


CASE STUDY

NIGERIA 2018–2021 / CONFLICT

KEYWORDS: Permanent houses, Restricted vouchers, Trainings, Wider impacts

CRISIS	Boko Haram and Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) Insurgency (Armed Conflict)	
PEOPLE DISPLACED	2,197,824 individuals displaced as of June 2022*	
HOMES DAMAGED/ DESTROYED	5,095 houses completely damaged** 4,845 houses partially damaged	
PEOPLE WITH SHELTER NEEDS	2.95 million people***	
PROJECT LOCATION	Bama and Gwoza Local Government Areas, Borno State.	
PEOPLE SUPPORTED BY THE PROJECT	650 HHs (5,533 individuals) Over 700 local skilled and unskilled laborers 58 locally hired shelter field supervisors.	
PROJECT OUTPUTS	650 permanent shelters with micro solar systems	
SHELTER SIZE	25.92 m² for 2 single rooms covered area per shelter	
SHELTER DENSITY	4.32 m² per person for an average household size of 6	
DIRECT COST	USD 1,932 per HH	
PROJECT COST	USD 2,206 per HH	

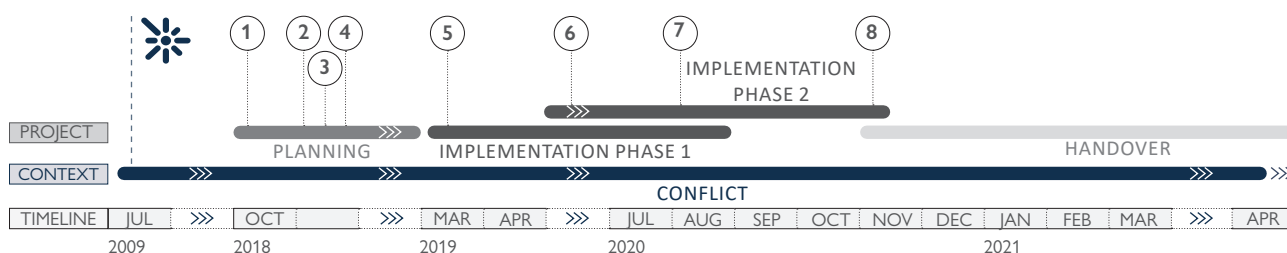
*IOM Nigeria Displacement Report, Round 41, Baseline Assessment in Northeast Nigeria

**Assessment done by the organization, November 2020

***Humanitarian Response Plan, Nigeria, 2022 (February 2022)

PROJECT SUMMARY

650 permanent shelters installed with micro home solar systems were constructed to the most vulnerable households with completely damaged shelters in Bama and Gwoza local government areas of Borno State. The local communities were directly engaged and trained on shelter construction skills to design and build back their shelters which has contributed to increased sense of ownership of the beneficiaries to their shelters. Based on learnings from implementing transitional shelter programming in Damboa, Dikwa and Ngala Local Government Areas, a cash-based approach to shelter construction was employed in the project which ensured household participation in the shelter design process, thus building towards better ownership and links to recovery of the affected population.



Jul 2009: Boko Haram uprising began, now in its 14th year.

- 1 **Oct 2018:** Needs and Housing Typology Assessment in Gwoza.
- 2 **Nov 2018:** Inception Meeting in Gwoza.
- 3 **Nov 2018:** Mapping of damaged houses in Gwoza.
- 4 **Nov 2018:** Shelter design workshop with the local communities in Gwoza.
- 5 **Mar 2019:** Pilot shelter construction in Gwoza.
- 6 **June 2020:** Pilot shelter construction in Bama.
- 7 **Aug 2020:** Completion of 325 permanent shelters in Gwoza.
- 8 **Nov 2020:** Completion of 325 permanent shelters in Bama.



View of a completed shelter with micro solar installation.

CONTEXT

In 2022, the conflict in northeast Nigeria entered its 13th year since Boko Haram launched operations in the region, which experienced brutal attacks on civilians and the massive destruction of infrastructure. The conflict has claimed the lives of tens and thousands (including women and children) while displacing millions across the shores of Lake Chad through Niger, Chad, and Cameroon – some moving as far as the Central African Republic and Sudan. The threat of potential attack by armed groups and military restrictions also negatively impacted trade, livelihoods, and markets – leaving many civilians dependent on humanitarian assistance.

Although major military campaigns from 2015–2016 succeeded in reducing the group’s territorial control, Boko Haram has proven remarkably adaptable in its tactics. The end of 2018 once again saw a rise in attacks in Nigeria’s Borno State, and by March 2022 in northeast Nigeria, approximately 2,171,652 individuals (446,740 households) were displaced.

SITUATION BEFORE THE CRISIS

The Bama and Gwoza local government areas are peri-urban areas, with most homes primarily built with concrete blocks and corrugated galvanized iron roofing sheets. Some households also used mud bricks for walls. In remote areas, individuals live in thatch homes, which accommodate both people and their cattle, as most individuals are farmers and herdsmen.

Following the crisis, roads were closed and accessed only by military escort until March 2018, when they were reopened by the state government for free access. This enabled markets to reopen and encouraged displaced people to return home.



A completely damaged shelter in Bama Local Government Area, Borno State.

SITUATION DURING/AFTER THE CRISIS

In Bama, an initial camp was set up to accommodate returnees in the government general hospital. Due to its quick congestion, the camp was later relocated to the Government Senior Secondary School. Shelter capacity and other services were overstretched, as the number of returnees continued to increase. Flash floods during rainy seasons became a recurrent hazard, damaging and destroying shelters across the camps regularly. The Gwoza local government established a camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) after communities were secured by the Nigerian military. However, rural areas under the two local government zones remained uninhabitable due to the activities of non-state actors in the region.

NATIONAL SHELTER STRATEGY

The national shelter strategy in 2020 aimed to ensure the sufficient, coordinated, and adequate delivery of emergency, transitional, and permanent shelter solutions to respond to the immediate and long-term needs of the affected population (displaced, returnees, and host communities) in the different areas.

PROJECT DESIGN

A 36-month multisectoral project was designed with the objective of increasing social cohesion and resilience to economic, social, and climate-related shocks for up to 200,000 men, women, boys, and girls from conflict-affected communities in Borno State. Four intermediate outcomes were established to contribute to achieving the objective, including:

- i. Improve rural livelihoods in an ecologically sustainable way by enabling households to take advantage of existing and new agricultural market opportunities.
- ii. Adolescents and youth empowered as economic actors in their communities through access to employment and diversified livelihood opportunities, financial services, vocational training, and business development initiatives.
- iii. Improved access to social protection and community-based services for women, youth and adolescent breadwinners, and other at-risk groups.
- iv. Social cohesion will be strengthened within and between conflict-affected communities and environmental resource management improved in areas of displacement and return.

A component of the third outcome was the construction of 650 permanent shelters for the most vulnerable returnees, IDPs, and host community members.

Although the project initially considered the engagement of a contractor for the construction of 300 shelters, the idea was later abandoned based on the learnings from the implementation of transitional shelters in other Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Borno state. A community-led

approach was established, which reduced the unit cost of the shelters and allowed the caseload to be increased to 650 units within the same overall budget.

The organization collaborated with local communities and involved participants during each stage of the process. Communities led in the mapping of damaged homes, designing of shelters, and pre selecting the most vulnerable people based on agreed vulnerability criteria. A final draft design was agreed upon by the communities during a design workshop, which was later finalized based on recommendations and approval of the Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (MRRR).

IMPLEMENTATION

Skilled and unskilled laborers from the communities were trained, engaged, and paid on daily rates to construct the shelters, while the construction materials were redeemed by the project's participants at pre-selected vendor shops using an e-voucher system.



Meeting with local laborers before the implementation phase.



Design workshop with the local community in Bama.

As most of the targeted participants were returnees, the shelters were built on the same land plots where their previous homes had been destroyed once the property was verified in coordination with the local government. For cases where the participant's land was not accessible due to security issues, some were able to prove the ownership of another land plot within the community, and others were authorized to build on land belonging to relatives.

For each land plot, a land access and use authority (LAUA) agreement and a memorandum of understanding were signed between the organization and all landowners, aiming to ensure security of tenure prior to the commencement of construction works. Both documents were registered

with the desk office of the local government areas by the organization's Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) Officer and each participant household.

Together with the mentioned HLP Officer, the organization's team was composed of a Shelter Manager and a Shelter coordinator overseeing all shelter programming in Borno State, as well as a dedicated team for the project, which included a Senior Program Officer, two Officers and four Assistants: a combination of engineers and community mobilizers in charge of both technical issues and the relation with the community. The organization hired 58 field supervisors from the communities, with technical backgrounds for day-to-day monitoring of the construction work of 10-12 shelters each.

TARGETING

A total of 650 vulnerable households were selected for permanent shelter construction in Bama and Gwoza LGA. A community-led shelter design was adopted and finalized based on recommendations and approval of the Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Resettlement (MRRR).

The first stage of the participant selection process consisted of engaging the communities to conduct a mapping of completely damaged homes. After that, each community was asked to draft the vulnerability criteria. A vulnerability vetting session was organized with representatives of all the communities (men, women, boys, girls, and persons with disabilities per community), and the final criteria were agreed during the session.

Sensitization sessions were then conducted across all the communities on the agreed vulnerability criteria, and the participant lists were developed by each community accordingly. The organization then verified the lists using the agreed criteria and selected the final 650 HHs. Community feedback mechanisms were installed to receive complaints from the communities. The agreed vulnerability criteria included:

- Households with completely damaged homes.
- Families with no economically productive head of household due to gender or other proven cause.
- People with permanent disabilities living with a family.
- Women-headed households were given priority, for widows who lost their husbands due to recent conflict.
- Large families (7+) with more minors under 5-year age (4+), or living in the camp who have a damaged house and cannot rebuild, or living in destroyed mud house(s) and have no capacity to rebuild them.
- Large families (7+) Elderly (+65 years) headed families, living alone and/or elderly with a household or elderly with a household.
- Households sheltering separated children.
- Child-headed or Chronically ill head of household household.
- Large families (7+) with more women and girls (4+), who are dependent on the household.



Sensitization activity before distributions of materials.



Construction of the permanent shelters using blockwork.



Distributions were carried out using vouchers. (Below) Members of families queue to receive shelter materials from a local vendor.



COORDINATION

The organization is an active member of the Shelter Cluster, Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, and Non-Food Item (NFI) Sector working groups in Borno State. It uses these platforms to discuss, assess, analyze, plan, develop technical standards, and monitor project implementation. It also participated in state and national-level coordination mechanisms at both government and humanitarian organization levels. Activities were coordinated with Shelter Working Group members in target areas to avoid duplication and further harmonize approaches. It also worked closely with all stakeholders at both LGA and field levels to ensure effective coordination and the sharing of information from periodic needs assessments and identification of risks to humanitarian operations.

DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

The project was coupled with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) sensitization activities. Specifically, orientation sessions were organized on fire safety prevention and mitigation for the 650 direct participant households, community groups, and field supervisors. Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials were also distributed to shelter participants covering: fire safety and sensitization in site and settlement, best practices of building a safe kitchen, and the utilization of fuel-efficient stoves.

PREPAREDNESS

Set up community fire committees, for training and firefighting.

Make fire stations with buckets, sand, fire beaters and fire-extinguishers.

IN CASE OF FIRE

Clothes on fire
 STOP, DROP AND ROLL
 If your clothes are on fire,
 - STOP where you are,
 - DROP to the ground and
 - ROLL to extinguish the flames

Tent on fire
 - Check that there is no-one inside.
 - THEN knock down the tent. This will help stop the fire from spreading.

Burns
 Cool the burn area with cold water or a wet cloth immediately.

PREVENTION

NO open fires or bare flames inside tents

- Candles must be placed in lamps or in jars

Never leave a candle lit while sleeping or when leaving the tent.

- Tents walls must be a minimum of 16 feet apart.

Stoves must not touch tent walls.
 - Chimneys should go through a solid wall or through a fire-proof elate.

Do not smoke inside tents.

Electric light bulbs must be at least 6 inches from the tent canvas.

IEC materials on fire safety (Preparedness and Prevention) were distributed to the community, both in English and Hausa.



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A view of a permanent shelter after construction. The project removed a major source of anxiety and risk for vulnerable households, allowing them to focus on other long-term needs such as education and vocational training, health and livelihoods.

MAIN CHALLENGES

- Lockdowns resulting from COVID-19 contributed to delays in the progress of shelter program implementation. The project quickly adapted by formulating COVID-19 mitigation measures on construction sites to proceed with activities.
- An attack on a humanitarian helicopter by insurgents led to the suspension of flights to all deep field locations within Borno State for over a month, which resulted in the delay of activities by skilled/unskilled labor due to difficulties in transporting cash for payments.
- Delays were also experienced in securing approvals concerning the movement of cash to deep field locations for labor payments in Gwoza, disrupting the smooth progress of construction activities.

TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

During project implementation, micro-home solar power systems were installed in the 650 shelters. Local volunteers were trained on the repair and maintenance of solar power systems for sustainability. Existing techniques were adapted for the construction of shelters.

OUTCOMES AND WIDER IMPACTS

- Through collaboration with the LGA and the organizational HLP unit, participants now have legal documentation for their land
- At the design stage of the project, local stakeholders and community members were engaged – resulting

in enhanced community acceptance of construction activities and heightened social cohesion and community ownership of the project.

- Before the inception of the activities in Bama and Gwoza, there were very few local vendors who could supply construction materials due to the insurgency. Engaging local vendors who had shops before the advent of the insurgency helped in empowering them and boosting the local economy. The number of vendors increased in both locations.
- The construction of permanent shelters for 650 households provided privacy, safety and security to the most vulnerable community members and helped to enhance dignity and well-being. The project removed a major source of anxiety and risk for vulnerable households, allowing them to focus on other long-term needs such as education and vocational training, health, and livelihoods.



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Over 700 local skilled and unskilled laborers were trained in technical trainings.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES AND LESSONS LEARNED

STRENGTHS

- √ **Participatory approach to community engagement:** The organization collaborated with local communities and took a transparent and accountable approach, involving participants in every stage of the process. The communities led in the mapping of damaged homes, designing of shelters, and pre-selecting the most vulnerable people based on agreed vulnerability criteria.
- √ **Local labor engagement and livelihood support:** Local skilled and unskilled laborers were engaged and trained to construct shelters in their communities. Local field construction supervisors with technical backgrounds were also engaged and trained to support the on-site supervision of construction works.
- √ **Clean Energy:** A local partner was engaged to install micro-home solar power systems in permanent shelters, which provided the participants with clean energy for lighting and small home appliances.

WEAKNESSES

- × **The project's high cost** per household and the modest number of individuals assisted (3,900) does not meet the massive need in the region.
- × **Preparatory stages for this project took longer than expected**, as this was the first project of its kind for the organization in Nigeria – impacting the delivery timeline.
- × **Once designed, shelter construction was not flexible to meet additional needs.** No allowance could be made for large families, who would ideally have received an expanded shelter. The specific needs of vulnerable individuals and groups were not directly addressed.
- × Although the project took a community-focused approach, more could have been done to design project activities in a way that better supported **women's involvement**.
- × Time needed for project implementation was underestimated and should have included adequate contingency time for **unforeseen circumstances**.
- × **Laborer payments** upon completion of construction work took longer than anticipated (more than a week) due to internal organizational processes.

LESSONS LEARNED

- The cost of permanent shelter was not affordable to low-income individuals from the project communities.
- Active community engagement throughout the project cycle helps to increase a sense of shelter ownership and contributes to the recovery of the affected population.
- A market-based approach to shelter construction using local materials, local vendors, and local laborers instead of a traditional contractor reduced the cost of construction and increased the target caseload from 300 to 650 households.

RECOMMENDATIONS MOVING FORWARD

- Different shelter options should be considered for Persons with Disabilities.
- The organization invested in shelter applied research and studies aimed at improving local technologies and practices to enhance the sustainability of humanitarian assistance in Borno state in collaboration with local academic institutions and government agencies. An early outcome of this ongoing research was mud brick stabilization, leading to improved quality of locally produced mud bricks (water resistance and compressive strength) using local materials. The organization will use the stabilized mud bricks for low-cost housing in its future programs, expecting to reduce the cost of permanent shelter construction by more than 50 percent.



FURTHER READING ON SHELTER PROJECTS

On Nigeria: [A.4 / NIGERIA 2017–2018](#); [A.7 / NIGERIA 2017–2020](#); [A.18 / NIGERIA 2015–2016](#)

On permanent houses: [A.21 / MALAWI 2015-2016](#); [A.22 / SOMALIA 2011-2013](#); [A.20 / PHILIPPINES 2015–2017](#)

On vouchers: [A.7 / SOUTH SUDAN 2017–2018](#); [A.27 / IRAQ 2017–2018](#)