

INTRODUCTION

In May 2016, the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) brought together 9,000 participants representing governments, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private sectors, and academia with the intention of generating new initiatives to better serve the world’s most vulnerable populations.¹ A key development from the WHS was the Grand Bargain, which brings together donors and humanitarian organisations in an effort to provide more assistance to those in need while simultaneously improving the effectiveness and efficiency in which that assistance is provided. As such, the Grand Bargain has acted as an impetus for humanitarian actors to commit to greater accountability to affected populations (AAP).²

Since 2016, humanitarian actors, with the support of the Nigerian government, have provided assistance to millions of individuals in the Northeast state of Borno.³ However, there is limited information on community perceptions of humanitarian assistance in northeast Nigeria, which could limit the provision of relevant and inclusive aid to affected communities in the region. The need for quality AAP information in Northeast Nigeria is further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased the number of people in need of urgent assistance in the Northeast by 2.7 million (from 7.9 million at the beginning of 2020 to 10.6 million since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic).⁴

In order to fill the identified information gap on community perceptions on the humanitarian response, REACH developed an AAP assessment, focusing on perceptions around five key AAP themes: 1) awareness of humanitarian service delivery; 2) fairness/inclusion of the humanitarian response; 3) feedback modalities within the humanitarian response 4) relevance of humanitarian interventions 5) respect of affected populations by humanitarian service providers as perceived by the community. The assessment also explored aspects of protection concerns and barriers to accessing aid.

This assessment intends to gather a more robust understanding of settlement level perceptions in targeted local government areas (LGAs). By doing so, it is aimed to inform the humanitarian response on community perceptions of service delivery to enable a more community-centred and responsive approach.

REACH carried out a mixed methodology assessment, consisting of 351 key informant interviews (KIIs) across 245 settlements and 6 focus group discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries, across 8 LGAs that have received assistance (Jere, Kala/Balge, Konduga, Mafa, Maiduguri, Mobbar, Monguno, Ngala) from March 22-31, 2021. LGAs were selected on the basis of having received aid in the 6 months prior to data collection and accessibility for data collection. See the methodology section on page 8 for more information.

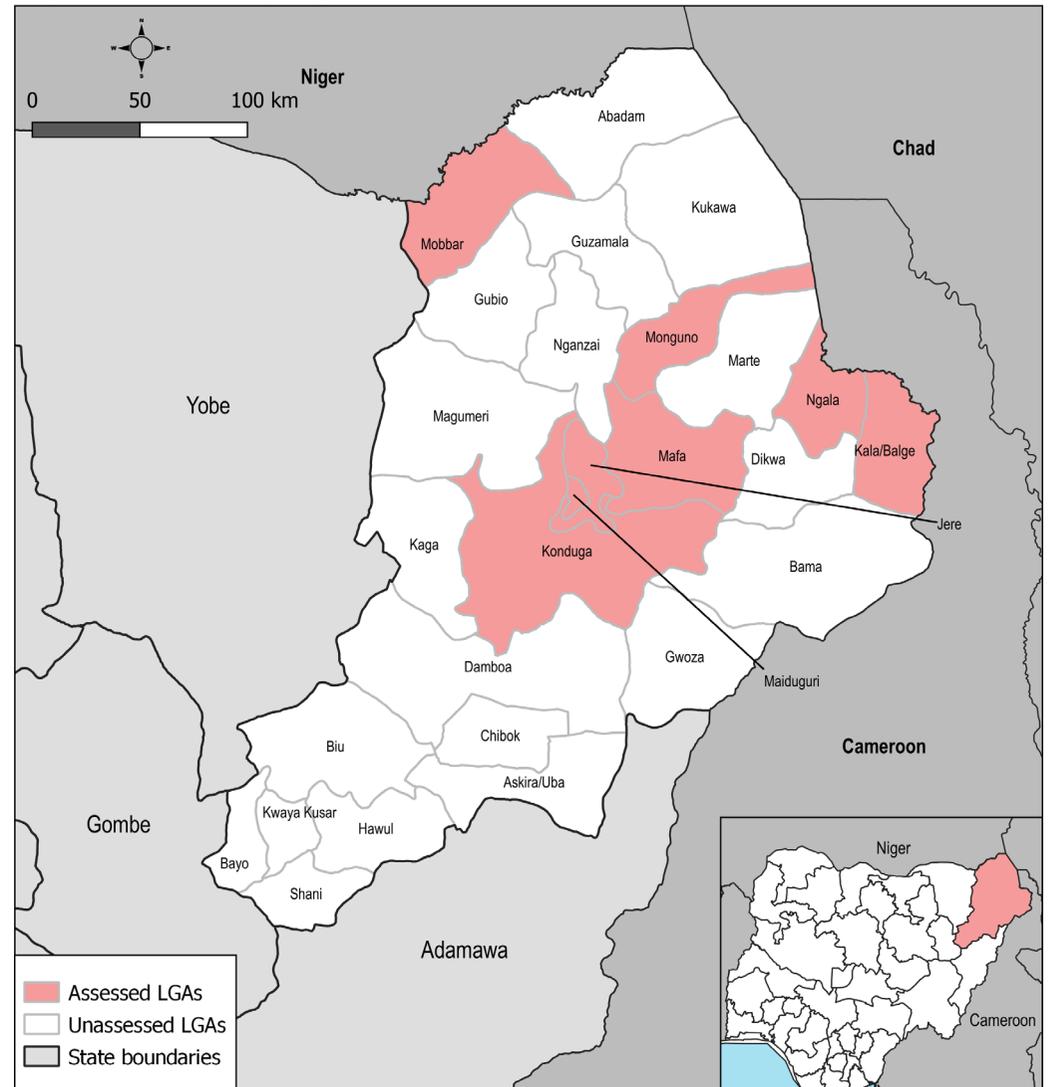
KIIs reported on the settlement level and therefore the findings relate to the proportion of assessed settlements with a given response. Both the quantitative findings (KIIs) and qualitative findings (FGDs) should be considered indicative only.

AAP MIXED METHODOLOGY

 **8 LGAs assessed**
 **245 Settlements assessed**

 **6 FGDs**
 **351 KIIs**

Map 1: Assessment coverage map of Borno state



KEY FINDINGS

- Awareness** Variations between the perspectives of KIs, who are often community leaders, and FGD participants, who are community members, indicated a challenge for humanitarians to carefully balance respecting the traditional authority structure in settlements while addressing the beneficiaries' desire for direct communication with humanitarians.
- Fairness** Similarly to awareness, KI and FGD participants' perceptions were split on the fairness of beneficiary selection and assistance distribution within their settlements. In most settlements, KIs reported people believed humanitarians were responsible for selecting beneficiaries, while most FGD participants believed community leaders purposely selected their own family or friends to receive assistance, leading to perceptions of favoritism.
- Feedback** KIs and FGD participants reported different preferred feedback modalities and varying levels of satisfaction with humanitarian agencies' responses to their feedback. KIs reported a preference for direct communication with humanitarians while FGD participants preferred anonymous sources, such as complaint boxes, suggesting that community leaders are more comfortable providing feedback and have greater access to humanitarian workers. Variations in findings across LGAs suggested that people in settlements with greater humanitarian access were generally believed to be more satisfied with feedback loops.
- Relevance** While KIs in most settlements and participants in most FGDs reported the assistance they have received in the 6 months prior to data collection was appropriate to their needs, KIs and FGD participants also reported only partial satisfaction with this assistance due to the quality and quantity of assistance, poor targeting, lateness, and irrelevant assistance, indicating a need for more tailored programming.
- Respect** KIs in the majority of settlements and participants in most FGDs reported feeling respected when interacting with humanitarians, however, several participants noted humanitarians have previously dressed inappropriately while visiting their settlements, leading to the disapproval of certain humanitarian behaviors.
- Protection** While KIs in the majority of settlements and FGD participants reported no protection concerns while retrieving assistance in the 3 months to data collection, both groups noted that women were more likely to experience concerns, if any.
- Barriers** There were variations in the types of perceived barriers reported by KIs and FGD participants. In most settlements, KIs reported communication between the settlement and humanitarians as the main barrier, whereas FGD participants frequently reported poor targeting of beneficiaries as the main barrier.

KI DEMOGRAPHICS⁶

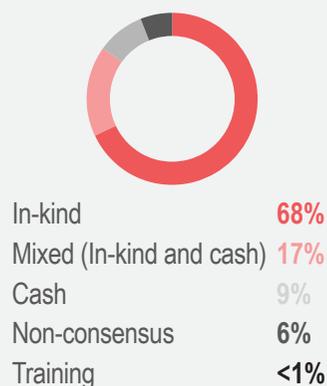


FGD PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS



HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE OVERVIEW

% of settlements by main reported assistance modalities received in the 6 months prior to data collection:



Top 3 reported types of assistance KIs reported their settlement had received in the 6 months prior to data collection:[†]

1. Food 69%
2. WASH 47%
- 3a. Livelihoods 14%
- 3b. Non-food items (NFIs) 14%

Top 3 reported sources of assistance KIs reported their settlement had received in the 6 months prior to data collection:[†]

1. International non-governmental organization (INGO) 94%
2. Government 21%
3. National non-governmental organization (NNGO) 15%

[†] Respondents were allowed to select multiple choices

AWARENESS

To assess the level of awareness about service delivery, KIIs and FGD participants were asked about who they perceive to be reliable sources of information, whether they believe their settlements have received enough information in the 6 months prior to data collection, what modes of information they prefer, and what type of information they like to receive.

Top 3 reported preferred sources for reliable information for most people in the assessed settlement, as reported by KIIs¹:

1. Community leader	98%	
2. Religious leader	94%	
3. INGO	24%	

In nearly all settlements, KIIs reported that community or religious leaders were the preferred source for reliable information in the settlement about assistance. However, in FGDs with community members, the vast majority of participants reported that humanitarian workers were their preferred source for reliable information and they perceived that community leaders often withhold information from them in order to prioritize their own family or friends for humanitarian assistance. **The discrepancy between KII and FGD findings may be attributable to the fact that KIIs are often community leaders themselves, suggesting that community leaders perceive that they are the most reliable information source, where as community members in the FGDs perceive otherwise.** This disconnect between community leaders and community members has implications for how humanitarians should approach information disseminations in communities.

“Our community heads and camp chairmen are not being fair when providing us with information, instead we prefer group awareness or individual consultation (with humanitarians)”- Female participant from Konduga LGA

KIIs' and FGD participants' perceptions on whether they or most people in their settlements have received enough information about humanitarian assistance also varied between groups. KIIs in about half of assessed settlements (51%) reported their settlement received enough information in the 6 months prior to data collection, while participants in only 2 out of 6 FGDs indicated they felt they were receiving enough information within the same time period. This variation may suggest a similar disconnect between the amount of information that community heads believe they share versus the amount of information the community perceives is shared. The apparent disconnect between beneficiaries and community leaders indicates a concerning trend that may complicate humanitarians' ability to properly identify and communicate with, as well as, provide assistance to the people in most need of assistance within these assessed settlements.

“We are being registered and we get information about assistance but when it comes to distribution, we hardly hear anything and even our Bulama (community/village head) is left out”- Male participant from Jere LGA

Top 3 reported preferred means of receiving information for most people in the assessed settlement, as reported by KIIs¹:

1. Phone-call	52%	
2. Face to face	51%	
3. Radio	50%	

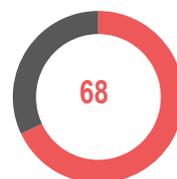
KIIs did not report a strong preference for one communication modality over another. Similarly, FGD participants were split between preferring face-to-face communication while others preferred posters, community events, and public announcements from churches and mosques. The mix in preferences across both KIIs and FGDs may be due in part to differing access to phones and other information sources in different areas of Borno state.

“We suggest that if announcements are being made through imams, mosques, churches, [then] traditional leader communication will be easier and smoother”- Male participant from Konduga

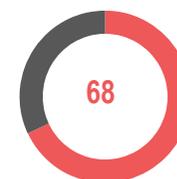
Top 3 reported types of information most people in their settlements would like to receive from humanitarians, as reported by KIIs¹:

1. How to register for assistance such as food, water, cash, fuel, shelter	70%
2. The security situation in current location	33%
3. News on what is happening in the communities' area (e.g. COVID-19)	32%

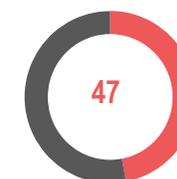
LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION



% of settlements where KIIs reported **Kanuri** as the most spoken language within their settlement



% of settlements where KIIs reported **Hausa** as the preferred language to receive written information in within their settlement



% of settlements where KIIs reported **Kanuri** as the preferred language to receive spoken information in within their settlement

FAIRNESS

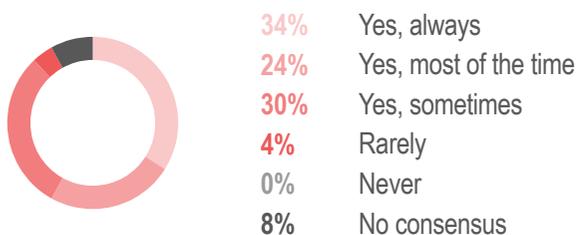
KIs and FGD participants were subsequently asked about perceptions towards the fairness of the humanitarian system. KIs and FGD participants were asked how much is known about beneficiary selection processes and if the current selection process is perceived as fair with the assistance going to the most in need members of the community.

KIs in half of assessed settlements (54%) reported that most people from their settlements believed beneficiaries were selected because humanitarian agencies identified them as the most vulnerable, while KIs in 29% of settlements reported that most people from the settlement believed chiefs/community leaders were responsible for beneficiary selection. FGD participants further explained that it was often a combination of humanitarian selection with support from community leaders, but overall FGD participants perceived that it was more frequently community leaders who selected beneficiaries. While participants in 5 out of 6 of the FGDs perceived beneficiary selection to be unfair because of favoritism, within only 3% of assessed settlements, KIs reported that people in their settlements believed beneficiaries are selected on the basis of favoritism.

No KIs in Konduga and Jere LGAs reported their settlement believed beneficiaries were selected on the basis of favoritism yet participants from all Konduga and Jere FGDs noted that favoritism was the main reason behind their perceptions of unfairness. This split in perceptions is likely linked to FGD participants' beliefs that community leaders withhold information from them in order to prioritize their own family or friends for humanitarian assistance. The divergence in perspectives on fairness may be attributable to similar reasons reported in the Awareness section regarding KI and FGD participant identities.

“Humanitarian workers select beneficiaries with the help of the Bulama (community leader), they look out for most vulnerable people from the community and add them, this selection are [sic] sometimes fair while sometimes are not. When the Bulama makes selections he tends to include his close relatives either those in the community or those outside.” - Female participant from Jere LGA

% of settlements where KIs reported assistance is evenly accessible in the settlement, including the most vulnerable members:

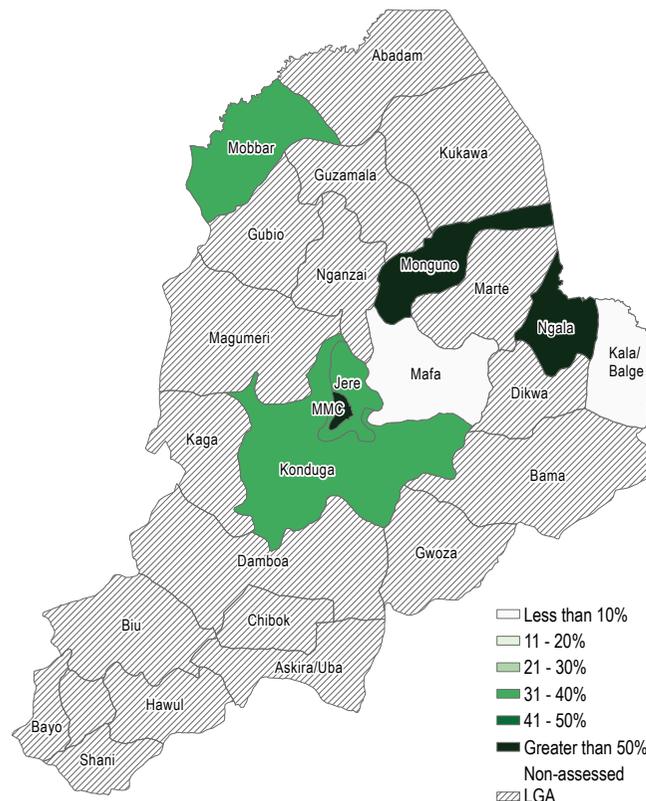


In over half of settlements, (58%) KIs reported they felt assistance was equally accessible to community members either always or most of the time. KIs that reported assistance is rarely

accessible to all community members identified men (in 58% of settlements), women (58%), elderly men (50%), and elderly women (42%) are in need of assistance but cannot get it while no settlements had KIs report young boys and girls had trouble accessing needed assistance†. Some KIs did report that adolescent boys (17%) and adolescent girls (17%) were more likely to face challenges accessing this needed assistance.† Participants from several FGDs also reported that assistance was not evenly accessible to all community members.

Perceptions of unfairness among KIs and FGD participants can be linked to several factors. FGD participants from Jere, Konduga, and Maiduguri explained reasons for the perceptions of unfairness may be stemmed from the fact that the quantity of assistance has stayed the same while the populations in their settlements have increased, leading to thinner distributions. While KIs were not asked why assistance was not evenly accessible, it is possible that their settlements are experiencing similar issues.

Map 2: % of assessed settlements where KIs reported that most people felt like their opinion is considered enough in the design of humanitarian activities:



FEEDBACK

KIs and FGD participants were asked about how most people from their settlements and they perceive feedback mechanisms for the humanitarian assistance they received. Both groups were asked about their preferred mechanisms for providing feedback on the humanitarian assistance they received or will receive. In addition, KIs and FGD participants were asked whether most people in their settlement and they have previously used feedback mechanisms and if they were satisfied with the response(s) they received. FGD participants were also asked about their level of comfort when providing feedback to humanitarian workers.

Top 3 reported preferred means of providing feedback to aid providers about the quality, quantity and/or appropriateness of aid for most people in the assessed settlements, as reported by KIs:

- 1. Face to face at humanitarian office **49%**
- 2. Face to face at home **33%**
- 3. Phone call with humanitarians **32%**

While KIs reported people in their settlements preferred direct communication with humanitarians, in most Jere and Konduga FGDs participants reported preferring to provide feedback through complaint boxes.

“People feel comfortable reporting to the complaint box rather than in person, we think that if it is in person it might create misunderstanding among individuals but when kept anonymous, it can be resolved without anyone’s consent.” - Male participant from Jere LGA

The differing preferred feedback modalities between LGAs may suggest there are greater levels of trust between beneficiaries and community leaders in places where there is more humanitarian oversight or where there is greater social connectedness, such as in Maiduguri where the humanitarian response is centered and where FDG participants commonly reported preferring providing feedback through community leaders or community volunteers. Further, KIs reported people in their settlements overwhelmingly prefer direct feedback with humanitarians, which may suggest community leaders have more direct communication and access to humanitarians and thus are able to more comfortably provide feedback about the quality, quantity and/or appropriateness of aid on behalf of people in their settlements.

% of settlements where KIs reported that someone in their settlement has ever raised concerns on the assistance received through a complaint/feedback mechanism:

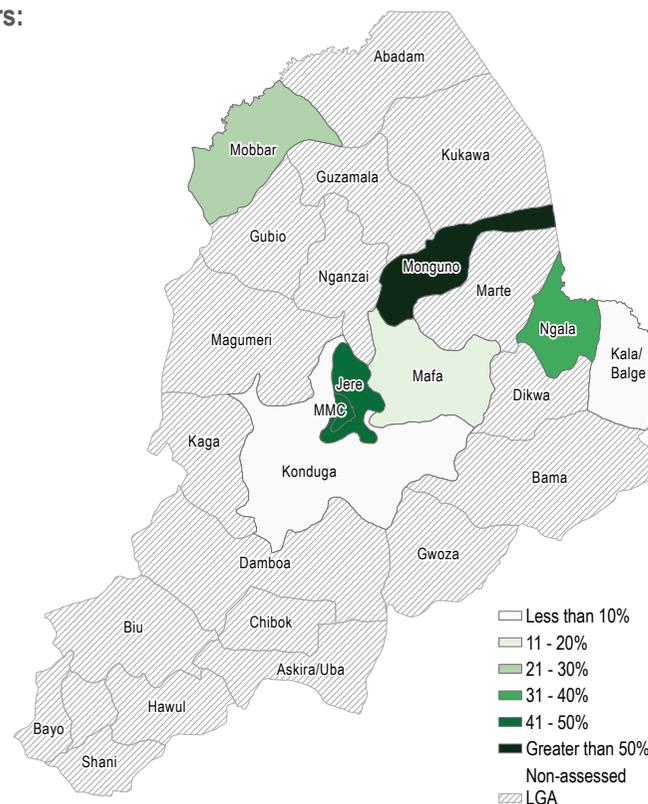


- 54%** Yes
- 39%** No
- 3%** Don't know/ No response
- 4%** No consensus

Despite KIs in over half of settlements (54%) reporting that someone in their settlement had made a complaint, both KIs and most FGD participants alike reported that current feedback modalities are ineffective at addressing their communities’ or their concerns about humanitarian assistance. In all Jere and Konduga FGDs, participants reported that complaint boxes and providing feedback via community leaders were ineffective. Further, in all Maiduguri FGDs, participants reported their preferred modalities were effective. Within settlements in Jere, Maiduguri, Monguno and Ngala LGAs, KIs reported above average (26%) levels of satisfaction with the responses their settlements received from humanitarian workers.

Remarkably, these 4 LGAs are accessible to humanitarians via air services compared to the other assessed 4 LGAs, which require riskier road travel. This may suggest settlements have more positive perceptions of humanitarian systems where humanitarians have greater levels of access and thus are able to provide more oversight.

Map 3: Of the settlements where someone reportedly ever raised a concern, % of settlements where KIs reported people were satisfied with the response they received from aid workers:



RELEVANCE

KIs and FGD participants were asked about perceptions on the relevance humanitarian assistance they received or will receive. KIs and FGD participants were asked whether the assistance most people in their settlement were receiving was appropriate to the needs of the community. Furthermore, KIs and FGD participants reported on the level of satisfaction of most people from their settlement or their satisfaction with the assistance they received within the 6 months prior to data collection.

% of settlements where most people received assistance that was appropriate to the needs of the community, as reported by KIs:



KIs in the majority of settlements, and participants in all FGDs reported that the assistance their communities and they received was appropriate to the needs of the community. However, in half of FGDs, participants indicated they were also in need of assistance that was not provided. Reportedly, this gap in assistance had to do both with a lack of quantity and a lack of quality of assistance provided in the 6 months prior to data collection.

In those settlements where people were reportedly partially satisfied or dissatisfied with the assistance (32%), the most commonly reported reasons were poor targeting of beneficiaries (61%), lateness (38%), and the most needed aid was not provided (16%).[†]

Notably, within 4 out of 6 of FGDs, participants indicated they were partially satisfied or unsatisfied with assistance due to the lack of assistance being provided while participants in 2 out of 6 FGDs mentioned poor targeting.[†]

“We also need capital or vocational centres where we can learn trade to help ourselves. We are being [sic] tired of receiving aid and not moving forward”- Female participant from Maiduguri LGA

A recent increase in pendulum displacement in Borno state has caused the population size within assessed settlements to increase, further stressing the humanitarian system and potentially exacerbating the settlement’s level of dissatisfaction with humanitarian assistance.

“Assistance should be increased in quantity as our population is growing fast and everything been brought is not sufficient.”- Male participant from Konduga LGA

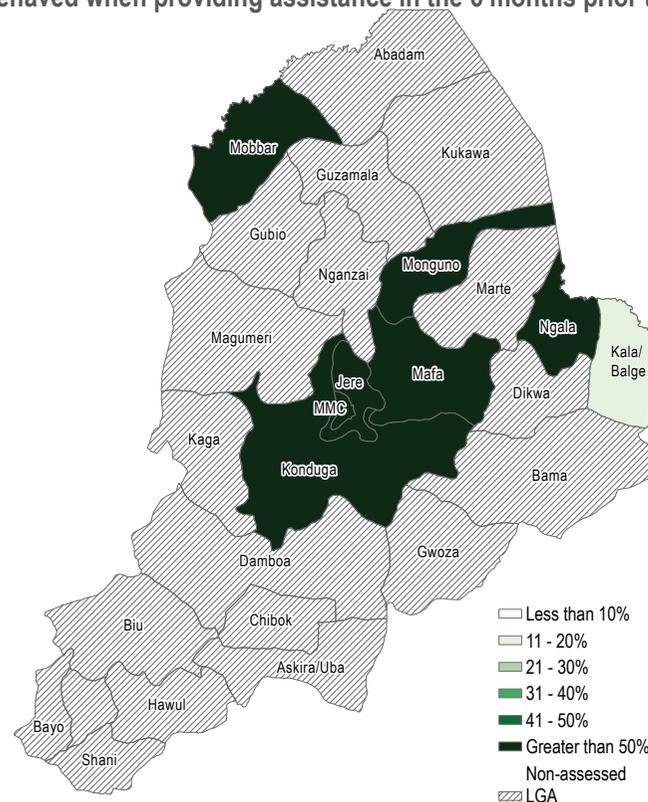
RESPECT

KIs and FGD participants were asked about perceptions on the behavior of humanitarian workers. **Within all FGDs, participants reported feeling respected by humanitarians.** In 2 out of 6 FGDs, participants reported instances where aid workers were dressed inconsiderately to local customs. In both cases, the participants referred to a female aid worker wearing tightly fitted clothing that was perceived as culturally appropriate in their community.

While KIs in the majority of settlements, and FGD participants reported humanitarians showed respect during interactions, it is imperative humanitarians continue to acknowledge cultural norms when providing assistance. In doing so, humanitarians are committed to improving current interventions while ensuring future interventions are in line with the expectations of the populations served.

“We are respected and treated well by humanitarian workers, they joke with us like we knew each other from the beginning”- Female participant from Maiduguri LGA

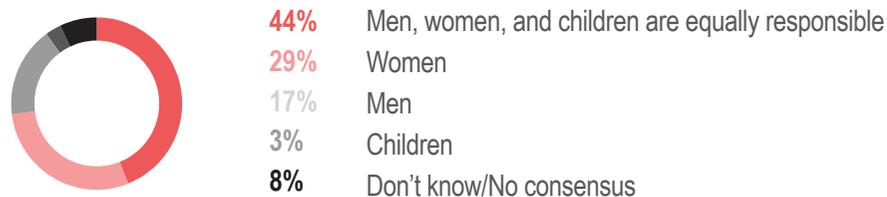
Map 4: % of settlements where KIs reported most people were satisfied with the way aid workers behaved when providing assistance in the 6 months prior to data collection:



PROTECTION

In this section, protection concerns while receiving assistance, as perceived by KIs and FGD participants, will be discussed.

% of settlements where KIs reported who in the settlement is primarily responsible for retrieving in kind assistance:



Protection concerns while receiving humanitarian assistance were minimally reported across KIs and FGDs. Participants in all FGDs indicated that they mostly feel safe; however, Konduga participants reported there were concerns with community members in the past forcefully taking assistance from others. Both male and female participants indicated this is a concern primarily for women. In all 4 FGDs conducted in Jere and Maiduguri, participants reported there were no protection concerns during and after receiving assistance. Furthermore, within all FGDs, participants mentioned that vulnerable populations were provided extra services to ensure their protection.

“People that are sick or disabled people come with family members to help them, they do not que, those without anyone to help the community head will ask one of the vigilante to help out” - Female participant from Jere LGA

Similarly, in **97%** of settlements, KIs reported women did not face protection concerns while retrieving assistance in the 3 months prior to data collection, while in **98%** of settlements, KIs reported the same for men. In those settlements where KIs indicated that men and women face protection concerns, the most commonly reported type of concern was verbal harassment for both groups, although this was more frequently reported for women than for men.

The inclusion of [protection mainstreaming principles](#) within the humanitarian response in Borno state has shown to be beneficial within the assessed settlements. Particularly encouraging is cohesion in responses between KIs and FGD participants where the majority of both groups reported no protection concerns while retrieving assistance in the 3 months prior to data collection. However, reports from KI and FGD participants of women facing protection concerns at significantly higher rates than other demographics indicates the need for ongoing protection for vulnerable groups. The continued security deterioration in Borno state threatens to reverse the progress humanitarians have made in ensuring safe and secure distributions.

BARRIERS

KIs and FGD participants were asked what they perceived to be the key barriers to accessing the most needed humanitarian assistance, if any. **Within 5 out of 6 FGDs, participants indicated the main barrier to accessing assistance was poor targeting of beneficiaries.** KIs in most settlements reported communication between the community and humanitarians to be a main barrier, however, reported barriers varied between LGAs.

In 4 assessed LGAs, KIs in the majority of assessed settlements reported there were no barriers to accessing assistance for most people in their settlement, further indicating the need for humanitarians to design systems where the perceptions of beneficiaries and community leaders are more closely aligned.

Types of barriers to accessing the most needed humanitarian assistance in the 6 months prior to data collection, by % of assessed settlements where KIs reported such barriers[†]:

	Jere	Kala/Balge	Konduga	Mafa	Maiduguri	Mobbar	Monguno	Ngala
None	11%	0%	53%	13%	29%	45%	80%	100%
Lack of communication between community and humanitarians	44%	38%	5%	63%	59%	37%	20%	0%
Humanitarian assistance is not evenly distributed within the settlement	44%	0%	11%	38%	17%	13%	0%	0%
Humanitarian assistance is not given to those who need it most	11%	13%	21%	0%	9%	3%	0%	0%
Humanitarian assistance is not relevant to the needs of the community	11%	50%	0%	25%	2%	1%	0%	0%
Humanitarian actors do not provide assistance in a respectful manner	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Settlement does not feel safe when receiving assistance	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Physical barrier(s) when accessing assistance	0%	50%	5%	0%	1%	6%	0%	0%
Other	0%	25%	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%
No Response	0%	0%	21%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Don't Know	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	1%	0%	0%

CONCLUSION

Since the start of the humanitarian crisis 12 years ago, Nigerians in the northeast have been subjected to high levels of displacement and disruptions of their daily lives. This crisis is no more evident than in Borno state where an estimated 3.9 million people will need humanitarian assistance in 2021.⁷ The continued threat of violence compounded by economic instability, climate change, and the COVID-19 pandemic indicates humanitarians will continue to be key stakeholders in providing assistance to the affected populations. As such, humanitarians have a responsibility to adhere to the [humanitarian principles](#) through the mainstreaming of AAP principles.

Perceptions of awareness, fairness, feedback, relevance, respect, protection concerns and barriers varied between KIs and FGD participants and between LGAs. While concerns or dissatisfaction within the awareness, fairness, feedback, relevance, and barriers themes was brought up in some FGDs, KIs seemed to more commonly report satisfaction among the people in their settlement across all 7 themes, particularly related to awareness and fairness. Both groups overwhelmingly perceived respect and protection as themes where humanitarians were doing a satisfactory job.

The implications from this assessment show affected populations need further community engagement with humanitarians to refine settlement level concerns. Nonetheless, the affected populations represented in this assessment demonstrated a mutual respect and appreciation for humanitarians and the assistance they provide.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

In total, 351 KIIs were conducted remotely through a call centre in Maiduguri town. Additionally, 6 FGDs were held in Jere, Konduga, and Maiduguri LGAs with one male and one female group per LGA. Data was collected at the lowest possible administrative unit – individual settlements – as derived from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) settlement dataset (in which a settlement represents a village or neighbourhood in a defined urban area). The settlement level was chosen to increase the likelihood that the area for which KIs provided information corresponds directly to their actual area of knowledge, thereby mitigating unfounded deductions. KI contacts and FGD participants were found through community leaders and local partners in the targeted LGAs. For KIIs, REACH purposively selected settlements that were determined to have received humanitarian assistance in the previous 6 months. FGD participants were purposively selected to have received humanitarian assistance and to be from a settlement that had received humanitarian assistance in the 6 months prior to data collection.

KIIs were conducted in 8 purposively selected LGAs across Borno state. Five LGAs were selected based on the 2020 MSNA indicator “% of households who received aid in the past 3 months” i.e. Kala/Balge, Mafa, Mobbar, Monguno, and Ngala LGA. The additional 3 LGAs (Jere, Konduga, and Maiduguri) were selected due their accessibility, and thus the ability to conduct both FGDs and KIIs within these areas. The total sample quota for KIIs was calculated using the total number of inhabited settlements in each LGA and purposively selecting 10% of those settlements from each LGA to assess.

Both the quantitative findings (KIIs) and qualitative findings (FGDs) should be considered indicative only. For more information on the methodology, please refer to the [terms of reference](#).

While it was intended to interview one KI per settlement, due to mobile network disruptions in certain LGAs, there are several cases where multiple KIIs were interviewed for the same settlement. As a result, a consensus aggregation was used in order to account for the difference in number of KIIs per settlement across LGAs. In instances where a settlement had an even number of interviewed KIIs and a majority answer could not be determined for a given indicator, a non-consensus result was assigned. As men were the majority of KIIs, the AAP assessment’s results are inherently skewed to the perceptions of males. Additionally, KIIs are often community leaders, leading to potential bias of perceptions.

END NOTES

1 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), [About the Grand Bargain](#)

2 Defined by the IASC as “Accountability to affected populations is an active commitment to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people humanitarian organisations seek to assist”. https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/aap_psea_2-pager.pdf

3 Additional information on the humanitarian response in Nigeria is available from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GHO2021_EN.pdf

4 Additional information on the humanitarian response in Northeast Nigeria is available from <https://www.unocha.org/nigeria/about-ocha-nigeria>

5 Additional information on REACH’s 2020 MSNA is available from <https://www.reachresourcecentre.info/country/nigeria/cycle/27914/#cycle-27914>

6 KI demographics are presented at the individual KI level and not at the settlement level (i.e. as a % of the total KIIs interviewed)

7 Additional information on the humanitarian crisis in Northeast Nigeria is available from <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/nigeria>