there had not been a focus on training or on supporting or strengthening security and risk management. NGOs felt that there was insufficient space in their budgets to cover security-related costs (accommodation, vehicles and communications).

*'UNICEF does not share security alerts, but some of the UNICEF officers share information when necessary. But it is not systemic or official.'*

*-UNICEF implementing partner (Nigerian NGO)*

The evaluation found that the risks that would have been borne by UNICEF staff have, in large part, been transferred to local and national NGO partners that do not have the same level of resources as UNICEF to manage them. Although some local and national NGO partners might have better contextual knowledge and access to contacts with localized risk information, the evaluation shows that this is not the case across all partners. It is general UNICEF practice that the organization does not take responsibility for partner security management,<sup>91</sup> which would likely overwhelm its resources.

## 4.4 The role of programme monitoring to identify and address gaps in coverage and quality

Since UNICEF implements its interventions through a wide range of partnerships, it is imperative to monitor quality and coverage of its activities to ensure the organization understands where and how its programmes contribute to humanitarian outcomes. This section discusses the use of HPM by the emergency team, programmatic monitoring by sections, and how data and information are handled and used to manage the coverage and quality of the response.

### 4.4.1 Humanitarian performance monitoring

**UNICEF's emergency team has successfully institutionalized a robust HPM mechanism that periodically generates actionable information on challenges and gaps for a sample of humanitarian interventions. Given the limited extent of integrated programming, it is not surprising that HPM is focused on snapshots of individual sections rather than contributing to improving cross-sectoral analysis or performance.**

<sup>91</sup> See, for example: UNICEF (2012), Remote Programming in Humanitarian Action, EMOPS. Annex 8: Engaging with Partners on Security.



HPM is an approach to ensure results-based management of humanitarian action. It is meant to combine the most feasible data collection mechanisms available to the CO to generate information on UNICEF's performance against targets and the quality of the response on the ground. The data should allow programme managers to make effective decisions with a view to meeting their accountability for results and to the people in need. The evaluation sought to assess the effectiveness of UNICEF's programme monitoring mechanisms in identifying and addressing gaps in coverage and quality.

The NCO emergency team has successfully institutionalized an HPM mechanism that has remained fully operational since the phase 1 evaluation in 2018 when it was last reviewed (see *Figure 7*). Interviews with UNICEF staff and a review of the HPM documentation (data collection tools, plans and reports) suggest that the system of monitoring a sub-sample of humanitarian intervention sites each month continues to achieve the purpose of providing a snapshot of output quality across a large

programme and multiple sectors. The HPM reports make reference to CCC and Sphere standards, providing balanced feedback that highlights achievements in addition to noting the challenges.

The HPM recommendation matrix is used systematically to highlight required follow-up actions, assigning them a priority, identifying the responsible staff member and indicating whether remedial action has been taken or not. While the evaluation team is not able to comment on the extent to which the issues that were identified have been resolved and the timeliness of the action taken, the approach used in BAY states appears to be robust regarding what it can realistically deliver: the emergency team coordinates with programme sections in advance to rotate through geographic locations and intervention sites, ensuring a relatively balanced coverage of partners and programmes with HPM visits. The type of information collected and the tracking of issues and follow-up actions are transparent and systematic.

Given the limited extent of integrated programming, it is not surprising that HPM is focused on individual sections rather than contributing to improving cross-sectoral analysis or performance. Nonetheless, each HPM report covers all sectors visited during a given monthly monitoring round. Therefore, it has the potential to play a role in fostering integration, or at least in highlighting areas where convergence would be beneficial.

The evaluation team did not observe this in practice and, given the significant workload of the emergency team that leads on HPM, it is likely to be beyond the team's capacity as it is currently configured. UNICEF's recent Humanitarian Review flagged this as a concern across many emergency contexts: 'UNICEF's approach to humanitarian data collection has been less holistic, resulting in a series of snapshots rather than a full panorama.'<sup>92</sup>

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**FIGURE 7**  
UNICEF Nigeria HPM process and workflow<sup>93</sup>

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- Revisit the monitoring work plan
- Request programme briefs for site visits from sections
- Training sessions with data collection supporting staff
- Contact focal person on ground to support (security, accommodation, FGDs).
  
- Service point observation (e.g. clinic, toilets, etc.)
- KIIs with service providers
- FGDs
- Supply end-user monitoring.
  
- Field notes consolidated and draft report prepared
- Draft report and recommendations shared with sections
- Recommendations follow-up matrix prepared to monitor progress
- Final report prepared and circulated.

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92 UNICEF (2020), Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action - The Humanitarian Review: Findings and Recommendations.

93 Authors' illustration based on: UNICEF Nigeria (2018), Nigeria Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Monthly Rounds, Framework for Core Functions, December 2018. Unpublished.

While HPM, which is led by UNICEF's emergency team, is a cornerstone of results and quality monitoring of the humanitarian response, it can only cover a small sample of interventions and sites across UNICEF's extensive programme portfolio. Programme monitoring is primarily the responsibility of each programme section.

#### **4.4.2 Programme monitoring and quality assurance**

**Overall practices on programme implementation and quality monitoring, which are the responsibility of programme sections, leave room for improvement. Partners indicated that there was limited follow-up from UNICEF staff on programme quality, with field monitoring being a rare occurrence for most. Programmatic monitoring visits appeared to be undertaken for only a small sub-sample of partners and intervention sites across all sections, with limited or no systematic management of the information generated through these visits.**

Partner reporting, routine field monitoring and PMVs by UNICEF, an assurance activity under the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers (HACT), are the main means to assess programme quality and progress towards results. TPFs have also been used to support monitoring functions. Some programme sections, in particular health and to a lesser extent child protection, can rely on well-established management information systems

(MIS) that generate data on indicators related to outputs and quality.

The evaluation team reviewed PMV reports related to the humanitarian response for all sections from 2018 to 2020. For any given year, between three and seven reports had been shared per section, putting the extent of programmatic monitoring activities into perspective, given the relatively large scale of the response. Since PMVs are generally undertaken by UNICEF staff, the reach of the monitoring visits tended to be limited to locations within Maiduguri or in the LGA capitals that are accessible by helicopter, which only partially covers the programme.

The majority of UNICEF staff interviewed in the evaluation, including senior management, considered the current quality monitoring and assurance practices to leave room for improvement. UNICEF relies heavily on reporting from implementing partners for information on programme results and quality, partly owing to the limited access and field mobility of UNICEF staff, as discussed above. Several partners indicated that, when UNICEF followed up on reports they had submitted, the conversations mostly revolved around quantitative targets rather than deeper discussions on managing programme quality. Multiple partners appreciated the quarterly and, for some, monthly office-based meetings with UNICEF to discuss progress, but rarely saw UNICEF staff who came to observe interventions in the field. A senior UNICEF staff member involved in the response summarised the dilemma as follows:

*'Not being able to monitor our humanitarian programmes closely is a hard reality. I think this is partly due to personal preference – some people have become used to not traveling to the field very much – and partly due to an organizational risk aversion. We have been over-reliant on UNDSS. They definitely have a valuable advisory role, but our staff don't realize that UNDSS does not say "you can't go". It is always a managerial decision from UNICEF to use this information and decide to go to the field or not. So, we might be a bit too risk averse, and this has created somewhat of a disconnection from the field. BUT it is important to keep in mind that there has been a stable pattern and trend of humanitarians being attacked, so we cannot take this lightly! But our risk analysis could be deeper.'*

*- UNICEF staff member, Maiduguri*

UNICEF staff members suggested that TPFs could play a stronger role in supporting implementation and quality monitoring in the field, but that UNICEF would need to provide them with additional training and the right tools for this. As one interviewee put it:

*'Even when our facilitators have the right technical background, they don't know what they are meant to be looking for if we don't equip them with the right tools.'*

*- UNICEF staff member, Maiduguri*

UNICEF's leadership in Nigeria indicated that a process was under way to strengthen programmatic monitoring holistically, to connect progress tracking against milestones and results with financial data, supplies, and context and risk analysis. The enhanced measures are envisaged to be in place by the end of 2021. The evaluation supports this move and suggests specific measures to strengthen quality monitoring of the humanitarian response, as further detailed in the recommendations (see section 6).

#### **4.4.3 Cross-cutting findings on programme monitoring: vast potential for digitalization**

**The CO has not yet utilized the potential of what modern IT solutions can offer. HPM and programme monitoring data are handled mostly 'offline', in MS Word documents and MS Excel files. Information is not easily accessible, analysed and visualized to inform decision-making. The CO stands to gain significantly from investing in digitizing its monitoring and reporting processes. In mid-2021, the office introduced an electronic PMV system, which is expected to improve this situation once in full use.**

The evaluation was surprised to note that an operation the size of the Nigerian humanitarian response has been run mostly offline. Large volumes of information are generated in the planning and reporting on HPM and PMVs, yet all of it is done in desktop MS Excel files

and lengthy MS Word documents, which are emailed around the office. Information is not digitally geo-referenced. This means that it is difficult for programme managers to access and process these large amounts of data and to gain a holistic understanding of the geographic reach and thematic coverage of monitoring activities.

Part of the underlying reason might be that UNICEF HQ has continued to tell its COs that its corporate 'e-Tools'<sup>94</sup> suite would eventually cater for such functionalities, so COs have held off investing in their own solutions. However, the same indications for 'additional e-Tools functions soon to come' have been communicated by HQ since the 2018 phase 1 evaluation in Nigeria and, in fact, much longer than this in other COs. There is also UNICEF's corporate hesitancy to let COs invest in information technology (IT) solutions that involve online, server-based software and data management, because of the privacy and IT security risks. Taken together, this has resulted in COs – including in Nigeria – not considering or shying away from establishing IT-based monitoring and reporting tools. It may also be partly due to CO staff not wanting to engage in the perceived administrative burden to first get permission and then procure software solutions.

In mid-2021, the CO introduced an electronic PMV (e-PMV) system that is intended to digitalize the information collected during PMVs. Going beyond the core HACT requirements, the e-PMV form lets UNICEF staff share their first-hand impressions of the extent to which the targeted beneficiaries of an intervention were reached, and enter data for supply end-user monitoring. The e-PMV is a significant step in the right direction towards digitizing programme management, and monitoring and tracking follow-up of issues. However, the evaluation did not find evidence of the tool informing programme management, and no interviewees mentioned it.

The humanitarian response in the north-east stands to gain vastly from digital solutions that allow for analysing, visualizing and mapping data automatically on dashboards, making it easier for programme managers and staff – and, if desired, even partners – to understand which interventions are not moving according to plan, where pressing issues require attention, and which intervention sites have not been visited for a long time. Data security would be of paramount importance. UNICEF implementing partners indicated that they would welcome more IT-based monitoring solutions, but also said that maps of their intervention sites must not fall into the wrong hands because it would expose their staff and make them easy targets for NSAGs.

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<sup>94</sup> See: <https://etools.unicef.org>.

## 4.5 Maintaining relevance

Maintaining operational relevance in contexts of ever-changing needs requires humanitarian actors to pay attention to context, to be accountable to and shaped by the communities they serve, and to be connected to the long-term perspective.<sup>95</sup> These aspects of relevance are discussed below.

### 4.5.1 Context, conflict and political economy analysis to inform the humanitarian response

**Despite UNICEF guidance emphasizing the importance of context analysis and adapting programmes to contextual needs, there was no evidence of regular context analysis of the programme in north-east Nigeria to ensure that it adapts its approaches and delivery mechanisms to the changing context. This makes it difficult for UNICEF to have confidence that it is maximizing its potential to achieve coverage and quality. A comprehensive analysis of the context and political economy would also go a long way towards developing a holistic strategy for the north-east.**

The evaluation did not find evidence of substantial context and conflict analysis being

undertaken or commissioned by UNICEF. The CO's senior management concurred that there had been weaknesses in collective leadership in the north-east, especially on analysis, and limited efforts to develop a strategic vision for where the response was trying to go, given the challenging and changing context. Overall, there was agreement among UNICEF and development partner interviewees who spoke on the issue that focusing on needs assessment alone was insufficient to inform a context-sensitive response.

This is not unique to the response in north-east Nigeria. UNICEF's 2020 Humanitarian Review found that:

*'Many COs reported challenges with contextual analysis, stating that if UNICEF cannot understand the context, it will not be able to deliver an appropriate emergency response. (...) As humanitarian contexts become more complex, so must humanitarians' analysis. (...) With a shrinking humanitarian space, UNICEF must ensure it has a robust, methodological and rigorous analysis where specialist political analysis is used alongside humanitarian analysis to help predict future humanitarian challenges'*<sup>96</sup>

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95 UNICEF (2013), Strengthening humanitarian action: Background paper; unpublished. See also Ramalingam, B. and Mitchell, J. (2014), Responding to change needs? Challenges and opportunities for humanitarian action, Montreux XIII Meeting Paper; ALNAP (2014) Montreux XIII Humanitarian Retreat, Convenors Conclusions.

96 UNICEF (2020), Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action - The Humanitarian Review: Findings and Recommendations, p.76.

Over the years, UNICEF Nigeria has had to adapt its response to emerging humanitarian needs, and the scale of displacement has meant that UNICEF has had to continually expand its presence and programme as the situation escalated. Its history of programming in the north-east has meant that it is better positioned than many to contribute to context analyses. However, staff turnover has led to there being limited institutional memory

of UNICEF's decision-making processes and how its programme has changed over time. The challenge for UNICEF now lies in ensuring that programme approaches remain relevant in a complex context where many parameters have changed, but humanitarian access has completely stalled. The body of relevant external research on the north-east is unfortunately thin.<sup>97</sup>



## BOX 6

### The role of cross-sectoral and sector-specific strategies to guide analysis and operations

In-depth context and conflict analyses would allow humanitarian actors to identify transformational programming opportunities for providing life-saving assistance while connecting their interventions to more sustainable solutions towards peace and development objectives.

In the absence of more profound analysis and strategic programme approaches, Nigeria's three-year Humanitarian Response Strategy (HRS) 2019–2021 for the north-east reflects a constructive and pragmatic approach to operating under 'status quo' conditions. It provides a light-touch situation analysis, summarizes shared knowledge on underlying causes of the conflict, and offers a set of priorities to guide the response, including on gender- and age-sensitive programming, principled access through acceptance, and enhanced community engagement. Unfortunately, the strategy does not map out knowledge gaps, and fails to identify priority areas for analysis and research of strategic importance, a missed opportunity given the visibility of the HRS.

It is noteworthy that several programme clusters have felt the need to complement the high-level HRS with more detailed, sector-specific strategies.

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<sup>97</sup> One of the few recent examples appears to be an FCDO-funded study on the war economy in BAY states. See: Williams, A. (2020), War Economy in North East Nigeria, K4D Helpdesk Report 734. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

The **WASH** sector has developed a ‘3-year WASH Response Strategy for North-East Nigeria: 2021–2023’.<sup>98</sup> The document presents short situation analyses, synthesizes the most relevant legal frameworks governing the sector and sets guiding principles for all partners. The remainder of the strategy is very operations-oriented and reads as a high-level, multi-year work plan, but it is commendable that partners have started to take a long-term view rather than to remain in firefighting mode from year to year.

The **nutrition** sector has established a ‘Sector Strategy and Response Plan 2020–2022’,<sup>99</sup> which includes a summary of the drivers of malnutrition in north-east Nigeria and provides a synthesis of key challenges for the nutrition response, along with a short outlook on how the situation might evolve. The document then identifies strategic focus areas and specific operational objectives that are to be pursued depending on the type of context in which a location is understood to be. All in all, the nutrition sector strategy is a well-developed, articulate and relatively strong strategic guidance document.

The **EiE Working Group** in has started developing a ‘Localization Strategy’ and an ‘Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) in Education Strategy for North-East Nigeria’.<sup>100</sup> Neither is suitable nor aims to guide overall analysis or the strategic programme direction, but these efforts are indicative of the fact that (a) many in the humanitarian community are looking for a common-sense strategic direction and vision for the response; and (b) in the absence of common approaches and more detailed multi-partner strategies, clusters have begun to develop their own.

A review of the WASH and education strategies suggests that, while they represent commendable efforts to develop guiding documents, they leave room for improvement. This is not surprising, given that operational cluster coordinators are not necessarily experts in strategy development and may write or commission the drafting to consultants. Beyond these individual efforts, the HCT would be better placed to lead the development of a more comprehensive humanitarian strategy and vision, and to prioritize, oversee and support the development of more sector-specific or thematic strategy documents, for example on localization and AAP, which are relevant to all sectors.

98 WASH Sector Nigeria (2021), 3-year WASH Response Strategy for north-east Nigeria: 2021–2023.

99 Nigeria Nutrition in Emergencies (2020), Sector Strategy and Response Plan.

100 Education in Emergencies Working Group Nigeria (2021), EiEWG Accountability to Affected Population in Education Strategy for North-East Nigeria, draft for comments, November 2021. The localization strategy document was not yet available for review.

UNICEF's current 'North-East Strategy' draft document primarily clusters locations according to their status as being in a state of acute emergency, protracted crisis or early recovery, and maps applicable programme approaches and partnerships across the three categories. The document is not grounded in a more foundational diagnosis of contextual factors, which does not exist, and does not contain other elements one would typically expect to find in a strategy document: context analysis, lessons learned, guiding principles and overall goals. However, the strategic approaches by key area listed in the document are, albeit succinct, highly relevant and can be expanded on.

#### **4.5.2 Community engagement to strengthen accountability and programme quality**

**UNICEF engages with affected populations in its humanitarian response in a number of different ways, but the patchwork of approaches lacks consistency, coherence and follow-up, meaning that it is still some way from meeting UNICEF's corporate aspirations and commitments on AAP. This indicates that there is a significant opportunity to strengthen accountability and programme relevance by establishing a systematic AAP mechanism in NCO.**

AAP is a key component in ensuring the quality of UNICEF's programming. The revised CCCs commit UNICEF to 'ensure that all vulnerable, at-risk and crisis-affected populations supported through its humanitarian action are able to hold UNICEF to account for promoting and protecting their rights and generating effective results for them, taking into account their needs, concerns and preferences, and working in ways that enhance their dignity, capacities and resilience'.<sup>101</sup> Numerous new guidelines and corporate procedures have recently been released to anchor AAP more firmly in UNICEF operations. Most recently, the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) published 'Accountability to Affected Populations: a handbook for UNICEF and partners',<sup>102</sup> which contains practical guidance on how to integrate AAP at country level and implement it in programmes. Community engagement is meant to go beyond C4D to include 'processes for listening to and communicating with people in order to better understand their needs, vulnerabilities and capacities, and gathering, responding to and acting on their feedback'.<sup>103</sup>

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101 See <https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org>, accessed on 30 October 2021.

102 UNICEF (2020), Accountability to Affected Populations: a handbook for UNICEF and partners, Geneva: EMOPS, June 2020.

103 Ibid., p. viii (Glossary).

UNICEF engages with communities it assists in BAY states in several different ways:

- by taking account of community feedback during assessments
- through the interactions that UNICEF staff and consultants have with those using humanitarian services
- through its C4D activities
- consulting communities in a more targeted way during programme monitoring (which, outside of Maiduguri town, is most frequently undertaken by TPFs).

This engagement is largely for the purposes of assessing needs, disseminating information about humanitarian services and obtaining a snapshot of user satisfaction with humanitarian assistance.

Interviews with UNICEF staff and implementing partners in Maiduguri revealed a mosaic of different approaches to community engagement, a commitment to which was said to be incorporated in all partnership agreements. The community engagement mechanisms that were shared mostly pertained to some form of complaints response mechanism (CRM), such as complaints boxes and the use of a dedicated phone line – in the majority of cases not toll-free, meaning that

community members rarely or never used it. These CRM approaches can make an important contribution to strengthening accountability if they are linked to a formal process of reviewing and responding to complaints and making changes to programmes – which they are not in the case of UNICEF's response in north-east Nigeria. Occasionally, UNICEF has also used its U-Report platform to solicit feedback on specific interventions. It is worth noting that the HCT established a 'Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan for North-East Nigeria' in 2018.<sup>104</sup> Evidently, this has not translated into substantial operational AAP mechanisms on the ground. A recent assessment of the AAP situation in Borno State found that, when given the opportunity, community members generally appreciated the ability to provide feedback and engage directly with humanitarian actors.<sup>105</sup>

Based on interviews with UNICEF staff and implementing partners, the evaluation found no systematic efforts on the part of UNICEF to access, understand, follow up on or use community feedback and complaints that partners might have received to inform humanitarian programming. UNICEF's INGO partners in particular appeared to have more robust CRM, but UNICEF staff rarely – if ever – showed any particular interest in the information generated through these.

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<sup>104</sup> United Nations (2018), Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan for North-East Nigeria, June 2018 – June 2020, developed with the support of the AAP Working Group and endorsed by the HCT on 9 November 2018.

<sup>105</sup> REACH (2021), Accountability to Affected Populations Situation Overview, Borno State, Nigeria.

The AAP practices in NCO are reflective of the status quo in most COs. UNICEF's 2020 Humanitarian Review concluded that 'UNICEF and its partners have no systematic approach to AAP.'<sup>106</sup> A survey among UNICEF COs revealed that 50 per cent had systems to ensure community participation, while only 38 per cent had established feedback mechanisms that could inform programme decision-making.<sup>107</sup> In summary, the Humanitarian Review estimates that 'less than half of UNICEF's COs manage to achieve more than 50 per cent of the organization's AAP goals.'<sup>108</sup> Regarding UNICEF's lack of follow-up on community feedback, the Humanitarian Review found that:

*'Where existing feedback mechanisms do cover programme-related complaints, there is seldom a system to ensure that feedback is acted on. In failing to engage affected populations effectively, UNICEF risks implementing programming that is not well targeted, that is culturally inappropriate or that does not fully address the needs of the affected population.'*

- UNICEF Humanitarian Review 2020<sup>109</sup>



While it is acknowledged that the complex context of the response in north-east Nigeria means that even basic assistance modalities may be difficult to deliver in hard-to-reach areas, let alone more feedback-responsive approaches, UNICEF Nigeria stands to gain from establishing a more systematic, formalized system for gauging programme relevance as part of an approach that seeks to adapt to the changing context and needs. UNICEF's senior leadership in Nigeria indicated that establishing a more systematic AAP mechanism was a top priority and is intended to be operationalized later in 2021 or early 2022.

<sup>106</sup> UNICEF (2020), Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action - The Humanitarian Review: Findings and Recommendations, p.69.

<sup>107</sup> UNICEF (2019), AAP Strategic Monitoring Questionnaire Analysis 2019, quoted in: UNICEF (2020), Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action - The Humanitarian Review: Findings and Recommendations.

<sup>108</sup> UNICEF (2020), Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action - The Humanitarian Review: Findings and Recommendations, p.69.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p.70.

#### **4.5.3 Connecting to the longer-term perspective: humanitarian action, development and peacebuilding**

**All UNICEF programme sections have been attempting to ensure that humanitarian programmes include a longer-term development perspective to improve quality and sustainability. However, ongoing insecurity and the Government's lack of capacity and willingness to take responsibility for basic service delivery remain significant challenges to achieving long-term coverage and quality objectives and, ultimately, peace and stability.**

In recent years, UNICEF has undertaken several corporate initiatives to strengthen the link between its humanitarian and development work globally. In 2019, a new 'Procedure on Linking Humanitarian and Development (LHD) Programming' was issued.<sup>110</sup> In 2020, the Evaluation Office commissioned a 'Formative Evaluation of UNICEF Work to Link Humanitarian and Development Programming'.<sup>111</sup> The latter highlighted that UNICEF's approach to the humanitarian, development and peace nexus as 'linking humanitarian and development' programming neglects the peacebuilding dimension. This may reflect a heavily divided structure that

has developed over time, with programmes compartmentalized into humanitarian or development interventions, with similar divisions in funding cycles and narratives. UNICEF's internal structures and processes that usually separate humanitarian and development programming mirror this division.

LHD for UNICEF has been defined more comprehensively in the glossary that accompanies the revised CCC:

*'Fostering the coherence and complementarity between humanitarian and development actions to strengthen systems that deliver essential services to the most vulnerable and marginalized populations (...) and [interventions that] are designed to strengthen policies and programmes related to climate change, disaster risk reduction and peacebuilding.'*

*- Core Commitments for Children<sup>112</sup>*

All UNICEF sections have, to varying degrees, attempted to use their humanitarian programmes to contribute to systems and capacity strengthening in the north-east. For example, education partners have begun

<sup>111</sup> UNICEF (2021), Formative Evaluation of UNICEF Work to Link Humanitarian and Development Programming. UNICEF Evaluation Office, New York.

<sup>112</sup> UNICEF (2020), Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, New York.

to integrate temporary learning spaces into schools so that these can eventually be turned into additional regular classrooms, and the EiE programme works to connect non-formal learning with formal education pathways. In health, nutrition and child protection, UNICEF builds and rehabilitates local facilities and community structures and trains staff and volunteers to maintain services even in the absence of a UNICEF intervention. Similarly, the WASH section invests in village-level operation and maintenance teams, which are local structures that are intended to help sustain interventions even after UNICEF support has ended. Moreover, capacity strengthening plays an important role in system building and sustainability (see section 4.3 above).

UNICEF interviewees indicated that their programmes had mostly switched back into 'development mode' in large parts of Adamawa and Yobe, and in some parts of Borno State that had been relatively stable for extended periods of time. In the twelfth year of the conflict, the Government is evidently keen to argue that the situation has stabilized, as illustrated by the Borno State 25-Year Development Framework (see section 2.2.3). At the same time, given the Government's limitations, there was consensus among four out of five UNICEF staff who spoke on the nexus issue that UNICEF programmes were at risk of substituting and delivering basic public services that the Government was unable or unwilling to provide. One international agency partner of UNICEF characterized the situation as follows:

*'National staff employed in public services will not want to go to the north-east. The area does not attract strong staff. So, the aid sector comes in as a substitute. We need to be aware of this. It provides no good basis for handing over the response to government from a nexus perspective, and for building on it to achieve development goals.'*

*- United Nations agency staff partnering with UNICEF*

UNICEF's senior management indicated a strong interest in strengthening nexus programming in the north-east and was in the process of securing support from one donor agency, the German Development Bank (KfW), to fund a €40 million resilience programme in Borno State, albeit in two already relatively stable, easy-to-access LGAs. The partnership will include a political economy analysis and will have a major emphasis on peacebuilding.

## 4.6 Advocacy

This section reviews how effectively UNICEF has influenced others to strengthen protection and to increase the quality and coverage of humanitarian action in north-east Nigeria. First, the evaluation reviews the reporting on grave violations, which is one of UNICEF's main mechanisms for speaking out against protection concerns. Second, this section will look at the use of advocacy for humanitarian access (see also section 4.1 on humanitarian access more generally).

#### **4.6.1 Reporting on grave violations**

**The evaluation found that the process of collecting and verifying evidence on alleged grave violations was rigorous and systematic, albeit limited to areas currently accessible to humanitarian actors. Despite capacity and coverage constraints, the MRM is widely thought to contribute meaningfully to an enabling environment for child protection in north-east Nigeria. The MRM draws on some of UNICEF's core areas of expertise and allows it to demonstrate its added value in the United Nations response.**

The operational core of UNICEF's capability for advocacy in Nigeria is the MRM, which was established in 2012 to enable the systematic collection of evidence on six types of grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. The MRM is currently deployed in 13 countries, including Nigeria. At country level, the MRM is overseen by the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting, which is co-chaired by UNICEF and the RC/HC.

To date, information gathered in Nigeria under the MRM has fed into global reports of the United Nations Secretary General (UNSG) on Children and Armed Conflict, submitted annually to the United Nations General Assembly, as well as two country-specific reports of the UNSG, released in 2017 and 2020. Evidence gathered under the MRM provides the basis for advocacy work conducted globally and in-country, both directly

by UNICEF and through advocacy relays, including civil society organizations.

The MRM as an advocacy mechanism is notable for its direct links with a range of highly specialised child protection activities. In Nigeria, it informs UNICEF's ongoing engagement with NAF, aimed at obtaining the release of children with alleged ties with armed groups. It also connects with the rehabilitation of these children at the Bulumkutu Transit Centre, run by the Borno State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MWASD) with UNICEF support. Finally, it interfaces with case management work done at community level to support the reintegration of alleged former child combatants, and to arrange for their reunification with their families.

It is worth noting that the grave violations monitored through the MRM include sexual violence against children. Reporting on the sex- and gender-based dimension of these violations dovetails with advocacy work on this thematic area, which has been the subject of annual reports of the UNSG since 2013. Denial of humanitarian access for children also features among the six grave violations monitored by the MRM. This is worth noting as it potentially adds weight to advocacy and engagement work aimed at improving access in north-east Nigeria.

The evaluation found that the process of collecting and verifying evidence on alleged grave violations was rigorous and systematic. The overwhelming proportion of

the information received on these allegations is conveyed to UNICEF through community-based child protection networks that have been established with its support. The allegations are verified on a case-by-case basis by UNICEF child protection personnel, with the assistance of TPFs. In interviews, UNICEF staff involved in data verification for the MRM displayed specific knowledge of protection monitoring and reporting practice and referenced dedicated guidance and training material on the subject.<sup>113</sup>

In the 12 months preceding 2021, 250 grave violations against children were recorded under the MRM in Nigeria.<sup>114</sup> Multiple interviewees noted that this number was likely well below the number of violations actually committed and was also significantly lower than the number of allegations received. In this, it is reflective of the methodological rigour of MRM practice. Of a comparatively large volume of allegations made, only limited numbers were retained through the MRM's verification and quality control processes. UNICEF staff involved in verification acknowledged that their capacity was limited; in these circumstances, priority was given to the quality and reliability of the data, with the possible effect of narrowing the range of allegations that could be verified.

According to multiple respondents, the low number of allegations reported under the MRM also reflects one of its main limitations; namely, that it only covers areas accessible to its monitoring personnel. There was a widely held view among interviewees that this resulted in systemic bias in reporting, and that the number of violations recorded would be significantly higher if coverage could extend to NSAG-held areas.

Regarding the volume of allegations processed, another recurrent observation among UNICEF respondents was that few United Nations or other aid actors took part in monitoring. A stated intention of the MRM is to rely for its coverage on the field presence of other humanitarian actors. To that end, the MRM has developed a range of support tools and guidance aimed at enabling third-party data collection to appropriate standards.<sup>115</sup> The limited participation of other aid actors in data collection on the ground was attributed to a lack of capacity. It was viewed as another factor contributing to fewer violations being reported than had actually been committed.

Assessing results at impact level in advocacy is notoriously difficult.<sup>116</sup> Nonetheless, despite the limitations in scope and capacity, there was

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<sup>113</sup> UNICEF (2014), Field Manual, Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) on Grave Violations Against Children in Situations of Armed Conflict.

<sup>114</sup> <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/>

<sup>115</sup> The MRM has a dedicated web portal leading to MRM guidelines, as well as the MRM manual and a training toolkit. See <https://www.mrmtools.org>

<sup>116</sup> See, for example, Teles, S. and Schmidt, M. (2011), The Elusive Craft of Evaluating Advocacy, Stanford Social Innovation review.



a clear sense among interviewees that the MRM had contributed in a meaningful way to an environment more conducive to child protection in north-east Nigeria. A view generally shared by non-UNICEF respondents was that the MRM had served to confirm UNICEF's credibility as a protection actor and had demonstrated its technical expertise and added value in a range of highly specialized sub-areas of protection. An example widely cited with reference to the MRM's impact was the 2021 delisting of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) from the UNSG's Report on Children in Armed Conflict. The delisting was directly linked to a sharp reduction in this armed group's recruitment of children into its ranks, following its signing with

the United Nations of an action plan to stop the recruitment of children and their use in armed conflict.<sup>117</sup> Specifically, the CJTF supported the disengagement of 2,203 girls and boys from its ranks since its endorsement of the workplan in 2017.<sup>118</sup> There was a widely held sense among interviewees that MRM reporting had contributed to this positive outcome, alongside active UNICEF engagement with the CJTF on the basis of the action plan.

Another example cited of the MRM's contribution to an enabling environment for child protection was the generally constructive working relationship between UNICEF and NAF, which holds an unknown number of

<sup>117</sup> 'An action Plan is a signed commitment that allows the United Nations to support a party to a conflict listed in the annexes of the Secretary General's Annual Report on Children and Armed Conflict, by laying out concrete and time-bound measures it must take to end and prevent the recruitment and use of children, as well as other grave violations' Source: Annex to UNICEF press release announcing CJTF signing of Action Plan to end recruitment of children, September 2017.

<sup>118</sup> United Nations (2020), Children in Armed Conflict in Nigeria, Report of the Secretary General, United Nations Security Council, 6 July 2020.

former child combatants linked to NSAGs in administrative custody.<sup>119</sup> Divergences of view remain on UNICEF's position that all children formerly linked with armed groups should be treated as victims and detained only as a last resort. Nonetheless, UNICEF respondents in the evaluation noted that the quality of dialogue with NAF had improved markedly on matters relating to child protection, with some children being referred directly to UNICEF and MWASD in the wake of military clearance operations, without undergoing detention.

More generally, interviewees shared a sense that MRM reporting provided a valuable backdrop to case management work done in child protection at community level. The reintegration of ex-child combatants in their communities was aided by the MRM's public recording of the type of experience they had probably endured. In this perspective, MRM reporting provided an element of accountability for rights violations carried out during the hostilities, and clearly placed ex-child combatants as victims.

#### **4.6.2 Advocacy for humanitarian access**

**In advocating for principled humanitarian access in north-east Nigeria, UNICEF must reckon with determined counterparts and a highly complex operating environment.**

**It must also balance its own advocacy and engagement work with the RC/HC's prerogative to set the orientation of UN-wide advocacy efforts. Although it has balanced these competing imperatives adeptly, results on humanitarian access remain elusive overall. At local level, UNICEF has registered notable successes in advocating on behalf of its partners.**

As noted above, there was a widely held view among respondents in the evaluation that humanitarian principles in the United Nations response have been deprioritized in favour of a posture of alignment with governmental and military authorities. This perception was common among non-United Nations sources, who did not differentiate markedly between the United Nations response and UNICEF's country programme. A frequent comment was that the principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality were not being substantively applied to operations on the ground. Several sources also expressed the view that some scepticism existed at senior levels of the United Nations on the applicability of these principles in the Nigerian context.

However, there was a strongly held view among respondents that, despite the need for hard security in a volatile context, this did not take away from the centrality of humanitarian

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<sup>119</sup> More than 220 children linked to armed groups were released from administrative custody in 2020. Source: UNICEF Press Release, March 2020.

principles. In particular, several sources viewed the principle of independence as critical to ensuring that humanitarian aid remained needs-based and effectively shielded from attempts at instrumentalization. Their concerns revolved around signs that the humanitarian response in north-east Nigeria might be drawn into a conflict-stabilization effort combining armed operations with the use of aid and economic assistance to bolster the Government's legitimacy in contested areas.<sup>120</sup>

A cause of equal concern to many respondents was a perceived reluctance on the part of the RC/HC to assert the neutrality and independence of the United Nations response. When queried on the subject, sources familiar with the RC/HC's position argued that a hardening of stance on the United Nations side was only likely to be reciprocated by the authorities, resulting in a possible breakdown in dialogue. The closure of multiple FOs belonging to two NGOs in September 2019,<sup>121</sup> following charges they were abetting the insurgency, does show a readiness on the part of the United Nation's Nigerian counterparts to enforce stringent conditions on the response.

In these conditions, UNICEF's advocacy for principled humanitarian access faces competing imperatives. On the one hand, UNICEF's prominence in the response through its leadership of five sectors, its key role in the RRM, and the youth-biased demographics of the response's targeted population<sup>122</sup> gives it a special responsibility to play a lead role in advocating for improved access. On the other hand, the principles of governance that underpin the United Nations inter-agency process do require UNICEF to defer to the RC/HC in matters relating to the United Nation's engagement with external stakeholders. Similarly, at operational level, there is an understanding that engagement and advocacy on access are coordinated by OCHA.

Few respondents were fully familiar with UNICEF's internal efforts to influence the collective posture of the United Nations on matters relating to access, and to the independence of the response. Those who were shared the view that UNICEF's senior management was measured yet steadfast and consistent in its advocacy for principled humanitarian action. At operational level, the

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120 The Nigerian Armed Forces' approach to counter-insurgency and conflict stabilisation is well documented. However, the extent to which it might undermine the UN's humanitarian response is yet to be established. For more information, see: Brechenmacher, S. (2019), Stabilising North-east Nigeria After Boko Haram, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

121 In September 2019, the Nigerian Armed Forces ordered Mercy Corps and Action Against Hunger to close several of the field offices.

122 60 per cent the 6.4 million people targeted in the 2021 HRP are under 17 years old. Source: United Nations (2021), Humanitarian Response Plan – Nigeria, 2021.

FO in Maiduguri was engaged in consultations with OCHA's Civil–Military Coordination Officer, in view of agreeing a common advocacy line on the need to achieve shorter lead times for the military clearance of RRM deployments. There was a sense from sources familiar with these consultations that UNICEF staff were reluctant to step up their direct engagement with military authorities, for fear of overstepping their bounds.

It is worth noting that at LGA level, three local implementing partners independently credited UNICEF for advocating on their behalf. In two cases, the result was the timelier deployment of health and nutrition workers by the Local Government Service Commission. The third case was described thus:

*"UNICEF supported us with high-level advocacy and influenced LGA authorities' decision about the deployment of female teachers in project areas, who play an important role as mentors for girls.'*

*- UNICEF implementing partner*



## 5. HOW DO UNICEF'S INPUTS ENABLE OR CONSTRAIN PROGRAMME COVERAGE AND QUALITY?

This section examines how UNICEF's organization and management of its people and funds have supported or hindered the relevance and effectiveness of UNICEF's coverage and quality in north-east Nigeria. This includes an assessment of human resources, resource mobilization and policies and procedures.

## KEY MESSAGES

- UNICEF Nigeria has phased out surge deployments and invested substantially in staff well-being, which has contributed to more continuity among staff.
- Most personnel in the Maiduguri FO appear to have significantly more experience in development programming than in humanitarian assistance. This determines the range of UNICEF's capacity and options for conducting context analysis, developing strategies and designing effective humanitarian interventions for coverage and quality.
- Despite significant fundraising efforts, UNICEF has seen a steady decline in ORE funding over the years, broadly in step with the decreasing inflow of ORR programming.
- There appears to be a certain level of donor fatigue, although the total volume of incoming funding is still significant. UNICEF has been able to finance sectoral responses consistently at 50 per cent to 60 per cent of HAC requirements, on average.
- UNICEF's inability to access USAID funding because of a conflict on principles is of concern and should be taken up by EMOPS.
- There has been no improvement in the slow pace of progress in establishing new or renewed partnership agreements since the 2018 evaluation raised this as a significant concern for the coverage and quality of the response. Delays in partnership processing, often between 2 and 8 months, have created frustration among staff, partners and donors and have led to breaks in humanitarian service delivery. Three years on, there is a pressing need to address this now.
- The supply and logistics functions have generally performed well in the humanitarian response, with UNICEF being a major contributor to the 'common pipeline' and procurement not having emerged as a significant constraint.

### 5.1 Human resources

**UNICEF has largely phased out surge deployments and regularized the staffing that drives the humanitarian response in north-east Nigeria. The CO and FO have invested substantially in staff well-being. Overall, this has led to more continuity among programme staff. Most personnel in the Maiduguri FO appear to have**

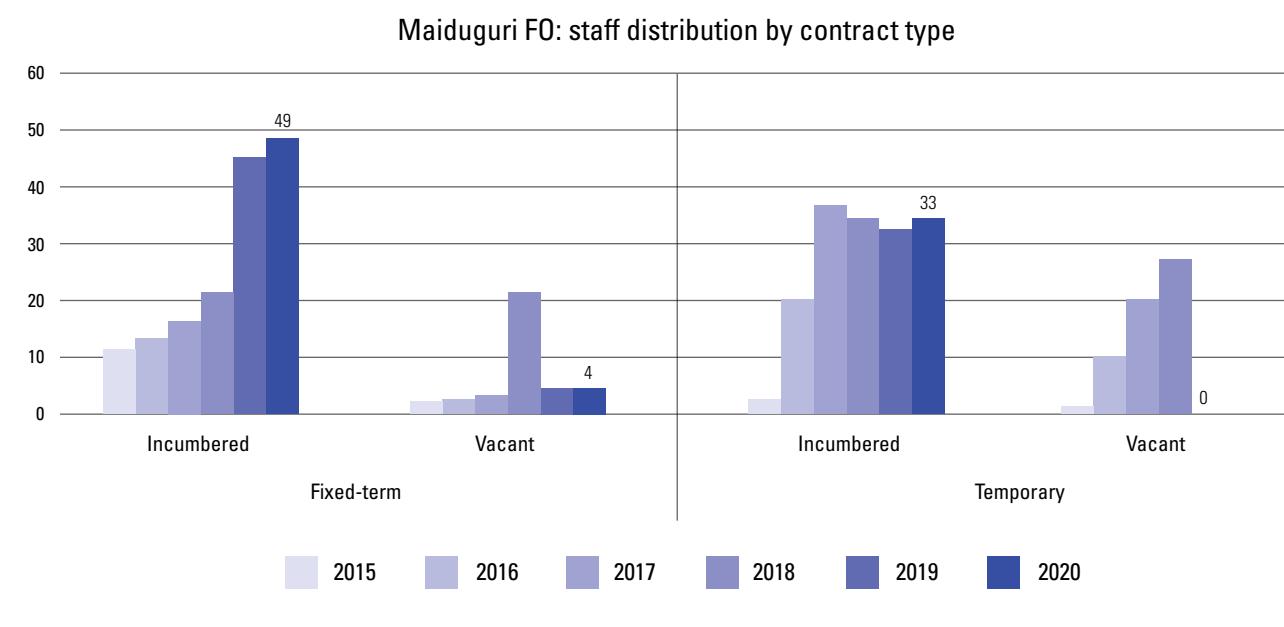
**significantly more experience in development programming than in humanitarian assistance, and no one dedicated to LHD or peacebuilding programmes. This determines the range of UNICEF's capacity and options for nexus-oriented analysis, strategy and programming. Gender balance and diversity among international staff have been highlighted as issues deserving attention.**

Following the rapid scale-up of the response in 2016 and 2017, UNICEF's staffing levels have stabilized at around 80 fixed-term and temporary positions in the Maiduguri FO in recent years (see *Figure 8*). An emergency team was only established in 2017 and has had a stable and slowly increasing presence ever since (see *Figure 9*). After the deactivation of the L3 emergency status in early 2019, UNICEF

has generally not used surge deployments, a decision that has frustrated some who would have liked to draw on additional expert capacity to respond to urgent needs, such as the recurring cholera outbreaks in the north-east. However, overall, this has contributed to a reduction in staff turnover, which was very high at the time of the 2018 evaluation.

## FIGURE 8

Staffing levels in the Maiduguri FO, 2015–2020<sup>123</sup>



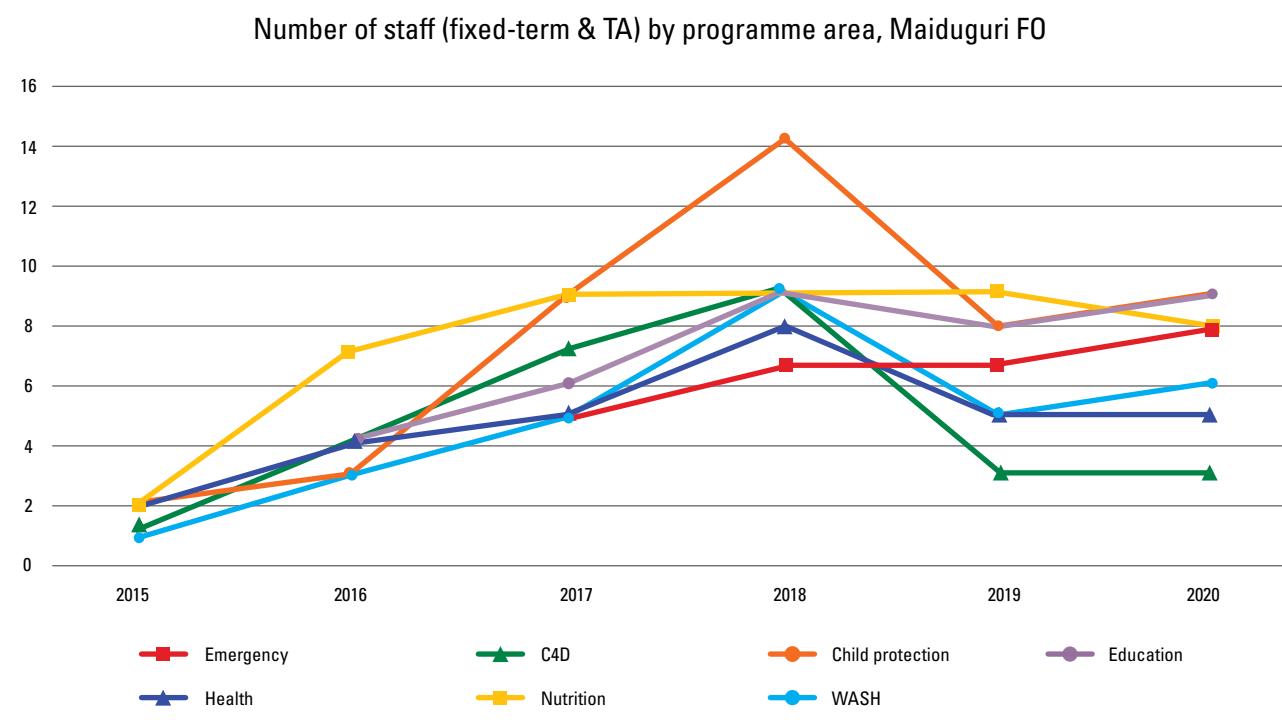
<sup>123</sup> The evaluation team is grateful to the HR team in the Maiduguri FO for having compiled the underlying data for the 2019–2020 period. The data for previous years was provided during phase 1 of the evaluation. It should be noted that the 2018 data was provided as of March that year, therefore the number of incumbered and vacant posts is unlikely to reflect the status at the end of that year. The increase in incumbered fixed-term positions was likely more gradual than the 'jump' from 2018 to 2019.

The proportion of temporary appointments (TA) in the Maiduguri FO, at nearly 40 per cent, is still substantial. Several staff indicated that the diminished appeal of TA positions weighed on staff morale and constituted a disincentive for staying on, ultimately leading to higher staff

turnover. Yet, the turnover rate was significantly lower than that found for 2015–2018. Moreover, UNICEF management indicated that the upcoming Programme Budget Review would regularize 10 TA positions to fixed-term posts, further strengthening staff continuity.

**FIGURE 9**

Number of staff (fixed-term and temporary) by programme area, 2015–2020<sup>124</sup>



124 It is again important to note that the 2018 data was provided as of March that year, therefore the number of incumbented and vacant posts is unlikely to reflect the status at the end of that year. A high number of vacant child protection positions in March 2018 explains the 'spike' in the 2018 line for that section.

UNICEF Nigeria management has taken deliberate steps to increase the appeal of Maiduguri as a duty station and of working on the emergency response. National staff in the FO can make use of special emergency compressed time-off (SECTO): they work one extra hour every day for nine weeks and get to take paid leave in the tenth week. This 'R&R for national staff' is usually only available in L3 emergencies, but the NCO – with the approval of the head of office – has instituted it in Nigeria for all staff engaged in the response as a measure to enhance staff well-being. The FO was also said to devote considerable time and resources in opportunities for staff capacity and career development. Combined with UNICEF's investments in office infrastructure, housing and humanitarian hubs, this has significantly contributed to creating an attractive, enabling work environment, so attracting staff. One UNICEF interview in the Maiduguri FO described the situation as follows:

*'National staff are excited to come here because of the extra incentives, and the environment in Maiduguri is not as bad as people expect.'*

*- UNICEF staff member, Maiduguri FO*

However, it has been more difficult to attract a gender-balanced cadre, with few women applying for national staff positions. Interviewees who could speak on the issue attributed this to the reputation of Maiduguri as being a challenging place to work, and the culture and gender norms prevalent in the

north-east. It has also been challenging to find a diverse field of qualified applicants for international positions, particularly from donor countries, owing to the perceived remoteness of Maiduguri as a place to live. There have also been difficulties in recruiting national and international staff with substantial experience of emergency programming.

*'Emergency skills and mindsets aren't always there, perhaps because people have to manage emergency and development programmes at the same time. We have lots of staff who have worked exclusively for UNICEF, and exclusively in development programmes. They have a different understanding of urgency, prioritization and how to push the organization to deliver in a large-scale humanitarian response.'*

*- UNICEF staff member, Maiduguri FO*

The protracted nature of the crisis in the north-east has not meant that needs have become less urgent or less severe. UNICEF needs a strong body of staff with skills and experience in humanitarian and development and ideally nexus – i.e. LHD and peacebuilding – programming if it wants to achieve coverage with quality. The evaluation judges that there is room to balance staff profiles in the Maiduguri FO, strengthening its emergency and peacebuilding capacity across all programme sections to ensure that UNICEF can continue to implement programmes that are relevant to context.

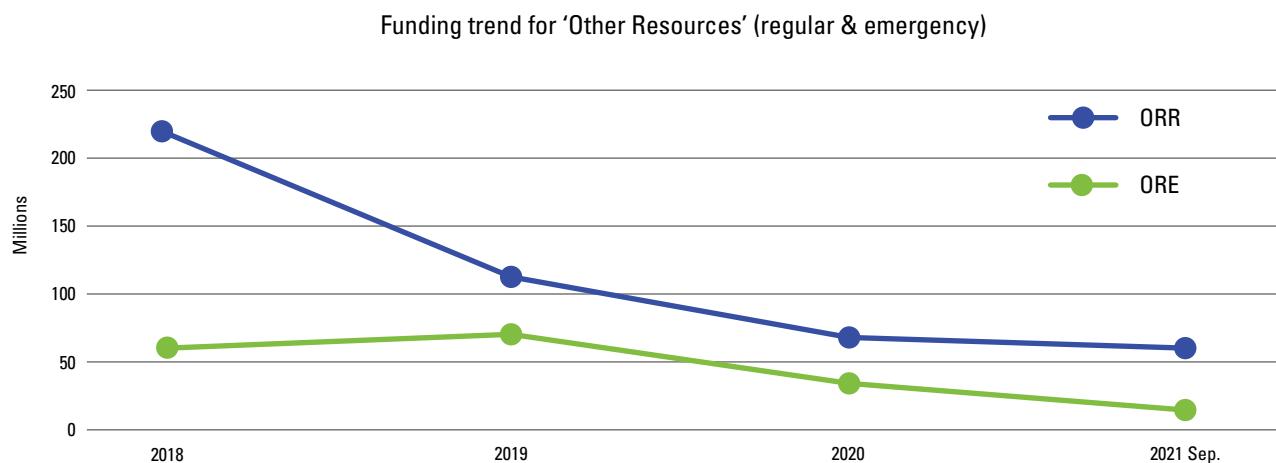
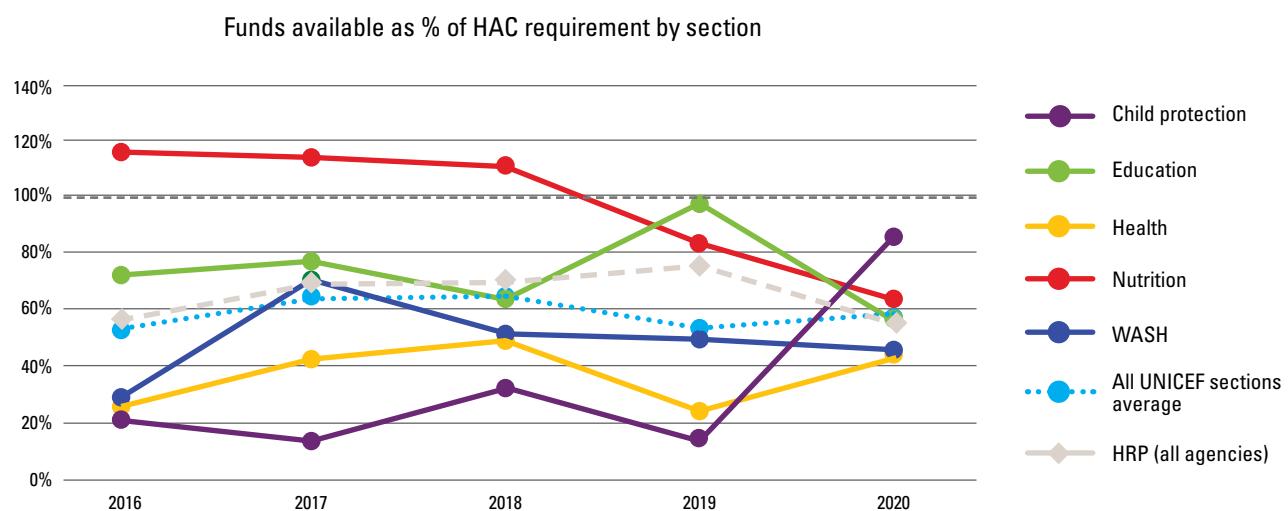


## 5.2 Resource mobilization

Despite significant fundraising efforts, UNICEF has seen a steady decline in Other Resources for Emergency (ORE) over the years, which are earmarked funds for specific humanitarian action and recovery activities. This is broadly in step with the decreasing inflow of Other Resources for Regular (ORR) programming (see *Figure 10*). Underlying this trend appears to be a certain level of donor fatigue, although the total volume of incoming funding is still significant and UNICEF has been able to finance sectoral responses consistently at 50 per cent to 60 per cent of HAC requirements, on average (see *Figure 11*). UNICEF's inability to access

**USAID funding because of a conflict on principles is of concern and should be taken up by EMOPS.**

Funding availability against need has varied considerably across sections over time (see *Figure 11*). Education and nutrition are the only sectors that have been able to maintain resource availability consistently above 50 per cent of the requirements that were specified in the Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeals. Nutrition had been the best-funded programme until 2018, after which financing vs. requirements started to shrink significantly, while the child protection programme saw a significant increase in available funding relative to requirements.

**FIGURE 10**UNICEF Nigeria funding trends for Other Resources: regular (ORR) and emergency (ORE)<sup>125</sup>**FIGURE 11**Proportion of funds available vs. requirements as defined in HAC, by programme section<sup>126</sup>

125 Data provided by UNICEF Nigeria M4R section.

126 Data sources: UNICEF Nigeria end-of-year SitReps. For HRP data: OCHA Financial Tracking Service

(<https://fts.unocha.org/countries/163/summary/2020>). 2015 has been omitted because it constitutes an outlier year; the response was only being established and funding requirements had been defined only for a '180-day plan' as opposed to the entire year. The average for all UNICEF sections is unweighted; that is, it does not take into account the relative magnitude of funding requirements between sections.

However, these large swings in appeal funds availability vs. needs must be seen in the light of the significant year-on-year changes in requirements that have been defined by programme sections. For example, the child protection section specified a funding requirement of USD 18.2 million in the 2019 HAC, which was nearly cut in half, to USD 10.5 million, the following year. During the same period, available funding tripled from USD 3 million in 2019 to USD 8.7 million in 2020. Therefore, the available funding relative to need appears to have quadrupled.

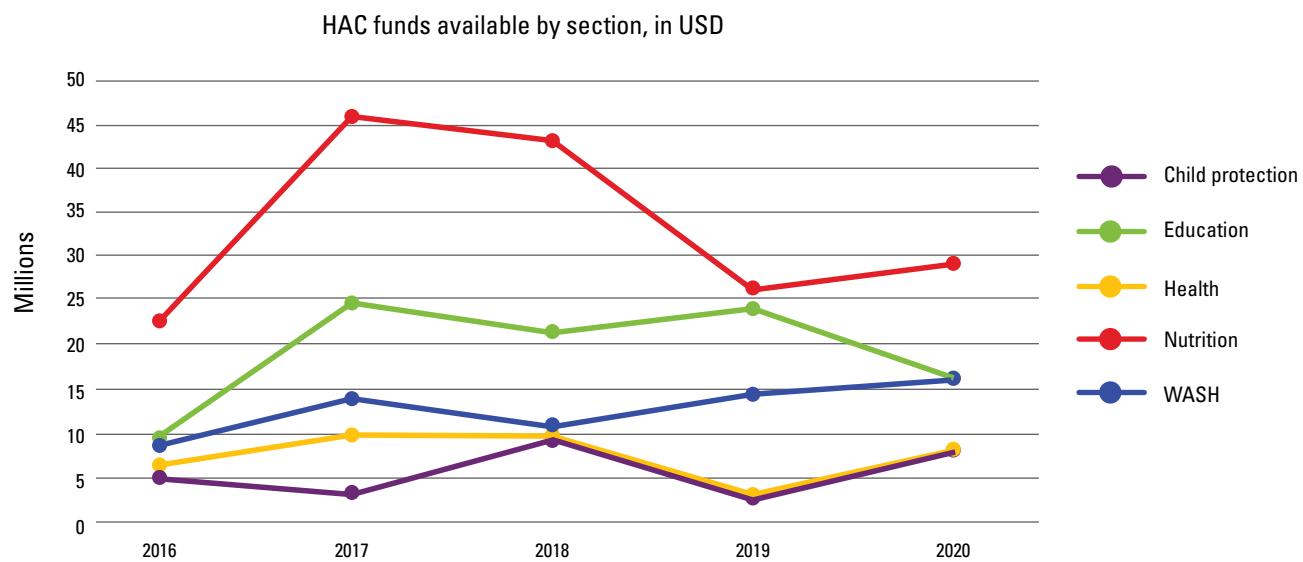
Steadier trends emerge when available HAC funds are viewed in absolute USD amounts by section (see *Figure 12*). All sections consistently have access to substantial levels of funding, albeit with fluctuations, except the nutrition programme, which has experienced an overall reduction in resource availability by nearly 50 per cent in the last two years. Interviewees attributed this to a certain level of frustration among donors, who saw nutrition primarily as providing life-saving RUTF support, although the response should have graduated to more systemic interventions given the protracted crisis now in its twelfth year. UNICEF staff countered that they perceived many donors to be willing to finance supplies, but less interested in providing resources to more complicated, long-term capacity-strengthening investments.

Overall, the evaluation found UNICEF's approach to resource mobilization for the emergency to be systematic and generally successful. Regular – at least quarterly – donor meetings and diligent reporting have contributed to positive donor relationships and relatively consistent levels of support.

Some of the donors interviewed for this evaluation signaled that they would appreciate more qualitative, textured reporting as opposed to the current focus that is perceived as being on quantitative achievements. The rationale for this was that, if UNICEF were to be more forthcoming in sharing achievements as well as challenges and shortcomings, this would give the donors an enhanced understanding of UNICEF's operating environment, 'take them along' in UNICEF's programming and help to avoid 'surprises' toward the end of a given grant period. Similarly, some UNICEF interviewees indicated that the quality of draft donor reports varied considerably by programme sections, and that more consistency and attention to detail were required to ensure continued success in resource mobilization.

## FIGURE 12

HAC appeal amounts funded in USD, by programme section, 2016–2020<sup>127</sup>



The evaluation noted with concern that UNICEF's humanitarian response in the north-east continues to face significant limitations in accessing USAID funding, the largest provider of financing for the HRP by a wide margin,<sup>128</sup> because of the donor's insistence on its controversial 'counter-terror clause'. This issue had already been reported by the media

in 2019, when UNICEF turned down USAID funding because it would have required excluding children and families 'formerly affiliated with Boko Haram or the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-West Africa' from humanitarian assistance,<sup>129</sup> which would have been highly problematic in respect of humanitarian principles. Interviewees in the CO

127 Data sources: UNICEF Nigeria end-of-year SitReps.

128 USAID provided USD 328 million to the HRP appeal in 2020, which is 52 per cent of the total HRP funding and nearly four times the amount given by the next biggest donor, the UK government. See: OCHA Financial Tracking Service, Nigeria 2020 Appeal Summary, available at: <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/869/summary>, accessed on 29 October 2021.

129 Anyadike, O. (2019), Aid workers question USAID counter-terror clause in Nigeria, in *The New Humanitarian*, 5 November 2021, available at: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2019/11/05/USAID-counter-terror-Nigeria-Boko-Haram>, accessed on 28 October 2021.

indicated that the CO had tried everything and exhausted all locally available means to advocate with USAID, to no avail. Given the volume of funding provided by USAID and the importance of a principled response in the north-east, the evaluation team recommends that EMOPS engages with USAID directly at the highest level to advocate for a change in position that will allow the NCO to access resources.

### 5.3 Policies and procedures

The main issues that emerged in the areas of policies and procedures that pertain to coverage and quality are partnerships management and, to a lesser extent, supply and logistics. The 2018 evaluation raised concerns about the contractual arrangements for TPFs, which have been addressed as part of the recent overhaul of the TPF mechanism.

#### 5.3.1 Supply and logistics

**The NCO's supply and logistics functions have generally performed well in the humanitarian response, with UNICEF being a major contributor to the WASH and nutrition 'common pipelines' and procurement not having emerged as a major constraint. Some concerns were raised about the timeliness of off-shore procurement processes.**

Humanitarian partners in the north-east have generally appreciated UNICEF's strong role in providing supply and logistics services to the response. UNICEF is a major contributor to the

WASH and nutrition sector pipelines. These are central repositories of core supplies that enable UNICEF and its partners to respond quickly to critical humanitarian needs, while aiming to harmonize the types of items used in the response and achieve cost-efficiency through economies of scale.

The 2021 cholera outbreak meant that the pipelines were utilized faster than expected. Therefore, UNICEF need to procure some WASH items internationally through its Copenhagen-based supply division, and RUTF (which is not available in the Nigerian market in the quality and scale required). Staff and partners expressed some frustration at the minimum of four to six weeks that it took for UNICEF to re-supply the stocks, pointing to other United Nations agencies that had been able to fly in their goods faster. For supplies that UNICEF procured locally, one implementing partner raised quality concerns:

*'The quality of relief materials is important. For example, the quality of non-food items provided by UNICEF, especially water storage containers, can be better. What we provide to beneficiaries are plastic containers and buckets which break up easily compared to those made from aluminium or polycarbonate. Unless UNICEF creates funds for water containers to be replaced every few months, beneficiaries will not be able to use them for a long time.'*

*- UNICEF implementing partner*

Regarding logistics, UNICEF Maiduguri-based staff were found to be committed and inventive in trying to find ways to get supplies to intervention sites under difficult circumstances. Interviewees said that it has become increasingly difficult for UNICEF to find logistics contractors to do business with. Haulage companies are hesitant to commit their trucks during the rainy season when many roads become impassable, and in the face of tangible risks to drivers being kidnapped or killed on the road when their vehicles are attacked, damaged or destroyed. UNICEF staff have attempted to broaden the base of contractors, and to break up bigger consignments into smaller loads that can be carried by lighter vehicles to accommodate difficult road conditions.

### **5.3.2 Managing partnerships**

**There has been no improvement in the NCO's slow-paced processes of establishing new or renewing expired partnership agreements since the 2018 evaluation raised this as a significant concern for the coverage and quality of the response. Delays in partnership processing have created frustration among staff, partners and donors and have led to breaks in**

**humanitarian service delivery. Three years on, there is a pressing need to address this now.**

The humanitarian crises in the north-east constitutes a Level 1 (L1) emergency in UNICEF's corporate classification system, meaning the CO should be able to respond to it using its own staff, funding, supplies and other resources, with 'the usual' support from the RO and HQ. Procedural simplifications that are available to L2 and L3 emergency situations mostly do not apply, although this will change with the revision of corporate emergency procedures that is currently under way.<sup>130</sup> The simplified Humanitarian Programme Document (HPD) format, with a target preparation time of 15 days, remains available for the NCO to use. However, the NCO rightly took the position that, after an active humanitarian response since at least 2015, operational requirements have been broadly predictable in the short term, notwithstanding sudden spikes in need owing to the influx of new IDPs. Therefore, for the majority of programming needs, it has been assumed that programme sections are able to muster sufficient foresight to initiate partnership processes quickly enough to ensure that adequate response capacity is available. This has not been the case.

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<sup>130</sup> UNICEF (2021), UNICEF Emergency Procedures, /PROCEDURE/EMOPS/2021/XXX, final draft, unpublished.

*'Some teams implementing humanitarian programmes in COs felt that UNICEF's bureaucratic systems and processes were distracting them from the humanitarian response, with interviewees citing frequent meetings and the burden of administrative work in particular as holding back their practical work in effecting a timely and comprehensive humanitarian response'*

- UNICEF Humanitarian Review 2020<sup>131</sup>

All UNICEF partners and most staff were concerned about delays of four to eight months in establishing partnership agreements for the humanitarian response, irrespective of whether the partnership agreement document represented a renewal or a new engagement. The main frustration seems to stem from the expectation that 'this time' it can and will be done faster, but rarely is. UNICEF staff struggled with administrative processes, a common pattern also in other emergency contexts (see quote above). Two NGO partners said that they had been unable to maintain parts of their humanitarian assistance when one UNICEF partnership agreement had ended, and they were waiting for the next one to come through. One INGO partner said that the nearly year-long delay in establishing the partnership

with UNICEF had effectively reduced the time available to implement a donor grant from three years to two, but UNICEF had not communicated the delay clearly to the donor, which created an awkward position for the implementing partner.

The main cause of these delays appears to be the preparation process. An analysis of a sample of 16 recent partnerships relevant to the humanitarian response<sup>132</sup> and interviews with staff show that it took UNICEF an average of 'only' 15 days to review and sign a partnership agreement once it had been submitted for approval, but that it took 135 days – four months on average – from the time of advertisement to prepare the partnership agreement for submission. The fastest partnership needed 'only' 59 days, while the slowest took 263 days – about 9 months.

All partners expressed frustration that UNICEF's partnership agreement formats were cumbersome to complete and that there was a lack of commitment to timeliness, clarity and guidance from UNICEF staff in the process. Partners were not always clear what was expected of them. Some partners had the impression that UNICEF staff pushed the responsibility of developing partnership documents entirely on the implementing

131 UNICEF (2020), Strengthening UNICEF's Humanitarian Action - The Humanitarian Review: Findings and Recommendations, p.34.

132 The evaluation team is grateful to the M4R section in Abuja for having shared the financial and process details for 16 partnerships relevant to the response that were signed by UNICEF between June 2020 and August 2021.

partner, who was given the impression of urgency to turn things around, but then waited for weeks or months to hear back from UNICEF.

*'When the project ended, we were asked to submit for an extension. Our project site was in the highest priority area and, unfortunately, we had no feedback after we submitted our proposal and we couldn't understand why. The feedback we eventually received was very hard to understand. About formats not being right, but actually we used the template that we received from that very same person. (...) Then the next day he was calling back with something different although we have just done the last thing he told us. It went on over 4 weeks, with explanations changing all the time. We have had something like 35 different versions. Everybody was lost in end.'*

- UNICEF implementing partner, Maiduguri

Partnerships management is still largely an offline process, with documents being sent back and forth, which further complicates the process. UNICEF has now begun rolling out the electronic partnership document, together with a digital reporting platform, which will, it is hoped, help to standardize the process and make it easier to handle administratively.

There may also be room to speed up the review and approval mechanism for partnership agreements, although this area has already been streamlined considerably. As UNICEF



is moving towards the open selection of partners, the Management for Results (M4R) section has prepared guidelines and a checklist for how to prepare the call for expressions of interest and how the preparation and approval process is intended to flow. Yet evaluation interviews with staff revealed a potential duplication in the process with time implications: partnerships with a value above USD 100,000 must be reviewed by the PRC in Abuja before being signed into force by the Deputy Representative. Concurrently, the Maiduguri FO maintains an 'advisory PRC' that scrutinizes partnership agreements – without decision-making authority – before they are sent to the PRC in Abuja for the mandatory review. This suggests that the advisory PRC in Maiduguri is not required for decision-making, but might serve a useful coordination role to discuss new partnerships between sections.

It may be advisable for UNICEF to remove the Maiduguri advisory PRC from the process of establishing partnerships, while still ensuring that new partnership agreements are discussed for content between sectors at the FO level. Moreover, an upward revision of the PRC threshold from USD 100,000 to USD 200,000 partnership value can reduce the number of partnerships that have to go through the review committee and increase the speed at which documents are reviewed and approved by the M4R section with the Deputy Representative. The evaluation is cognizant of the importance of due diligence and that proposals must meet quality standards, yet it is also necessary to balance this against the need to maintain assistance to vulnerable communities in a dynamic displacement crisis.

The emergency team has recently started developing contingency documents, together with programme sections. The evaluation welcomes and encourages this as a mechanism to increase the agility of UNICEF's response capacity. The first call for expressions of interest for partners that can deliver WASH and nutrition interventions in response to sudden crises in any of the LGAs in Borno State was published in August 2021.



## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section synthesizes the findings of the evaluation to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of UNICEF in reaching those in greatest need with programmes that meet quality standards. Based on the conclusions, a set of recommendations to strengthen coverage and quality are made.

## 6.1 Conclusions

This section presents the main evaluation conclusions. As with the findings, they are organized according to the three main parts of the analytical framework – coverage and quality outcomes, ways of achieving outcomes, and inputs.

### 6.1.1 Coverage and quality outcomes

UNICEF has been among the largest and most important providers of humanitarian assistance and protection in north-east Nigeria, at significant risk to its own staff and partners. It has mostly been successful in meeting targets, but targets are set by balancing estimations of needs against a forecast of the operational capacity that can realistically be mustered to address them. Therefore, programme coverage relative to targets provides little indication of actual performance vis-à-vis humanitarian needs.

A conclusion to be drawn from this is that UNICEF Nigeria can strengthen its targeting and monitoring of programme coverage, as well as its accountability, by using 'people in need' as a consistent reference point. Targets should be set transparently and results reported against total needs and their geographic distribution. To smooth the large year-on-year variations in sector targets, which cannot be explained by changes in need alone, UNICEF would be well placed to use its role as cluster lead to factor operational risks into the planning process, including partner capacity, funding shortfalls and a contingency buffer for 'unforeseen'

needs that appear to arise periodically because of, for example, the influx of IDPs into garrison towns from 'newly liberated areas'. Taken together, these steps can make coverage targets and operational plans more realistic and predictable.

UNICEF's pragmatic approach to programme quality has resulted in overall favourable feedback from UNICEF's beneficiaries. However, in conclusion, there are prominent opportunities to strengthen quality management through enhanced field presence of staff, follow-up with implementing partners, systematic quality monitoring, and data management.

### 6.1.2 How do UNICEF's ways of achieving outcomes enable or constrain programme coverage and quality?

Although integrated humanitarian programming can deliver better outcomes and quality, UNICEF has not systematically pursued programmatic integration. The recent effort to establish multi-sector partnerships is a promising mechanism for strengthening integration. Within UNICEF, several steps could be taken to incentivize staff to make integrated programming the norm rather than the exception: multi-sectoral planning and results frameworks would ensure that sections deliver together on common outcomes, and managers could be held accountable for implementing integration through their annual performance reviews.

UNICEF has contributed significantly to the recent overhaul of the RRM in the north-east. A first activation in 2021 was only partially

successful. Despite a significant amount of lead-in time, UNICEF was unable to deploy its contribution to the RRM in time with WFP. Therefore, operational readiness and stand-by capacity need to be assessed and internal steps taken to ensure that the envisaged timelines can be adhered to. The contingency partnerships that the emergency team is currently working to establish are a welcome development in this direction.

Beyond UNICEF, the bureaucratic impediments to an agile response, including cargo movements, would need to be addressed directly with the Government and military, in coordination with other agencies. It is also advisable that UNICEF and partners critically review the extent to which the early warning/alert system – a commendable concept – achieves geographic coverage to detect and raise the alarm wherever sudden needs arise across BAY states. Otherwise, there is a risk that the RRM can only respond opportunistically to wherever a piece of analysis or information emerges indicating greater needs.

The humanitarian community in Nigeria has struggled to develop a common strategy to ensure principled humanitarian access or to create space for negotiation with NSAGs, to the extent that this would be feasible, given their position. UNICEF has contributed to creating a new Access Working Group (AWG) and has helped to draft a new Access Strategy 2021. However, implementing the Access Strategy would require challenging the Nigerian Government and military on long-entrenched positions and policies. The record of the United

Nations and its leadership in Nigeria suggests that this is unlikely to happen.

Therefore, UNICEF would be well advised to develop its own Access Strategy. Building on the evaluation findings on security and risk management, community engagement and advocacy, this would entail first conducting a comprehensive analysis of actors and influence in the north-east. UNICEF could then explore where there is room for its security staff to not only manage staff safety but to proactively support programme sections in enabling an increased field presence. Community engagement – underutilized overall – has not been harnessed to cultivate acceptance among affected populations, which is another enabler for keeping staff safe, and to increase programmatic coverage. There also appears to be potential for engaging more directly and at a higher level in civil-military coordination with the objective of giving humanitarian actors more elbow room, and specifically to get assurances for faster processing and support for rapid response deployments.

TPFs have been key in scaling up and maintaining UNICEF's humanitarian programmes in the north-east since 2016. In 2021, UNICEF reviewed and reorganized the management and deployment of TPFs. The available evidence suggests that this has been largely successful from an administrative point of view. From the perspective of maximizing the coverage and quality of the response, UNICEF should explore strengthening the function of TPFs. Accountabilities in the field are still unclear to many, and TPFs are not empowered



to fulfil some of the more supervisory or coordination tasks that partners expect them to fulfil. In addition, they could be specifically tasked with supporting quality monitoring and community engagement to build acceptance.

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, several UNICEF programme sections successfully piloted remote and mobile programming approaches. Some have gone to scale and contributed to expanding coverage to underserved populations. The 'last-mile learning' initiative of the education section stands out as an example. While remote programming has limited potential to strengthen acceptance, it is a pragmatic approach, given current constraints.

Throughout the response, the Government of Nigeria has been UNICEF's main partner, which has permitted UNICEF to respond to urgent humanitarian needs and has helped it to achieve

coverage. However, the Government's limited capacity and willingness to take responsibility for service delivery have meant that meeting quality standards through this partnership has been challenging. UNICEF has been investing in building government and national NGO technical capacity to some extent, but has not yet fully and systematically embraced corporate commitments on localization. This would entail a comprehensive mapping of local actors with their capacity, geographic presence and connectedness to other actors in the north-east. Building on this, UNICEF should devise a strategy for investing in long-term partnerships and capacity development in key sectors and technical areas of work, but also in the institutional and management capability of local partners. This would serve the dual purpose of building response capacity while addressing and mitigating the risks of partners being unable to deliver against their

targets because of organizational or capacity gaps. The actor and capacity mapping, together with efforts to strengthen capacity, would allow UNICEF to then allocate resources and responsibilities based the partners' abilities, budgets and expected delivery timelines.

Humanitarian performance monitoring has been institutionalized successfully and has proved a useful mechanism to assess the coverage and quality of a sample of programme outputs. It also provides structured feedback on gaps and challenges. However, it cannot replace systematic quality monitoring and follow-up by programme sections, a practice that the evaluation found in need of strengthening. Therefore, programme sections will need to pay more attention to quality monitoring and to following up with partners. TPFs could be used to support this. There was limited evidence of regular context analysis that could have contributed to adapting programmes to changing needs. Despite a strong corporate push for AAP, the NCO has not pursued a systematic approach for eliciting feedback on its programmes from those whom it seeks to assist. By addressing both shortcomings, there is the potential to be more responsive to the dynamic context. It would be advisable for UNICEF to invest in an in-depth context, conflict and political economy analysis of the humanitarian situation in the north-east, which should be updated periodically. An understanding of actors, interests and influence forms an indispensable basis for identifying allies and political or operational opportunities to expand the humanitarian space.

UNICEF Nigeria has a strong interest in nexus-sensitive programming in the north-east, and all its programme sections have been attempting to ensure that humanitarian actions include a long-term development perspective to improve quality and sustainability. However, UNICEF currently lacks the analytical foundation to create a strategic vision for humanitarian-development-peacebuilding programming in north-east Nigeria, and staff with relevant experience and profiles to implement it. The resilience and peacebuilding partnership with KfW could be the starting point for undertaking the requisite analysis and for defining and rolling out a more systematic approach to LHD programming in north-east Nigeria. It should go together with an effort to strengthen the capacities and mindsets of staff in key nexus-related areas such as peacebuilding, conflict sensitivity and AAP to be able to programme effectively across the nexus. Staff would need to be flexible enough to pivot between and connect development and humanitarian approaches, including to support advocacy and resource mobilization.

Since the 2018 humanitarian evaluation, UNICEF has significantly strengthened the MRM Mechanism. The evaluation found that the process of collecting and verifying evidence on alleged grave violations was rigorous and systematic, albeit limited to areas currently accessible to humanitarian actors. In its wider advocacy efforts for principled humanitarian access, UNICEF has had to balance its own engagement with the RC/HC's prerogative to set the orientations of UN-wide advocacy efforts. Although it has balanced these competing

imperatives adeptly, and UNICEF senior management was perceived to be measured yet steadfast and consistent in its advocacy for principled humanitarian action, results on humanitarian access remain elusive overall.

### **6.1.3 To what extent o UNICEF's human and financial resource management and its systems and procedures support an effective response?**

UNICEF has largely phased out surge deployments and regularized the staffing that drives the humanitarian response in the north-east. The CO and FO have invested substantially in staff well-being. Overall, this has led to more continuity among programme staff who manage the response. However, most personnel in the Maiduguri FO appear to have significantly more experience in development programming than in humanitarian assistance, and there is no one dedicated to LHD or peacebuilding programmes. This limits the range of UNICEF's capacity and options for nexus-oriented analysis, strategy and programming. It would be in UNICEF's interest to pay attention to the skill mix of its staff in the FO and to ensure new recruitments bring the humanitarian capacity and experience that the situation demands.

Despite significant fundraising efforts, UNICEF has seen a steady decline in emergency funding over the years. In the light of this, UNICEF's inability to access USAID funding – by far the biggest donor to the response in the north-east – is an important concern and should be taken up by EMOPS. All local means for advocacy and influence are said to have been exhausted.

While the CO uses most UNICEF systems and procedures according to standard, the severe delays in processing partnership agreements constitutes an impediment to the response that must be addressed.

### **6.1.4 Summary of findings organised by OECD/DAC criteria**

At the request of the CO, Table 6 provides a short summary of the main evaluation findings by the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of effectiveness, relevance, coherence, sustainability and efficiency,<sup>133</sup> while noting that the analytical framework agreed for this evaluation was not designed in this way.

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<sup>133</sup> See OECD-DAC Evaluation Criteria, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>, accessed on 26 October 2021.

**TABLE 6**

Summary of findings by OECD/DAC evaluation criteria

Criteria	Summary of findings
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<p>UNICEF's humanitarian programme has been largely effective in meeting its coverage targets (<i>see Figure 3</i>). However, because the targets do not directly reflect the number of people in need, programme coverage relative to targets provides little indication of actual performance vis-à-vis humanitarian needs.</p> <p>Based on favourable beneficiary perceptions, UNICEF has effectively managed to maintain acceptable levels of programme quality. The pragmatism of its approach to managing quality, given the prevailing constraints, has been relevant to the context. Limited systematic quality monitoring and follow-up with partners mean that there are risks to maintaining quality standards.</p> <p>UNICEF has effectively engaged in advocating against and reporting on grave violations through the MRM. Its advocacy efforts for principled humanitarian access have been less effective, although at local level UNICEF has registered notable successes in advocating on behalf of its partners, for example to ensure the timely deployment of government staff to NGO partner intervention sites.</p> <p>UNICEF's broad range of partnerships with both government and non-government partners has enabled it to deliver an effective humanitarian programme at scale, but investments in capacity are required to ensure quality and contribute to sustainable localization.</p>
<b>Relevance</b>	<p>While UNICEF's programme approaches and network of partners are highly relevant to humanitarian needs and the overall context, there is limited evidence of UNICEF having invested systematically in context and conflict analysis and in engaging with communities to ensure the continued relevance of its response in a dynamic context.</p>
<b>Coherence</b>	<p>Coherence UNICEF has actively and persistently engaged in and contributed to operational inter-agency mechanisms such as the RRM and the common supply pipeline, and in high-level advocacy and strategy efforts through the HCT. In advocating for principled humanitarian access, UNICEF has had to balance its own ambitions with the RC/HC's prerogative to set the orientation of UN-wide advocacy efforts. Although it has balanced these competing imperatives adeptly, and UNICEF senior management was measured yet consistent in its advocacy for principled humanitarian action, results on humanitarian access remain elusive overall.</p>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p>Government institutions and agencies have been UNICEF's main implementing partners for the humanitarian response, which has been effective in expanding humanitarian services in some sectors and is seen as a strategy to ensure sustainability. However, the ability of the Government to respond to humanitarian needs in the future is limited by capacity and budget constraints and its unwillingness to take responsibility for basic service delivery. There is a risk of UNICEF's humanitarian interventions substituting for government services, which is unsustainable. Therefore, UNICEF has invested in the technical capacity of local and national non-governmental partners, but is yet to fully commit to institutional capacity development and localization of its response.</p>

Criteria	Summary of findings
<b>Efficiency</b>	<p>The evaluation question related to efficiency as defined in the TOR asks: 'To what extent have UNICEF's revised humanitarian systems improved its response in complex high-threat environments?' While most systems appeared to be used as intended, a significant procedural inefficiency is found in the processing of partnership agreements, which are regularly delayed by two to eight months, costing UNICEF staff and implementing partners valuable staff time and goodwill. In addition, there is evidence of grant implementation periods having been inadvertently shortened because of the delays in setting up partnerships, leaving partners with less time to utilize UNICEF resources to implement important response activities. UNICEF has phased out surge deployments and operates the response with a stable cadre of staff and relatively consistent – albeit declining – levels of emergency funding. The evaluation did not find evidence for major financial risks or inefficiencies in the response.</p>

## 6.2 Recommendations

Based on the analysis of the coverage and quality of UNICEF's humanitarian programming and the lessons highlighted in the report, the evaluation makes 12 recommendations (see *Table 7*).

TABLE 7 Recommendations		
#	Recommendation	Action to be led by?
1	<p><b>Calculate targets and report coverage based on an assessment of people in need. Changes in targets should be consistently monitored and transparently reported. This will provide the strongest evidence for advocating adequate resources for the humanitarian response.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematically use 'people in need' as the starting point for UNICEF planning and reporting within the Nigeria CO.</li> <li>• Apply this approach in all clusters led by UNICEF to ensure consistency in the measurement of coverage as a proportion of people in need.</li> </ul>	Emergency Manager

#	Recommendation	Action to be led by?
2	<p><b>Introduce a user-friendly digital tool and use it to monitor humanitarian programme performance data on coverage and quality across all programme sections and implementing partners, possibly building on the experience from the e-PMV tool introduced recently.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Nigeria CO should set itself a timeline: if the corporate e-Tools do not provide the required functionality within 6 months, the CO will initiate the procurement process to have a digital solution in place within 12 months.</li> <li>A secure, web-based, software-as-a-service tool is recommended. Off-the-shelf solutions exist or can be customized.</li> <li>The software must allow for decentralized data entry to ensure staff and partners can report while in the field (for example, the location of an intervention site and the number of people served there). The tool should be suitable to digitalize humanitarian performance monitoring processes that are currently 'offline'.</li> <li>The tool must provide UNICEF section chiefs and staff with visual dashboards and a community-level map of operational presence, across all sections.</li> </ul>	Deputy Rep., with support from Chief of M4R and ICT, in consultation with EMOPS
3	<p><b>Strengthen programme integration with granular cross-sectoral needs assessments and by incentivizing programme sections to establish multi-sector interventions.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Going beyond the high-level, inter-agency MSNAs, programme sections should routinely undertake 'light-touch', localized and cross-sectoral needs and coverage assessments to identify coverage gaps for specific beneficiary populations. For example, a child may have access to SAM treatment at a nearby facility, but lack access to safe water and psychosocial support.</li> <li>Section chiefs and staff should be incentivized to make integrated programming by outcomes the norm rather than the exception, by (a) building integration into their performance reviews; and (b) developing multi-sectoral results frameworks for the humanitarian response as a standard component in country programme planning and annual planning cycles.</li> </ul>	Representative
4	<p><b>Strengthen the CO capacity to undertake and regularly update an in-depth analysis of the context and political economy of (a) the humanitarian operating environment in the north-east; and (b) opportunities for principled access.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the emergency team has at least one staff member with the analytical capacity and time in their TOR to undertake this analysis; otherwise, engage external expertise with a longer-term agreement to ensure regular updates of the analysis.</li> <li>The assessment must map the actors, interests, incentives, capacities and influence at play in the humanitarian operating environment, including United Nations agencies, the Government, armed forces, other parties to the conflict, and relevant international missions present in Nigeria. To generate actionable information, the analyst(s) will require access to decision-makers and informal knowledge. This can be achieved through (a) engaging former 'insiders' as analysts or informants; (b) building relationships over time, which means the analysis will take time; and/or (c) providing high-level support for this analysis from UNICEF and other partners.</li> <li>Programme sections should participate in the analytical process to contribute their sectoral perspectives and to ensure that they can take ownership of findings relevant to their sectors. Periodically, sections can undertake their own 'light-touch' context analyses to inform programme adaptations to context.</li> </ul>	Emergency Manager

#	Recommendation	Action to be led by?
5	<p><b>Develop a UNICEF strategic vision and plan to guide the humanitarian response and efforts to connect humanitarian, development and peacebuilding-oriented programming.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on the insights generated from recommendation #4, the CO should develop a strategic vision for what it can and wants to achieve in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States, given the differences in humanitarian needs and the positions of each state government.</li> <li>This strategy should be built on UNICEF's understanding of how the protracted crisis in the north-east is likely to develop under different scenarios, and what can realistically be achieved given present capacity levels.</li> <li>It should also include a definition of UNICEF's guiding principles and strategic approaches regarding humanitarian service delivery, contributions to development outcomes, and peacebuilding. Programme approaches in these three strands would ideally be integrated, and should at a minimum be coordinated.</li> <li>The development of this strategy constitutes a moment of reflection for UNICEF to take a position on its programme boundaries, with a view to avoiding long-term substitution of government service delivery.</li> </ul>	Representative, with support from the Chief of Maiduguri FO and Emergency Manager
6	<p><b>Secure a more direct role alongside OCHA in the United Nation's operations-level engagement in the civil–military coordination with the Nigerian Armed Forces (NAF) in Maiduguri, geared specifically to advocacy in support of easing the bureaucratic impediments to the response and enabling faster RRM deployment.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNICEF should leverage its prominent position in the response as multiple sector lead and RRM participant to secure a more direct role in the engagement and negotiations with the NAF and the Government of Nigeria.</li> <li>This engagement should be geared specifically to advocacy in support of the joint drafting, with the NAF, of RRM Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), allowing for significantly more rapid deployment lead-in times than the current 4–6 weeks, while also enabling the RRM to conform fully with the NAF's security requirements. Using the RRM as an entry point, the SOP could be extended with the aim of tackling the inefficiencies in the humanitarian cargo notification system and bureaucratic impediments more broadly.</li> <li>In pursuing this objective, UNICEF should seek to engage the good offices of one or more bilateral actors enjoying close security cooperation with the NAF, such as the defence sections of the UK or US embassies in Abuja.</li> <li>The CO should also bring on board dedicated independent civil–military expertise to advise on its engagement with the NAF on the joint drafting of the RRM SOP, and to network defence circles in support of this.</li> </ul>	Representative, with support from Chief of FO and Emergency Manager
7	<p><b>UNICEF Nigeria should develop its own access strategy that identifies opportunities and specifies roles and responsibilities for the organization, while continuing to use its influence and advocacy through the HCT and other coordinated United Nations mechanisms.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While recommendation #6 focuses on an immediate operational requirement, this recommendation seeks to ensure that UNICEF strengthens its overall position for expanding access.</li> </ul>	Representative, with support from Emergency Manager and Chief of FO

#	Recommendation	Action to be led by?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To confirm its commitment to inter-agency processes, UNICEF should use its position on the HCT and its relationship with the Government to support and endorse the draft HCT Humanitarian Access Strategy and to advocate for an approach that leaves space for humanitarian negotiations with all parties to the conflict, as enshrined in International Humanitarian Law.</li> <li>UNICEF's own access strategy should build on the UNICEF Access Field Manual (still in draft) and take stock of opportunities for strengthening access through (a) security management and field presence; (b) community engagement; (c) advocacy; (d) civil–military coordination; and (e) relationship management with government and other stakeholders.</li> <li>UNICEF should define strategic objectives in each of these areas and assign roles and responsibilities to its staff for operationalizing them. For example, enabling access through building acceptance with communities will involve specific accountabilities from multiple functions across the CO, and all programme sections.</li> </ul>	
8	<p><b>Establish a systematic mechanism for AAP.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the new UNICEF emergency procedures, expected to be released soon, a robust AAP approach is no longer optional but should be systematically applied in all UNICEF programming.</li> <li>UNICEF should implement corporate global guidance on AAP (see 'Accountability to Affected Populations Handbook for UNICEF and partners, 2020') and should ensure that effective mechanisms for two-way communication with affected populations are established.</li> <li>The evaluation has shown that there is currently limited follow-up from UNICEF Nigeria on community engagement by its implementing partners. Therefore, the CO must take special care to ascertain that the new AAP mechanism has a feedback loop into programme decision making.</li> <li>TPFs can be used systematically to play an enabling role in this.</li> </ul>	Representative with support from Emergency Manager
9	<p><b>Strengthen localization by (a) mapping actors, their capacity and presence; and (b) defining a capacity development strategy for local and national implementing partners.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With a view to identifying potential implementing partners and reassessing existing ones, undertake a systematic mapping of local and national actors. Assess their institutional and technical capacity, gaps, operational readiness and their geographical footprint in the north-east.</li> <li>Define a capacity development strategy that prioritizes required capabilities by sector and geographical location and maps key partners to capabilities by sector and across sectors and areas.</li> <li>Define and budget for commitments to strengthening institutional, operational and technical capacities of key partners with a view to building localized response capacity for the long term.</li> <li>Given the Government's constraints in capacity and willingness, it is recommended that UNICEF aims for the right mix of partners to deliver coverage and quality across its humanitarian programmes, being clear about the reasons for choosing particular partners and checking assumptions about their ability to deliver in periodic reviews.</li> </ul>	Chief of Maiduguri FO with support from Emergency Manager
10	<b>Streamline the process for establishing and renewing partnership agreements and set a maximum target duration (for example 60 days from advertisement to signature by UNICEF).</b>	

#	Recommendation	Action to be led by?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the SOP for developing partnership agreements for all partnerships, with special attention paid to those relevant to the response. Define a maximum duration for each step, including for turnaround times of UNICEF staff providing feedback to partners when drafting partnership documents and budgets.</li> <li>Orient all staff and all current and potential future partners on their accountabilities in the process and on common document formats.</li> <li>Restructure the role of the 'advisory' Partnership Review Committee (PRC) in the Maiduguri FO; it should serve a coordination role but – since it is without decision-making power – not hold up the approval process. Therefore, partnership documents should be sent to the CO in Abuja for processing without delay.</li> <li>If possible, the CO should consider revising the budget threshold for PRC reviews upward, from currently USD 100,000 to double this amount or even more. This would result in partnership agreements being reviewed and approved faster by the M4R section and the Deputy Representative while submitting only higher-value partnership documents for PRC scrutiny.</li> </ul>	
11	<p><b>Consider the establishment of an internal contingency funding facility to enable small but rapid and unconditional disbursements to pre-selected partners on a 'no-regrets' basis, to support responses to localized sudden-onset emergencies.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new emergency procedures will allow for start-up funding to be transferred to new partners with a one-page start-up letter. In an L1 emergency, the Nigeria CO will be authorized to release USD 10,000 up front, with a limit of USD 50,000 for L3 contexts.</li> <li>Irrespective of the new procedures, the Nigeria CO should set up a mechanism to enable small-scale, rapid action by partners to respond to localized sudden-onset emergencies, which frequently occur in the north-east.</li> <li>Pre-selection should follow established best practice typically adhered to by country-based pooled funds. It should aim to balance risk by recruiting well-capacitated partners alongside smaller but more agile grant-holders.</li> <li>The proposed contingency funding facility should be designed to support and complement the RRM.</li> </ul>	Deputy Representative, with support from Chief of Operations
12	<p><b>Ensure that UNICEF staff involved in the humanitarian response have the requisite skills and experience in humanitarian action.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make experience in humanitarian programming a core requirement when recruiting for staff positions involved in the response, irrespective of programme sector or operational area of responsibility.</li> <li>Establish mentoring arrangements so that experienced humanitarian staff are paired with less experienced colleagues for the first 6–12 months of their deployment.</li> <li>Offer periodic refresher training and orientation on systems and processes relevant to the response. This should be mandatory for all new staff and other staff who have not participated in a refresher for two years or more, covering critical areas including (a) establishing and managing partnerships; (b) humanitarian access; (c) accountability to affected populations; (d) nexus programming; and (e) risk management, with a view to expanding access while ensuring staff safety.</li> </ul>	Chief of People and Culture, with support from Chief of FO and Emergency Manager

The evaluation team suggests treating all 12 recommendations with equal priority, given that each one has significant potential to strengthen the quality and coverage of the response.

# ANNEXES

## Annex 1: Summary of terms of reference for the evaluation

### 1. Background

Complex high-threat environments (CHTEs) refer to humanitarian contexts that are multidimensional in nature, where multiple complexity factors converge and most are political and politicized. This includes (but is not limited to) armed conflict, restricted access to affected populations, civil or political upheaval, and large-scale violations of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law. While programme interventions for all humanitarian situations have their fair share of challenges, the general consensus is that humanitarian response in CHTEs has some unique challenges vis-à-vis risk management and principled humanitarian action (which comprises assistance, protection and advocacy). Many of these CHTEs are characterized by fragile or failing political and social institutions, weak governance, limited state capacity or will to respond to needs, and/or affected populations living in areas under the control of non-state entities.<sup>134</sup> In 2015, UNICEF

responded to 301 humanitarian situations in 102 countries, of which 63 were socio-political crises, including in countries such as Syria, South Sudan, Yemen, Burundi, Central African Republic, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Ukraine and Nigeria.

Children in countries affected by armed conflict face grave threats and are affected in various ways, ranging from direct killings and injuries, of becoming victims of sexual violence, of being separated from their families, of being recruited and used by parties to conflict, and suffering extreme distress, to more subtle, yet persistent and irreversible effects on schooling, health, nutrition, future opportunities and overall well-being. In CHTEs, the most vulnerable people are often located in hard-to-reach or the most insecure locations. Humanitarian response in these settings is conducted in a difficult political and highly insecure environment. As a result, the coverage and quality of humanitarian assistance have been a significant challenge in most CHTEs, since insecurity and inaccessibility have limited organizations' capacity to implement, manage and adequately monitor the humanitarian response.

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<sup>134</sup> Harmer, A. and J. Macrae (eds) (2004) Beyond the Continuum: The Changing Role of Aid Policy in Protracted Crises, Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG) Report 18. London, Overseas Development Institute (ODI). (see: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/279.pdf>).

UNICEF aims to meet humanitarian needs in a timely, appropriate, effective and efficient manner, in adherence with the humanitarian principles of humanity,<sup>135</sup> neutrality, impartiality and independence, and in line with UNICEF's Core Commitment for Children (CCC)<sup>136</sup> and equity approach, endeavouring to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized. CHTEs pose significant challenges to these principles and objectives, including in working with other humanitarian partners to provide humanitarian assistance to affected populations. Under Humanitarian Reform, sector coordination among the wider Humanitarian Country Team is guided by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) cluster approach. The aim of the cluster approach is to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies by ensuring that predictable leadership in the main sectors leads to predictable and effective humanitarian response. UNICEF is the global and country cluster lead agency for nutrition and WASH, and, with Save the Children, co-lead agency for education. UNICEF is also the lead agency for the child protection, which falls under the protection cluster.

Coverage is important in reflecting UNICEF activities in terms of geography and reach, sectoral or thematic focus, and in resource

allocations and expenditure. Where UNICEF's humanitarian access is hindered due to a CHTE or as a result of restrictions imposed by authorities or other actors, it has become critical to adopt innovative approaches in order to fulfill UNICEF's mandate and the CCCs. For example, remote programming and third-party monitoring have been options used in various locations, in order to avoid the negative consequences of suspending UNICEF activities.

## ***2. Objectives of the evaluation***

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to generate practical solutions for the improvement of the coverage and quality of UNICEF's response to humanitarian crises in CHTEs. It aims to provide a deeper, more systematic and objective analysis across country contexts, of the extent to which UNICEF is succeeding or failing to reach affected populations with high-quality programming in CHTEs, and how this is attributable to the limits of humanitarian action vis-a-vis political spheres and the conflict dimension (where applicable). This, in turn, should enable UNICEF to innovate and introduce alternative approaches and mitigation measures that will improve the coverage and quality of UNICEF's action in such challenging contexts.

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<sup>135</sup> For definitions of humanity , neutrality, impartiality, and independence please refer to: [https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples\\_eng\\_June12.pdf](https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf).

<sup>136</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/CCC\\_042010.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/publications/files/CCC_042010.pdf).

This evaluation has three specific objectives:

1. To assess UNICEF's performance in achieving coverage and quality in its humanitarian action in a sample of CHTEs, using both desk- and field-based studies.
2. To identify the internal and external enabling factors and challenges to UNICEF's performance in responding to humanitarian crises in CHTEs.
3. To provide the analysis required to allow UNICEF to clarify how it fulfils its role in CHTEs as a United Nations agency with a protection mandate, including its designated role in the monitoring and reporting mechanism<sup>137</sup> derived from United Nations Security Council resolutions on children affected by armed conflict.

### ***3. Scope of work***

Period to be covered: the evaluation will assess the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in selected, ongoing CHTEs for the period from January 2015 to the present. With respect to past responses, the evaluation will only rely on evidence from evaluations and reviews.

#### **Thematic focus (UNICEF and partners):**

The evaluation focuses on the coverage and quality of UNICEF's humanitarian response in CHTEs:

- Coverage is defined as: 'The extent to which major population groups facing life-threatening suffering are being (or were) reached by humanitarian action'.<sup>138</sup> For UNICEF, the concept of coverage also includes the extent to which UNICEF is identifying and reaching the most vulnerable, and is addressing differences in vulnerability due to, for example, age and gender and disability.
- The quality of humanitarian response does not have a unified definition in UNICEF. For the purposes of the evaluation, the assessment of quality is based on an understanding of the degree to which UNICEF is adhering to the benchmarks set out in its Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) in CHTEs, and also the supplementary commitments the organization has made to:
  - 1) the Core Humanitarian Standard;<sup>139</sup>
  - 2) technical standards for humanitarian programming (primarily the Sphere standards<sup>140</sup> and INEE minimum standards<sup>141</sup>);

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<sup>137</sup> For further information on MRM, click [here](#).

<sup>138</sup> Evaluation of Humanitarian Action Guide, ALNAP/ODI, 2016, p114.

<sup>139</sup> <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>.

<sup>140</sup> <http://www.spheredproject.org/>.

<sup>141</sup> <http://www.ineesite.org/en/minimum-standards>.

- 3) Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP); and
- 4) commitments made by UNICEF at the World Humanitarian Summit, especially within the Grand Bargain.<sup>142</sup> In assessing performance, the evaluation will recognize that this list represents a mixture of well-established and new commitments.

Sectoral coverage: The evaluation has no specific sector focus and will assess performance in all sectors where UNICEF plays a leading role in CHTEs.

Geographic coverage: This is a global evaluation and aims to generate learning and proposals for the enhancement of UNICEF's performance in all the CHTEs in which UNICEF operates. The evaluation will generate evidence using a case study approach, with a total of 12 case studies covering four to five UNICEF regions.

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<sup>142</sup> <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/working-group/documents-public/grand-bargain-shared-commitment-better-serve-people-need>.

## Annex 2: Evaluation matrix

Presented overleaf is the evaluation framework, consisting of evaluation questions, sub-questions, indicators, data sources and analytical methods.

Evaluation questions/Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods & sources	Analytical methods
<b>OUTCOMES</b>			
<b>EQ1: To what extent is UNICEF achieving coverage and quality in humanitarian action in an equitable way and what good practice, lessons and practical solutions can be identified to inform improvements across UNICEF's response in complex humanitarian situations?</b>			
<p>1.1 How successful has UNICEF been in achieving and maintaining coverage (geographic and demographic) in its humanitarian assistance and protection response?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Which factors have enabled or constrained coverage?</li> <li>■ To what extent has UNICEF been able to overcome the constraints?</li> <li>■ What good practice, lessons and practical solutions could be applied in other contexts?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of overall humanitarian needs and coverage as outlined in the Humanitarian Needs Overview, Humanitarian Response Plan and RC/HC annual report</li> <li>■ Evidence of the coverage achieved by UNICEF against its targets and the total population in need for nutrition, health, WASH, education, HIV and AIDS, and child protection</li> <li>■ Evidence of disaggregated data on UNICEF's coverage targets and results (age, gender, disability) and of vulnerability analysis based on disaggregated data or localized analysis of vulnerability patterns</li> <li>■ Evidence of use of disaggregated data and analysis of disaggregation to reach the hardest-to-reach, most marginalized, and most vulnerable</li> <li>■ Evidence of factors that have influenced coverage and approaches that have been taken to improve coverage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Document and literature review including Humanitarian Needs Overview, UNICEF country reporting documents and sectoral programme reports, good practice case studies and evaluations</li> <li>■ Interviews and focus groups at field level, including with UNICEF staff, United Nations agencies, INGOs, donors, and affected communities and populations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Humanitarian coverage and quality analysis tool</li> <li>■ Cross-country case study analysis.</li> </ul>
1.2 To what extent is UNICEF aware of, and meeting, its CCC and other commitments and international humanitarian programme standards?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of the knowledge, use of and results from the implementation of the CCC for each of UNICEF's programme sectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Document and literature review including UNICEF country reporting documents and sectoral programme reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Humanitarian coverage and quality analysis tool</li> </ul>

Evaluation questions/Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods & sources	Analytical methods
<b>OUTCOMES</b>  EQ1: To what extent is UNICEF achieving coverage and quality in humanitarian action in an equitable way and what good practice, lessons and practical solutions can be identified to inform improvements across UNICEF's response in complex humanitarian situations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To what extent is UNICEF contributing to the programming results outlined in the CCC in a way that is relevant to the context?</li> <li>■ Which other humanitarian programme quality standards are applied in practice by COs?</li> <li>■ Which factors have enabled or constrained quality?</li> <li>■ To what extent has UNICEF been able to overcome the constraints?</li> <li>■ What good practice, lessons and practical solutions could be applied in other contexts?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of the knowledge and use of other quality standards (Sphere, Core Humanitarian Standard, INEE Minimum Standards, Child Protection Minimum Standards, Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers)</li> <li>■ Evidence of factors that have influenced quality, and approaches that have been taken to improve it.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Interviews and focus groups at field level, including with UNICEF staff, United Nations agencies, INGOs and affected communities and populations.</li> </ul>
1.3 How does UNICEF balance coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations where it is hard to maintain high quality across hard-to-reach areas?  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Does UNICEF have a systematic way of assessing the level of quality that can be achieved against coverage (geographic and demographic) that needs to be achieved?</li> <li>■ What are the challenges, lessons, good practice and practical solutions that could be applied in other contexts?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of a systematic analysis of coverage (against a disaggregated vulnerability assessment) and assessment of quality standards</li> <li>■ Evidence of a decision-making process weighing up trade-offs</li> <li>■ Evidence of routine re-assessment of trade-offs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Document review, including UNICEF country reporting documents and sectoral programme reports</li> <li>■ Interviews with UNICEF staff, implementing partners and cluster members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Humanitarian coverage and quality analysis tool</li> <li>■ Cross-country case study analysis.</li> </ul>

Evaluation questions/Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods & sources	Analytical methods
<b>WAYS OF ACHIEVING OUTCOMES</b>			
<b>EQ2: In what ways and how effectively has UNICEF influenced others to strengthen protection and increase the quality and coverage of humanitarian action?</b>			
2.1 How actively is UNICEF speaking out against grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict and conflict-related sexual violence against children and women, and advocating for the protection of civilians and compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL)?  ▪ What lessons do successful examples of humanitarian advocacy provide for the organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evidence of the knowledge and use of child protection monitoring and reporting mechanism (MRM)</li> <li>▪ Evidence of the effect of the MRM on the lives of children</li> <li>▪ Evidence of where and how UNICEF has successfully advocated and influenced decision making on issues relating to protection of civilians and compliance with IHL.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Document and literature review including previous reviews/evaluations</li> <li>▪ Interviews and focus groups at field level, including with UNICEF staff, United Nations agencies, INGOs, donors, RC/HC, government officials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Context analysis</li> <li>▪ Cross-country case study analysis.</li> </ul>
2.2 In what ways, to what extent and with what success has UNICEF been able to influence the government, implementing partners, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and Integrated Missions at country level to improve principled humanitarian access?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Relevance of UNICEF's guidance on Advocacy in Emergencies</li> <li>▪ Evidence that UNICEF has used advocacy to improve access in complex humanitarian situations at the agency or inter-agency level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interviews with UNICEF HQ, RO and CO staff</li> <li>▪ Interviews with HCT members, RC/HC, United Nations Integrated Mission staff, government officials</li> <li>▪ Document and literature review.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cross-country case study analysis.</li> </ul>
<b>EQ3: What programme approaches and partnership strategies has UNICEF employed at the field level to gain principled access and improve coverage and quality, and with what success?</b>			
3.1 To what extent has UNICEF's engagement in complex humanitarian situations been guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, and what effect have these had on coverage and quality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evidence that staff have an understanding of UNICEF's humanitarian principles</li> <li>▪ Evidence that a principled approach has guided decision-making to support improvements in coverage and quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Document and literature review</li> <li>▪ Interviews with UNICEF HQ, RO, CO staff; RC/HC, cluster members, donors, implementing partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cross-country case study analysis</li> </ul>

Evaluation questions/Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods & sources	Analytical methods
<b>WAYS OF ACHIEVING OUTCOMES</b>			
EQ3: What programme approaches and partnership strategies has UNICEF employed at the field level to gain principled access and improve coverage and quality, and with what success?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ How successfully has UNICEF been able to manage constraints imposed by the application of the principles, as well as any trade-offs between the principles?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence that the application of principles has had positive impacts on coverage and quality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Identification, review and documentation of case studies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Analysis of decision-making criteria around application of, approaches to, improved access.</li> </ul>
<p>3.2 What partnership strategies has UNICEF adopted to deliver assistance in complex humanitarian situations, and to what extent have these strengthened the coverage and quality of humanitarian action?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To what extent, and to what effect, is UNICEF building national and local systems and capacities for humanitarian coordination and rapid scale-up or maintenance of life-saving services and protection?</li> <li>■ How well is UNICEF managing the transfer of risk to its implementing partners?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of initiatives to engage and support national and local first responders (2018–2021 strategy, WHS)</li> <li>■ Evidence of partnership approaches that have improved coverage and quality in UNICEF's humanitarian action</li> <li>■ Evidence that UNICEF is strengthening the capacity of its local/national partners that are delivering humanitarian assistance</li> <li>■ Evidence that UNICEF is routinely engaging with its partners to assess and manage risk</li> <li>■ Evidence of the use of relevant guidance from the Enhanced Programme and Operational Support for Fragile Contexts initiative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Document and literature review</li> <li>■ Interviews with UNICEF HQ, RO, CO staff; RC/HC, cluster members, donors, implementing partners, government officials, Integrated Mission staff</li> <li>■ Identification, review and documentation of case studies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cross-country case study analysis.</li> </ul>
3.3 To what extent has UNICEF successfully employed relevant approaches to strengthening programme coverage and quality in complex humanitarian situations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Relevance and use of UNICEF and inter-agency guidance on programming in CHTEs (inc. EMOPS Guidance on Civil-military Coordination, Programming Guidance on Engagement with Non-State Actors, Engaging Effectively with United Nations Integrated Presences, UNICEF Guidance on Remote Programming, UNICEF Integrated Programming in Humanitarian Action, IASC Stay and Deliver Strategy)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Document and literature review</li> <li>■ Identification, review and documentation of case studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cross-country case study analysis</li> </ul>

Evaluation questions/Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods & sources	Analytical methods
<b>WAYS OF ACHIEVING OUTCOMES</b>			
EQ3: What programme approaches and partnership strategies has UNICEF employed at the field level to gain principled access and improve coverage and quality, and with what success?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Application of remote programming, or alternative programming approaches</li> <li>■ Integrated sector programming</li> <li>■ The use of rapid response mechanisms (RRM) in selected countries</li> <li>■ Access negotiations and engagement with parties to the conflict on issues of humanitarian assistance and protection</li> <li>■ Implementation of the inter-agency 'Stay and Deliver' strategy</li> <li>■ The use of other innovative approaches for programming.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of the effect that different approaches have on the quality and coverage of humanitarian action in CHTEs</li> <li>■ Evidence of new and innovative approaches being taken by UNICEF to improve the quality and coverage of humanitarian action (UNICEF's approach to humanitarian innovation).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Interviews with UNICEF staff at HQ, RO and CO level, United Nations agencies, NGOs, implementing partners and other donors, government ministries and officials</li> <li>■ Interviews and focus groups at field level, particularly with communities and affected populations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Analysis of decision-making criteria around application of, approaches to, improved access.</li> </ul>
<p>3.4 To what extent do risk management and security systems and approaches enable or constrain UNICEF's humanitarian coverage and access in complex humanitarian situations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What internal UNICEF capacity exists to analyse risk and manage security for access?</li> <li>■ How well is UNICEF managing the financial risks associated with its humanitarian programming?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence that UNICEF at CO level routinely analyses and manages risks and receives high-quality and timely managerial support for this</li> <li>■ Evidence that UNICEF has a risk tolerance that permits it to work effectively in complex humanitarian situations</li> <li>■ Evidence of the use and relevance of UNICEF's financial systems and procurement/logistics procedures in complex humanitarian situations</li> <li>■ Evidence that financial and logistics procedures incorporate effective risk management and anti-corruption measures</li> <li>■ Evidence that UNICEF proactively adopts a range of strategies to reduce risk, which include acceptance through community engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Review of financial risk and other documentation, financial data and United Nations security management systems</li> <li>■ Identification, review and documentation of case studies</li> <li>■ Interviews with UNICEF staff at HQ, RO and CO level (including finance staff)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cross-country case study analysis</li> <li>■ Context analysis</li> <li>■ Analysis of decision-making criteria around application of approaches to improve access.</li> </ul>

Evaluation questions/Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods & sources	Analytical methods
<b>WAYS OF ACHIEVING OUTCOMES</b>			
EQ3: What programme approaches and partnership strategies has UNICEF employed at the field level to gain principled access and improve coverage and quality, and with what success?			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To what extent is UNICEF using multi-dimensional risk mitigation approaches, including mitigating risks and increasing access by building ‘acceptance’ within communities/through acceptance-based approaches?</li> <li>■ What role has the UN’s security management system played in enabling or hindering access?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of the relevance and use of the United Nations Programme Criticality Framework</li> <li>■ Evidence of the relevance and use of UNICEF’s risk management guidance (including Risk-Informed Programming, 2018–2021 strategy).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Interviews with United Nations agencies, NGOs, implementing partners and donors.</li> </ul>	
<p>3.5 How well is UNICEF using programme monitoring to identify and address gaps in coverage and quality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What challenges do complex humanitarian situations present to programme monitoring and how is UNICEF seeking to address these?</li> <li>■ What are the trade-offs in strengthening this monitoring?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of the relevance and use of UNICEF’s humanitarian performance monitoring approach and information management (IM) approaches</li> <li>■ Use of AAP approaches and community engagement to strengthen programme monitoring</li> <li>■ Evidence of challenges in implementing robust monitoring in complex humanitarian situations</li> <li>■ Availability of documented good practice and case studies for monitoring.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Review of programme monitoring data and systems</li> <li>■ Review of information management mechanisms</li> <li>■ Interviews with UNICEF staff at HQ, RO and CO level</li> <li>■ Field-level interviews with community members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Analysis of M&amp;E and reporting mechanisms</li> <li>■ Cross-country case study analysis.</li> </ul>

Evaluation questions/Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods & sources	Analytical methods
<b>WAYS OF ACHIEVING OUTCOMES</b>			
EQ4: To what extent is UNICEF's humanitarian response designed to be relevant and adapted to ensure its ongoing relevance to evolving needs and priorities?			
4.1 How well does UNICEF's context, conflict and political economy analysis (PEA) underpin the relevance of its humanitarian response strategy and its programme design, and to what extent does UNICEF adjust these as situations evolve?  ■ How well prepared is UNICEF at HQ, RO and CO levels for new humanitarian crises in situations at risk of becoming complex high-threat?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of ongoing context analysis in complex humanitarian situations</li> <li>■ Availability of updated context, conflict and PEA, and evidence that these are linked to programme strategies</li> <li>■ Existence of actionable preparedness plans at CO level (and relevance of the UNICEF Preparedness Guidance Note)</li> <li>■ Evidence of the effective use of UNICEF's corporate emergency activation procedure</li> <li>■ Evidence of the effectiveness of humanitarian surge in case study countries.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Review of needs assessments and conflict and PEA analysis</li> <li>■ Programme and strategy document review</li> <li>■ Review of recent evaluations of UNICEF humanitarian action in CHTEs</li> <li>■ Interviews with UNICEF staff at HQ, RO and CO level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cross-country case study analysis</li> <li>■ Analysis of UNICEF policies and strategies.</li> </ul>
4.2 How well has UNICEF engaged with communities to ensure that programmes are designed and adjusted to meet communities' own perceptions of their humanitarian needs and priorities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence that UNICEF has adopted AAP and community engagement strategies in complex humanitarian contexts that routinely elicit input and feedback on its programmes (2018–2021 strategy, AAP Checklist for the CCCs)</li> <li>■ Evidence of the relevance and use by UNICEF of the IASC AAP Operational Framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Focus groups with affected communities</li> <li>■ Review of accountability mechanisms</li> <li>■ Interviews with UNICEF staff at HQ, RO and CO level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cross-country case study analysis.</li> </ul>
4.3 To what extent is UNICEF's humanitarian programming coherent with or link to long-term development programmes and strategies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of coherent programme planning in humanitarian contexts</li> <li>■ Evidence that UNICEF's programmes are consistent with UNICEF's emerging guidance (Draft Humanitarian–Development Nexus paper)</li> <li>■ Evidence that programme links have strengthened the quality and coverage of UNICEF's assistance in complex humanitarian situations (Study on Linking Development and Humanitarian Programming).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Programme and strategy document review</li> <li>■ Identification, review and documentation of case studies</li> <li>■ Interviews with UNICEF staff at HQ, RO and CO level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Analysis of UNICEF policies and strategies</li> <li>■ Cross-country case study analysis.</li> </ul>

Evaluation questions/Sub-questions	Indicators	Data collection methods & sources	Analytical methods
<b>INPUTS</b>  EQ5: To what extent do UNICEF's human and financial resource management and systems and procedures support an effective response in CHTEs?			
5.1 How appropriately are UNICEF COs staffed by technical experts and senior management for delivering humanitarian coverage and quality?  ■ How well have COs been supported by senior management and technical specialists from ROs and HQ in improving coverage and quality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence that UNICEF is able to recruit people with the right skills and competencies for CHTEs and fill staff positions</li> <li>■ Evidence that UNICEF is meeting CCC commitments on HR for rapid deployment (commitment 1) and well-being (commitment 2)</li> <li>■ Evidence that high-quality and relevant managerial and technical support is available to UNICEF Representatives and programme staff in CHTEs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Interviews with UNICEF staff at HQ, RO and CO level</li> <li>■ Identification, review and documentation of case studies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cross-country case study analysis.</li> </ul>
5.2 How successful has UNICEF been in mobilizing flexible resources and other innovative financing modalities for CHTEs?  ■ To what extent has UNICEF succeeded in advocating with donors to address funding shortfalls affecting humanitarian action?  ■ To what extent does UNICEF apply programme criticality or other criteria to prioritize limited financial resources for complex humanitarian contexts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of donor engagement by UNICEF at HQ, RO and CO level to leverage funding for CHTEs</li> <li>■ Evidence of UNICEF adopting innovative financing modalities for complex humanitarian situations</li> <li>■ Evidence of UNICEF ensuring flexibility of funding</li> <li>■ Evidence of a decision-making process to prioritize funding allocations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Review of presentations, speaking notes and other documents prepared for donors</li> <li>■ Interviews with UNICEF staff at HQ, RO and CO level, and United Nations agencies and other donors in-country.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Cross-country case study analysis</li> <li>■ Analysis of decision-making criteria.</li> </ul>
5.3 To what extent have UNICEF's systems and procedures improved its response in complex humanitarian situations, and could these be further adapted to improve performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of the relevance and use of UNICEF's systems and procedures including:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enhanced programme and operational support for fragile contexts</li> <li>■ UNICEF simplified standard operating procedures</li> <li>■ Supply Division's 'no regrets' policy.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Review of procedures and systems</li> <li>■ Interviews with UNICEF staff at HQ, RO and CO level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Analysis of resource allocation and management</li> <li>■ Cross-country case study analysis.</li> </ul>

## Annex 3: List of interviewees

Listed below are the key informants who participated in the evaluation in phase 1 and phase 2.

### ***UNICEF, Abuja***

#### Phase 2:

Peter Hawkins, Representative  
 Rushnan Murtaza, Deputy Representative  
 Jane Bevan, Chief of WASH  
 Claes Johannson, Chief of M4R  
 Nemat Hajeebhoy, Chief of Nutrition  
 Ibrahim Sesay, Chief of Child Protection  
 Eliana Drakopoulos, Chief of Communication  
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## Annex 5: Phase 1 evaluation recommendations, management response and follow-up

The phase 1 evaluation report was submitted in January 2019. In April of the same year, the Nigeria CO prepared an internal management response indicating the status of follow-up actions as 'under way' or 'completed'. All actions were planned to be completed by 31 May 2019.

#	Phase 1 recommendation	Actions to be led by?	Management response 2019	2021 evaluation assessment of status
1	Review current partnerships to maximise the potential to achieve coverage and programme quality.	Led by Chief of Field Office with support from Emergency Coordinator	Agree.	Not done.
2	Support and advocate for the endorsement of the HCT Access Strategy.	Representative	Agree.	Completed but superseded. The strategy was never fully implemented after endorsement.
3	Engage robustly with DO for security and UNDSS on issues of access and use the UNICEF Security Officer in a strategic role to support and strengthen humanitarian access.	Representative and Chief of Field Office	Agree.	Not done.
4	Build in regular contextual analysis to inform programme adaptation.	Representative	Agree.	Not done.
5	Clarify UNICEF's accountability to communities and ensure a mechanism is in place to routinely deliver this.	Representative	Agree.	Not done.
6	Establish an overall approach and advocacy strategy in support of the New Ways of Working.	Representative	Agree with caveat: depends on HCT.	Not done.
7	Review and revise the SOP for the LTA for the third-party consultants and ensure strict adherence.	Representative	Agree.	Completed successfully in 2021.





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