

Gender, Protection, and AAP Risk Assessment 2022: Food Security

Humanitarian crises are happening simultaneously all over the world. Borno state in Northeastern Nigeria is a clear example of this reality. The state is undergoing a humanitarian crisis due to Organized Armed Groups (OAG) and natural disasters like floods. These events are leading to population mobility, food insecurity, malnutrition, and death. The COVID-19 pandemic repercussions, restrictions that disrupted economic and social activities and the general inflation prices of commodities and services is making this worse. **80% of those in need are women and children.**



These 3 LGAs are among the most conflict affected LGAs in the state with frequent attacks from AOGs leading to a continuous displacement of populations.

CARE Nigeria through funding from the UN World Food Programme (WFP) is carrying out Cash-based Transfer (CBT), General Food Distribution (GFD) and Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programme (BSFP) in Rann, Dikwa & Ngala LGAs of Borno state to tackle food insecurity and malnutrition in the region. As a result, the project has a targeted 130,768 GFD/CBT and 18,519 BSFP project participants for the different regions mentioned above.

Overall situation

Project participants from the different states were asked how they are coping with the current food situation. In Dikwa, the participants' responses are evidence of the severe food crisis they are going



“Some young girls in our communities **have decided to prostitute themselves to be able to feed**, although it is not rampant, even if it were one girl who engages in it, it is still very sad to say because it is against our culture”.

through. For example, to cope with the situation, they had to beg food from relatives; they pointed out that this help was too little compared to what they and their families need. Most said that they engaged in small trades to get some money to buy food. At the same time, most participants noted that for them WFP food aid is their only source of food but most of the time the rations are not enough to provide them with an adequate meal a day.

In Ngala and in Rann, responses collected in the FGDs show that most community members are coping with the food crisis thanks to WFP food aid and other humanitarian assistance. Only a few people are engaged in one or another type of income activity. Participants reverberated by stating that

humanitarian aid the only hope they have to survive the current food crisis.

Among other challenges is the representativeness of persons living with disability, since they experience major barriers with mobility within the community, therefore, to provide means for their families. Another crucial challenge is the consequences of lack of livelihood, poor security, and AOG member presence, all

"At times we have no choice but to go into the bush to search for firewood which we will bring back for sale. When you decide to go, you will not think of the eventuality of being attacked or abducted because at that time, you are more concerned about getting money to feed your family and the fear is not much, but when you are out there, then you start remembering what it can be like if you are attacked. It is God that protects us because we are not doing it for ourselves, it for our children".

together, this especially, when community members go out to fetch firewood. Women expressed the fear they have of being attached or abducted; and emphasized how they are putting before the needs of their families than their own safety.

Also, some women noted that part of their challenges, was from a nutritional standpoint as most of them face challenges with accessing condiments and access to cooking fuel. For example, in Rann, FGD participants noted that the lack of income is preventing them from meeting household needs. They connected this to a lack of livelihoods and lack of access to most of their farmlands.

WFP highlights: Participants noted that thanks to WFP food assistance unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases have not escalated. This because when providing for households becomes challenging, young women and girls in IDP camps may engage in transactional sex. When they have food, they do not need to do that.

Coping Strategies: Among the coping strategies mentioned by the participants are trading business, scrap metal collection from surrounding villages, firewood collection and sale, **begging**, support from some relatives who are into business, cap knitting, **prayers made for God's help**, **sale of small portions of food assistance** provided by humanitarian actors to support buying other necessities, and adapting other methods of cooking, for instance, using cow dungs to cook food in the absence of firewood.

Food Gap-related Protection Risks

Compared to previous years, prices of basic foodstuffs continue to rise and remain above average. This impacts household access to food and generates reduction in the minimum household expenditure basket. Nigeria's 2021 annual protection sector report cited that the reduction of food rations by WFP, a global action caused by funding shortages, left a huge proportion of the affected population food insecure, and this harmed the welfare of children as more and more parents were forced to send their children to the streets to beg or sell items. There was also an increase in child labor and child and forced marriages, as well as reports of incidents of gender-based violence against children.

Coping Strategies

People have too little food and limited diet diversity. The high magnitude of consumption gaps, malnutrition, mortality, and unsustainable usage of emergency coping strategies are largely driven by the limited availability of food stocks, restricted access to markets, and poor WASH services. This negatively impacting morbidity risk and households' ability to engage in labor for food or resource gathering. For example, 70% of households in the areas practice agriculture and for more than half this activity is their main source of income. But now this is



50.8% of the surveyed households struggled to have sufficient food intake and nearly **72.5%** experienced a crisis or higher levels of food deprivation and hunger **even with the WFP assistance**

accompanied by petty trading and livestock farming as an extra source of income. **Also, 10% of the household are doing unskilled wage labor, begging, or daily laborer as an additional source of income.**

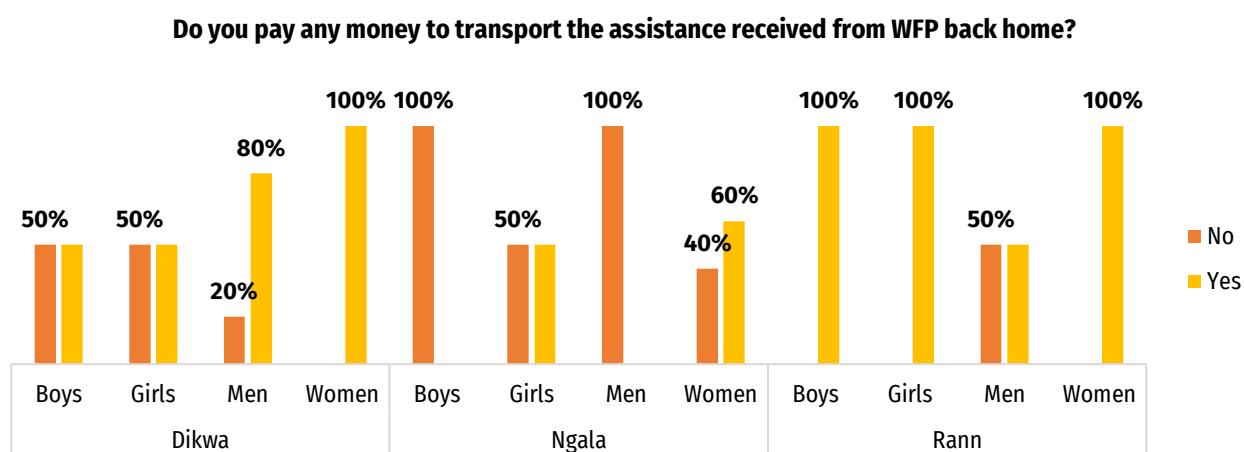
Due to these shocks, **86.5% of the households are consuming less preferred food items. They are also reducing the food quantities adults or mothers are consuming in order to feed the children.** To fulfill the basic needs families are borrowing money, using savings, or selling productive assets or animals unsustainably (10% of the households).

On the other hand, food crisis is heavily impacted by the violent conflict, where communities are at risk of being exposed to explosions. For example, sometimes women and children pick up improvised explosive devices and bringing them to the community without knowing their risks. Some girls are also engaging in transactional sex to cover basic needs, this risking them to get sexually transmittable diseases and unwanted pregnancies. Among other consequences of the violent context is being abducted or killed when looking for firewood, for example.

“We have no alternative but to risk our lives to survive. It is better to die while making efforts to provide for your family than to die of hunger or watch your family become something bad because they cannot bear the hunger. Men risk their lives when they go out to fish, or farm, women risk their lives when they go out to farm or fetch scrap metals, and they are mostly accompanied by their older sons who are at risk of either getting killed or being abducted. The sad part is that even if we get attacked today, we will have no choice but to take the risk again tomorrow”.

Safety and Integrity in Accessing Food Assistance

Most participants feel safe accessing the food assistance. In areas like Rann, **key informants noted that beneficiaries feel afraid of being robbed of their entitlements by those who are not benefitting.** This assistance implied transportations costs to over the assistance back home. Interestingly, across the 3 areas women mentioned more often they needed to pay money than men.



Among the challenges people faced when getting the food assistance, participants mentioned the following:

- Challenges with transporting entitlements from FDP to beneficiaries’ houses
- Challenges in mobility for persons with disabilities
- Anxieties and fears of being bullied to release portions of entitlements
- Sometimes beneficiaries do not get their nutritional needs from the vendors because some

- vendors do not provide all varieties of food items in their shops.
- Persons living with disability experience challenges in transporting their entitlement to their homes.

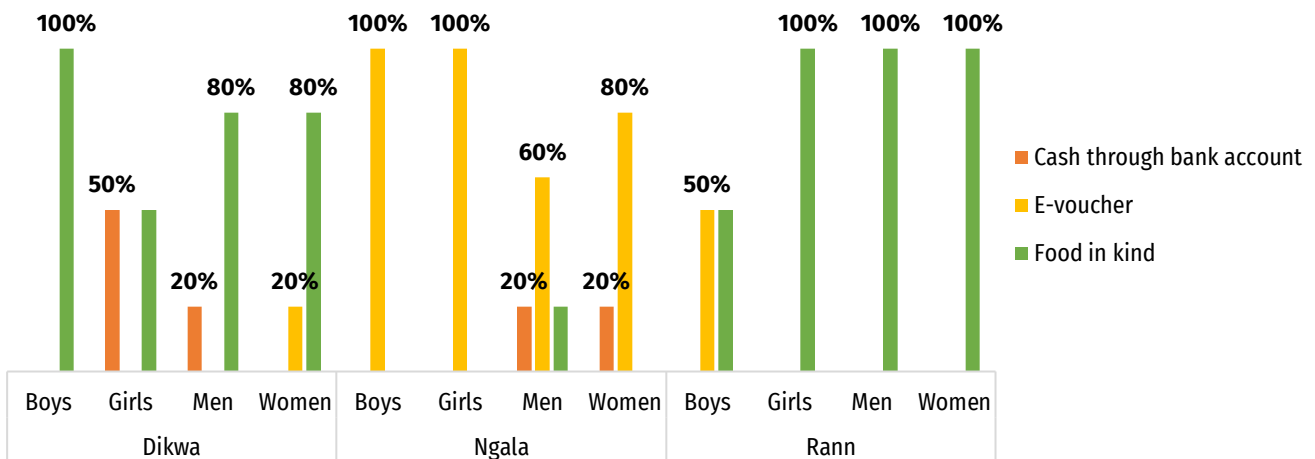
Dignified Access to Food Assistance

Providing humanitarian assistance, in this case food assistance, comes with different conditions that might enable people to undergo the process a little easier. The following is some of the feedback provided by participants in regard to *getting* the food assistance.

| Current conditions: | Feedback: |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was shade enough to protect the beneficiaries. • There were mats available to sit. • Drinking water was not provided during the redemption. • Distribution was organized. • Separated lines between women and men. • Vulnerable persons and elderly were given special considerations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued prioritization of serving elderly and disabled persons. If possible, only elderly, and disabled groups should be served on the first day of redemption. • Pregnant and lactating women should be prioritized along with elderly and disabled persons. • Return to in-kind rather than CBT modality due to challenges with fingerprint verification • If unable to attend redemption site, their relatives should be allowed to redeem for them. • Tokens should be distributed house-to-house, and shade should be provided at FDP. • Engage more community leader and PMC to help in crowd control. |

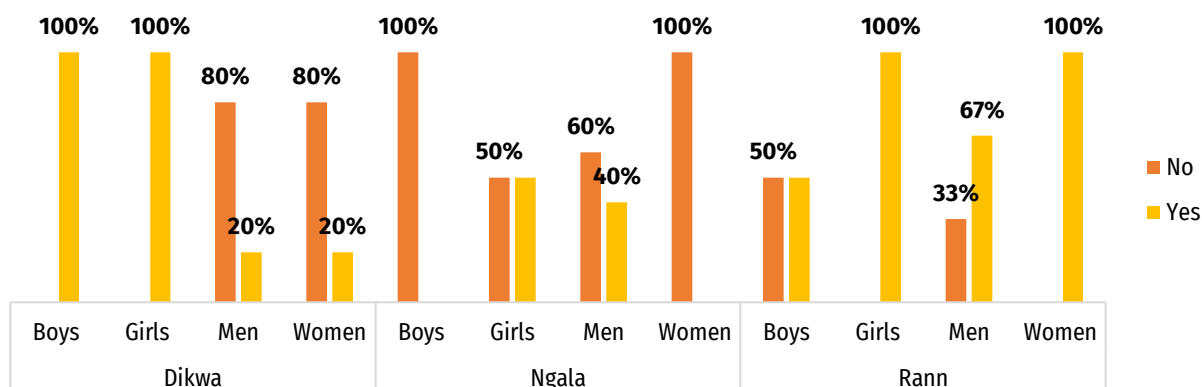
Key considerations

Considering the benefits, disadvantages, risks and challenges of each type of assistance, what type of assistance do you believe would be most suitable for your community?



All FGD groups in Dikwa and 57% of key informants preferred in-kind food distribution over cash. 100% of FGD groups and 86% of Key informants in Rann preferred GFD in-kind. In Ngala, 86% of the FGD

Would there be any conflict or tension between the recipient and other people in the community as a result of receiving assistance from WFP?



groups and 71% of the key informants indicated that they preferred the e-vouchers. A minority of beneficiaries indicated cash can cause problems within members of a household. And they also refer to e-vouchers as not being enough, leading to tensions in the family due to unsatisfaction of meal provided. Conflict did also arise outside the household, with people from the community. As detailed in the report, there are cases of frustration, jealousy and envy from people that are not benefitting from the WFP intervention.

“It is mostly women that collect food on behalf of their families, and when their husbands suggest that they be given some portions of the food to be able to cater for other needs in the household like fixing a bicycle to aid movement, some women will not accept this, and it leads to disagreement between them”.

Another informant said “some of the households are polygamous with many children. When they collect their entitlements, it leads to fights amongst the wives and in that situation sometimes, the men just go and marry someone else”.

Integrating protection into specific transfer modalities:

Participants’ advice on what can be done to reduce the risk of harm included:

- Provision of food items instead of cash support as it can be mismanaged
- Increased food rations to reduce rate at which community members result to negative coping mechanisms and risks.
- Daily redemption should close on time to ensure everyone is back home before dark.
- Provide more crowd control volunteers because people lose their personal belongings while accessing assistance

Conclusion: The world is struggling with food crisis everywhere. Incorporating participants’ feedback, experiences, and fears to make the humanitarian food assistance to ease the burden it already conveys, as well to find new ways to increase this aid. Further, approaches on **gender and social norms transformation** should be consider for addressing the communities’ beliefs around power and positive masculinity, like on the control of resources and decision-making. And advocacy with duty bearers on facilitating **safe and dignified return processes and restorative justice** to the displaced communities.

Authors: This brief was written by Raphael Joshua, Ruth Dede, Adoga Ogah, Habeeb Sulaiman and Emily Janoch in December 2022.