

NIGERIA NATIONAL PROTECTION SECTOR WORKING GROUP

COVID-19 IMPACT ON HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Introduction

As of 2nd June 2020, there are 10,819 confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported in Nigeria, increased by over 10,000 cases since the last NPSWG meeting which was replaced with information note on 7th April 2020. Since the first case was recorded, 3,239 people have been discharged with 314 deaths. The regular bi-monthly meeting of the National Protection Sector Working Group (NPSWG) scheduled for 2nd June 2020 was canceled in light of the pandemic. The NPSWG Secretariat will continue to monitor all developments related to COVID-19 and follow advice provided by the Nigerian Government and the World Health Organization. While information about upcoming meeting and its methodology will be shared with partners in due course in consideration for development of COVID-19 in Nigeria, the NPSWG meeting for June 2020 is substituted by this information note.

Protection Sector North East

Protection Highlights

- The Protection Sector has become aware of several reports of misconduct by security forces, suggesting the use of violence and harassment while enforcing COVID-19 movement restrictions in the North East. Relevant details were shared with CMCoord, and an advocacy note was produced providing details regarding incidents, key messages and how to report abuse of power.
- Protection monitoring activities carried out by partners highlighted the need for additional dissemination activities in order to reach marginalized communities, provide relevant information in different languages and formats, as well as counter rumors and misinformation. Protection monitoring indicates additional concerns as a result of COVID-19, which require attention and ongoing monitoring. These include, for example, increase in petty crimes within IDP camps as people are unable to access food and livelihood, as well as violence and hostile attitudes towards individuals who are, or perceived to be, infected by the virus.
- Borno authorities stated their intention to accept improvement of the IDP's shelter situation as part of the effort to decongest IDP camps and mitigate the risk to public health. The Protection Sector provided input to the Decongestion Strategy shared by the Shelter Sector. While the Protection Sector recognizes the importance and urgent need to decongest IDP camps in order to promote the welfare of IDPs and public health amid the COVID-19 crisis, new areas must be safe and have adequate services, in particular shelter, clean water, food and access to healthcare and livelihood. As much as possible, transfer to another location as part of the planned decongestions should be carried out based on IDPs' consent and preferences.
- In addition, the Protection Sector has become aware of some concerns in the context of COVID-19 isolation centers, for example, cases of children who are left without caregivers as a result of parents admitted to the centers or families that are suffering additional hardship due to the isolation of breadwinner. There is a need for specific interventions, as well as to nominate a focal point for each facility who can be contacted and make appropriate referrals. The Sector sought support for protection partners. In addition, the Sector is developing a guidance note regarding the protection and treatment of those held in isolation facilities.
- The Protection Sector held consultations with REACH regarding the MSNA 2020 and protection indicators are to be included in the survey. OCHA and REACH have requested the support of partners present on the ground in facilitating in data collection.
- The Protection Sector is leading the effort to harmonize different tools and methodologies used for protection monitoring in the Northeast. Hopefully, this will improve geographical coverage and information sharing between partners.

Nigeria, COVID-19 Prioritized Needs

The sector also participated in prioritization of needs and activities under OCHA. Prioritized needs and activities were formulated and forwarded. OCHA has informed that an amount of USD\$ 2 million has been allocated to Protection Sector.

Capacity Building

In line with its responsibility to build capacity for preparedness and response, the Protection Sector NE Nigeria has organized a series of Virtual Learning sessions to support the development of partners' capacities in recognizing, understanding and responding to protection issues in the NE. Using Microsoft Teams, sessions are held twice a week, covering topics ranging from Protection Principles, Protection Mainstreaming and community Based Protection to Psychological First Aid, Child Protection and Accountability to the Affected Population. Additional resource materials are shared with participants after the sessions.

COVID-19 response

The sector is in the process of assessing and aligning responses with the threat of COVID-19 as this potentially impacts both humanitarian and government ability to provide regular services to the affected populations. There is an effort to inculcate protection mainstreaming in dissemination of key messages developed by Health and WASH sectors on the new viral threat in the camp locations. The sector was also engaged in coordinating and collating impact of the restrictions and advisories issued by authorities on protection services. The protection sector is regularly engaged in Cross border meetings with general protection partners and also meeting with global protection cluster on response in the context of COVID-19.

A note on Protection Concerns in the COVID-19 context was developed and shared. The note highlights protection risks and heightened protection concerns arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as from the restrictive measures imposed by state authorities and makes recommendations. Also developed was an advocacy note on regulating the excessive use of authority while imposing the restrictive lockdown associated measures among the masses. The sector is also engaged in developing a guidance note on protection concerns in isolation centers and supporting the CCCM sector in its camp decongestion strategy.

The Protection Sector submitted its inputs to the GP20 Initiative draft document to the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement.

Impact of COVID-19 restrictions are real. There have been reports of extortions at border entry points and misconduct by state security personnel while enforcing lockdown, especially in Adamawa. The impact affected humanitarian services including food distribution and rationing. The reporting of petty thefts can be attributed to this challenge. Other services that remain a challenge is provision of adequate water and health services.

COVID-19 HRP 2020 Addendum

The Protection Sector participated in the Addendum to the HRP 2020 COVID-19 Response initiated by OCHA. Sector commenced the exercise to chalk out priorities and actions in response to the situation with a coordination meeting with all Sub sector coordinators. Protection partners participated in the Response with some submitting revised estimates on activities and some adjusting existing activities to accommodate COVID-19 response actions. As informed by OCHA USD\$1.2 million has been allotted to all sectors under the Addendum. The allocation specific to Protection Sector is awaited.

Other engagements

The protection sector is regularly engaged in Cross border meetings with general protection partners. The sector also conducted its monthly meeting during which concerns, and challenges of the current situation were raised and discussed. Advocacy with security forces continued during the monthly CMCoord meeting in last week of April. The Protection Sector initiated consultations regarding updating of referral pathways. In this regard, the sector is looking forward to developing an online interactive tool, which will provide information on all protection actors in a particular location along with protection services available in the location. Discussions have also been initiated on harmonization of different protection monitoring tools used by partners.

Updates from the Sub-Sectors:

Child Protection Sub-Sector:

- The Child Protection Sub-Sector (CPSS) developed the Child Protection Humanitarian Response Plan 2020 COVID-19 Addendum, the CPSS COVID-19 preparedness and response plan, the monitoring framework and the estimated financial requirements for the response.

- The Sub-Sector compiled examples of adapting child protection service delivery in the COVID-19 context which were discussed in a meeting to share experiences, challenges and identify solutions in order to support continuity of child protection programming.
- Whilst child protection actors adapted modalities to ensure safe provision of prioritized child protection services including remote case management and psychosocial support services within the COVID-19 context, this has been limited to locations where telecommunication is available. Stigma associated with COVID-19 infection has complicated the provision of alternative care for children whose parents have tested for COVID-19. On the other hand, the lack of belief in the existence of COVID-19 has also proven to be a challenge for provision of prioritized child protection services activities whilst adhering to physical distancing and other control measures.
- Following the decision by the Northern Governors Forum to ban the almajiri system as part of the state governments' response to mitigating the risks to COVID-19 pandemic, 186 almajiri children (all boys) were relocated to Borno and Yobe states during the reporting period. These relocation movements put the health and protection of children at risk given the ongoing pandemic and highlighted the need to address care and protection for children without parental care. The almajiri system involves parents sending their children, mostly boys, to distant locations for the purpose of acquiring religious (Koranic) education. While parents believe they are fulfilling their obligation to provide religious and moral education to their children free of charge, almajiri children are often sent by their teachers (mallams) to beg in the streets and form a significant portion of children without parental care at risk of abuse, exploitation and neglect.
- The Sub-Sector supported the Borno and Yobe state governments to prepare for and provide basic services to the Almajiri children in temporary shelters including food, water, health care, COVID-19 testing and to document the children for eventual reunification with their families. The Sub-Sector also supported the State Governments to develop guidelines aimed at ensuring State Government actors apply minimum basic health and child protection standards before, during and after returning the children to their states of origin and to support safe family reunification.
- As part of the Sub-Sector's localization initiatives, US\$20,000 for child protection national NGOs (NNGOs) to facilitate procurement of protective personal equipment for child protection workers; to support development and production of communication materials on child protection and to support two national NGOs with individual grants to implement safe child protection services within the response to the pandemic. This is part of the Accelerating Progress Towards Localization project implemented by Street Child Nigeria and supported by the Global Child Protection Area of Responsibility.

Gender-Based Violence Sub-Sector:

- **Transitioning to Remote Service Provision:** The COVID-19 pandemic heightens the already existing vulnerabilities for gender-based violence and affects the ability of survivors not only to report or seek help but also affects their access to quality response services. While in some situations, there has been an increase in the incidents for which survivors are seeking help, in many situations, restrictions and lockdown measures have presented barriers to help seeking and service provision. GBV service providing organizations have had to adapt to flexible approaches, in order to service provision for survivors and individuals in need. Established confidential spaces including service provision hubs to provide remote services through telephone helplines in the context COVID19 in Maiduguri, Pulka and Monguno. This is to enhance survivors and other vulnerable individuals to access GBV case management and psychosocial support services.
- **Test run of Smart RR - a mobile application for GBV referrals:** Smart RR, is a mobile application which enables survivors, social workers and service providers to report and refer GBV incidents to relevant service providers and authorities, conducts service mapping, automatically updates referral directory, collects and analyses referral data. The application is an innovation of a local NGO partner - Big Family360, built on the existing referral mechanism of the GBV Sub Sector to mitigate existing challenges such as under reporting and associated difficulties with accessing services. A test run has been conducted within a group of GBV specialists in Borno and Adamawa States under the guidance of the GBV Strategic Advisory Group to ensure the application does not compromise survivor centered approaches to GBV service provision. It is currently being piloted in locations in Adamawa and Borno States.
- **Strengthening Community Structures:** In collaboration with CCCM, women committees and community volunteers have been activated in Teachers Village Camp, Bakassi camps in Borno and Malkohi and Fufore Camps in Adamawa to offer support to survivors and provide a trusted source of information for GBV service provision, and women's health. The Women's Committees facilitate service provision using survivor centered approaches, enhance GBV referral pathways working closely with service providers. They also conduct community engagement actions jointly with law enforcement officers – Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) deployed in these locations. With support from the CCCM sector, the women's committee participate as representatives in the governance structure at camp level and other relevant activities.

- GBV Helpline Assessment was conducted and the report establishes that there are some existing initiatives that can support remote service provision; however, these need to be strengthened to provide ethical access to services without compromising the safety of survivors and service providers. The report also underscores the need to support the establishment of a state level infrastructure for GBV helpline that is sustainable and supports confidential and ethical incident data management at state level.
- The PSEA Network has secured and activated a toll-free number to facilitate inter agency reporting of allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. This makes inter agency SEA reporting possible through the following confidential channels: Toll Free Line 0800-000-2022 and Email nga.gbv@humanitarianresponse.info. These inter agency SEA reporting channels complement existing agency/organizational mechanisms and therefore the need to ensure they are operational.
- As part of leadership commitment and accountability the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) has endorsed the PSEA Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The SOPs outline the key PSEA roles and responsibilities, the terms of reference for the inter-agency PSEA Network and the inter-agency mechanisms for receiving and reporting SEA cases, among others.
- In line with the endorsed PSEA SOPs, the PSEA Network has developed an Information Sharing Protocol (ISP) to guide inter agency SEA data sharing and management among partners. The protocol is meant to facilitate good practices on how to share essential information throughout the SEA reporting, referral and response process. The aim is to improve collaboration and to ensure the responsible collection, handling, referral and investigation of SEA allegations, as well as feedback and timely reporting.

Mine Action Sub-Sector:

- Due to physical distancing measures as part of COVID-19 prevention, partners have had to halve the number of participants in Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) sessions resulting in less people having access life-saving messages, which leads to a reduced number of effectively reached beneficiaries against objectives defined in the HRP
- Partners, such as the Danish Demining Group, are working on radio messaging in order to mitigate the decrease of direct beneficiaries
- The Mine Action sub-sector has been engaged in processes to develop a COVID-19 addendum to the HRP 2020, the framework for the humanitarian response to the new situation in Borno. The main effort consisted of including mine action (Desk review, Non-Technical Survey (NTS) and EORE) in the strategy aiming at decongesting IDP camps.
- An increase in capacity is crucial to conduct necessary NTS to check whether land, road and infrastructure are free from explosive hazards. Specifically, in the scope of the Returns Strategy and decongesting of IDP camps.
- Capacity building activities (training of the police, of NEMA and SEMA) are delayed.
- Virtual explosive ordnance awareness (EOA) session for humanitarian workers and national authorities are conducted by UNMAS to mitigate the cessation of trainings occurred prior to Covid-19
- UNMAS conducted a fact-finding mission in Ngala to strengthen protection measures in terms of explosive ordnance awareness for humanitarian hub staff, which resulted in UNMAS providing EOA to all staff members in all IOM hubs

AOB

Overview of current situation of displacement in Nigeria (UNHCR)

NORTH WEST

- 36,469 Nigerian Refugees have been registered in the Diffa region of Niger Republic, while an estimated 26,953 are unregistered as of April 2020.
- There are 61,418 IDPs in Katsina, 69,163 in Zamfara and 43,876 in Sokoto (IOM DTM R3).
- Data on IDPs in the Northwest is limited due to few numbers of humanitarian actors.

NORTH CENTRAL

- In the middle belt there are estimated 303,844 IDPs in the three States of Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau (IOM DTM R3).
- In Benue, there are 180,258 IDPs, while there are also 7,531 Cameroonian refugees registered as of March 2020.

CAMEROONIAN REFUGEES

- As of March 2020, over 57,800 Cameroonian refugees were registered in Benue, Taraba, Cross Rivers and Akwa-Ibom.

- There has been an influx of Cameroonian refugees into Taraba State which is an area that is difficult to access because of the terrain, with limited presence of partners, the state currently hosts about 13,000 refugees.
- UNHCR opened an office in Taraba State due evolving protection issues.
- Registration in April and May was suspended due to COVID-19 pandemic.

URBAN REFUGEES

- As of April 2020, there were 2,430 refugees registered, with majority residing in Abuja, Kano, Ogun, and Lagos.
- In addition to the urban refugees, there is 1,122 Asylum seekers as at end of April 2020.
- Updated data on urban refugees for May is not available due to precautionary measures against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The date of next NPSWG meeting is scheduled to be on Tuesday, 04 August 2020.

Methodology for the meeting will be announced in due course in consideration for COVID-19 pandemic.
