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THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR) AND CHALLENGES OF EFFECTIVE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

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Abstract

In recent times, the globe has witnessed unimaginable humanitarian crisis. People have been forced to flee their homes in the most unusual circumstances, massive displacements and food insecurity have taken centre stage and all these have affected humanity adversely. The African continent is not left out in all of this as it has also been plagued by several humanitarian crisis-- from the horn of Africa, down to Sub-Saharan Africa. In all, Northeast Nigeria has been devastated by the activities of Boko Haram insurgents since 2009, leading to a seemingly intractable humanitarian catastrophe in the region. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees stepped in 2014 to render humanitarian assistance and services to communities in this troubled zone. The study employed the Complex Humanitarian Emergencies (CHEs) theory as an analytical framework. Methodologically, the descriptive research design was used and data was gotten through primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data were sourced using Key Informant Interviews, where structured questions were purposively administered to key officials of the UNHCR and International Committee of the Red Cross. Secondary data were gotten from documentary sources as journal articles, books, internet blogs, etc., and analysed using content analysis. The study uncovered the fact that UNHCR's humanitarian response in Nigeria's north-east has not yielded the desired results as the agency is currently bedeviled with so much challenges, ranging from insecurity of UNHCR staff, lack of access by the agency to remote areas, to funding shortfall and a host of others. It recommends, among others, the need for inter-agency collaboration, adequate protection of the agency's staff and proper funding of the agency's activities in the area.

Keywords: human services, red cross, refugees, sub-saharan Africa united nations,

Introduction

In the 21st century, series of humanitarian crises have ravaged the entire globe; so much so that every part of the world has experienced and received a fair share of this burden. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has reached a record high of 362 million, or one in every 22 people. Over 110 million people have been compelled to leave their homes, and over 260 million people suffer severe food insecurity, putting some at risk of starvation (United Nations Press, 2023). Globally, spiraling crises have forced 120 million men, women, and children to flee; 1.5% of people have been displaced by violence, conflict, or persecution; and

low-and middle-income nations have taken in 75% of the refugees and internally displaced people USA for UNHCR (2024).

In the midst of the growing humanitarian crisis in the globe, one of the continent's most impacted by this global crisis is Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa. The region is plagued by multiple lengthy conflicts, challenging climate conditions, and economic woes that have exacerbated humanitarian needs (United Nations Press, 2023). Nigeria is a focal point due to the intractable insurgency and high-intensity violence orchestrated by Boko Haram in the country's northeast (Omenma, Onyishi & Okolie, 2021).The scourge of Boko Haram attacks has afflicted the northeastern region of Nigeria since 2009, resulting in a serious humanitarian catastrophe in the area (Okunade, & Ogunnubi, 2020; Kamta, Schilling & Scheffran, 2020 ; Idowu , Nwangele & Nwosu 2021). More stresses like reliance on oil, poor economic planning and volatile oil prices have put a strain on resources, food insecurity is worsened as a result of the depletion of the Lake Chad Basin, climate change, which has caused desertification in the north and flooding in other areas, thus impacting on agriculture and livelihoods (Onuoha, 2008; Eke-okocha & Eze, 2023).

The fall-out of the aforementioned crisis in Nigeria's northeast has been a humanitarian crisis in the form of refugees and internally displaced persons. This state of affairs has led so many non-state actors to come to the rescue of affected victims in the area. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) happens to be one of such agencies rendering humanitarian assistance and services to people in need and vulnerable communities in Nigeria's northeast since 2014 (Nnadi.,Ezeani .,& Nnadi ,2020). The study therefore sets out to interrogate as it were, why the number of individuals in need of humanitarian assistance continue to escalate by the day in the region, prompting the question as to whether there are challenges militating against the smooth operations of the UNHCR in Nigeria's northeast and in what ways the challenges have affected the agency's humanitarian response in Nigeria's northeast.

Conceptual Clarifications
Humanitarian Crisis

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) defines Humanitarian crisis as "a singular event or series of events that are threatening in terms of health, safety, or well-being of a community or large group of people" (OCHA, 2024). In another vein, the Humanitarian Coalition (2013) defines humanitarian crisis as an incident or sequence of events that poses a serious risk to the health safety, security, or well-being of a community or other sizeable population, typically over a large territory. One singular variable in these two definitions of humanitarian crisis as presented above is that for a situation to qualify as a humanitarian crisis, it must be of a large scale and affecting, as it were, the livelihood, welfare and security of a large group of people or community. Anderson and Garber (2018) do not agree any less with the foregoing when they opined that humanitarian crisis is any disaster that necessitates international assistance (humanitarian aid) to provide for the impacted population's basic requirements and that when a humanitarian crisis occurs, national and local resources are insufficient to provide for the needs or relief; foreign aid is required and often, no single humanitarian organization can adequately handle the scope of the crisis' response.

Likewise, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) emphasizes that there cries frequently stem from complex emergencies characterized by "extensive violence and loss of life, massive displacements of people, widespread damage to societies and economies, and the need for large-scale, multi-faceted humanitarian assistance" (IFRC, 2023). According to the Oxford Handbook of Human Security (2003), a humanitarian crisis occurs when a sizable segment of the population is in critical need of aid; these situations are frequently brought on by war, severe natural disasters, or unstable economic conditions. Humanitarian crises are extreme circumstances in which a great deal of people are suffering or have died as a result of conflicts, natural catastrophes, or other emergencies, necessitating significant and prompt humanitarian response (Beasley and Hughes,2017). For (Kuhlman and Parker, 2008), a humanitarian crisis is a dire circumstance in which society's regular processes have broken down, resulting in great suffering for people and requiring immediate action and relief measures.

Humanitarian Response

Humanitarian response is defined by the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative as acts performed by nations or international organizations to stop or prevent widespread suffering among people, especially during times of conflict or natural catastrophes; under the auspices of independence, impartiality, and humanism, encompassing actions meant to preserve human dignity, save lives, and lessen suffering (GHD, 2003). The phrase "humanitarian response" describes the coordinated efforts made by a variety of international organizations, governments, and non-governmental organizations to deliver aid effectively and efficiently in crisis situations. Humanitarian response aims to alleviate suffering, ensure the well-being of affected populations, and restore normalcy as quickly as possible. It involves addressing urgent needs like food, shelter, water, and medical care as well as protecting human rights and supporting recovery efforts (Szabo, 2019; Altare et.al., 2022; Lie, 2020). Pringle and Hunt (2015) concur with the foregoing definitions by averring that humanitarian response or action is the active giving of aid with the goal of preventing death, reducing suffering, and restoring and advancing human dignity in the wake of large-scale emergencies and disasters.

Research Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive research design and data were gotten from both primary and secondary sources. The data from primary sources include key informant interviews with structured questions conducted on key officials of both the UNHCR and the ICRC, using the purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique was considered germane as it enabled the researchers to specifically pick respondents to be interviewed. The respondents so selected were individuals holding sensitive offices in both the UNHCR and the ICRC. They included the UNHCR Protection Unit, Abuja and the desk officer; for the ICRC, we picked the ICRC regional spokesperson for Africa and the desk officer. These set of individuals occupying knowledgeable positions formed the population for the study. Secondary data were also gotten from documentary sources which included newspapers, journal articles, text books, etc. The data generated were analysed using content analysis, allowing for detailed generalizations and logical conclusions.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that guided this study is the Complex Humanitarian Emergencies (CHEs) theory or framework. This theory explains multifaceted crises that disrupt the social, economic, and political fabric of societies, often accompanied by conflict, violence, and large-scale displacement. These emergencies are characterized by their complexity, duration, and the multiplicity of factors contributing to the crisis, setting them apart from simpler, more localized disasters.

Key Features of CHEs:

Multi-faceted Crises: CHEs involve a combination of natural disasters, conflict, and social disorder, creating intricate and interconnected challenges.

Prolonged Duration: Unlike sudden-onset disasters, CHEs can persist for extended periods, exacerbating the suffering and vulnerability of affected populations.

Mass Displacement: CHEs lead to large-scale displacement of people, both internally and across borders, resulting in significant humanitarian needs.

Political Instability: The crises often arise in contexts of weak governance, failed states, or political instability, complicating response efforts.

Complex Coordination: Effective intervention requires coordination among multiple actors, including international organizations, NGOs, local governments, and communities.

Contributors to the theory:

Some of the notable contributors to the theory are:

de-Waal (1997) who's work on famine, conflict, and humanitarian response in Africa has been influential in shaping the understanding of CHEs. Similarly, Duffield (2001)'s research on the political economy of war and humanitarianism has provided critical insights into the complexities of CHEs, especially in the context of global governance and development. Additionally, the UN Agencies and NGOs like the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have played pivotal roles in defining and operationalizing responses to CHEs, contributing to the theoretical and practical understanding of these emergencies.

Application of the Theory:

The Complex Humanitarian Emergencies theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the complexities of the humanitarian crisis in North East Nigeria. The Boko Haram insurgency, which began in 2009, has led to a protracted crisis characterized by widespread violence, displacement, and human suffering. The crisis has been exacerbated by factors such as climate change, poverty, and political instability, making it a quintessential example of a CHE.

The application of the CHEs theory to the North East Nigeria crisis highlights the following key features:

Multi-Faceted Crises: The conflict in North East Nigeria is a classic example of a multi-faceted crisis, combining natural disasters, conflict, and social disorder. The region has been affected by droughts, floods, and epidemics, which have exacerbated the humanitarian needs of the affected populations (UNHCR, 2019). The conflict has also led to the destruction of infrastructure, displacement of people, and the disruption of essential services, including

healthcare and education (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Prolonged Duration: The crisis in North East Nigeria has persisted for over a decade, with the conflict showing no signs of abating. The prolonged duration of the crisis has led to chronic humanitarian needs, with millions of people requiring assistance and protection (UNHCR, 2020). The protracted nature of the crisis has also led to the depletion of resources, making it challenging for humanitarian organizations to sustain their response efforts (MSF, 2020).

Mass Displacement: The conflict has led to massive displacement, with over 2.5 million people internally displaced and over 300,000 displaced across borders (UNHCR, 2022). The displacement has resulted in significant humanitarian needs, including shelter, food, and medical care (OCHA, 2020).

Political Instability: The crisis in North East Nigeria is complex and deeply rooted in political instability. The region is plagued by weak governance, corruption, and political instability, which have hindered the effectiveness of humanitarian responses (Duffield, 2018). The political instability has also led to the proliferation of armed groups, further exacerbating the humanitarian situation (ICRC, 2020).

Complex Coordination: Effective humanitarian response in North East Nigeria requires complex coordination among multiple actors, including international organizations, NGOs, local governments, and communities. The UNHCR has played a critical role in coordinating humanitarian efforts, working closely with other UN agencies, NGOs, and local authorities (UNHCR, 2020). However, coordination has been hindered by limited resources, insecurity, and conflicting interests among stakeholders (MSF, 2020).

To conclude, the CHEs theory provides a useful framework for understanding the complex crisis in North East Nigeria. The application of this theory highlights the challenges and complexities of effective humanitarian intervention in the region, including the need for sustained funding, improved coordination, and addressing the root causes of the crisis.

Review of Related Literature

Challenges Undermining UNHCR'S Responses to Humanitarian Crisis in northeast Nigeria

Although there has been significant improvement in refugee aid programmes, rehabilitation of internally displaced persons, rendering help to communities affected by crisis and the like, the UNHCR still faces difficulties in offering comprehensive help to IDP's, returnees, refugees, and asylum seekers because of paucity of funds, red tape, a shrinking humanitarian space, and limited access (USA for UNHCR, 2023). This state of affairs made Betts (2013) to contend that the idea of challenged institutions which emphasizes the difficulties experienced by multilateral organizations in rapidly shifting global governance finds full expression in the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees as it responds to an increasingly competitive institutional setting. This is indeed factual as overlaps have been presently created by the proliferation of humanitarian institutions. In a similar vein, Betts et al (2011) did not mince words when they averred that the UNHCR was created to address the needs and concerns of refugees in Europe but that after the cold war, this role snowballed with the wide range of forced displacements experienced globally, a state of affairs that has challenged the mandate of the Office sorely.

Also, the UNHCR faces numerous security challenges in its operations globally, Nigeria, not being an exception. A report by the UNHCR Executive Committee Report (2022) makes it vivid where it stated that of late, the UNHCR has presence in 126 countries and almost 25% of the workforce works in areas where the overall risk level is deemed to be significant or high. More than 300 security incidents were reported by the agency in 2021, some of which were dire, exposure to fire in areas faced with hostilities, civil conflicts, violent demonstrations, crime, ambushes, abductions and road accidents, in December 2021, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a UNHCR vehicle was ambushed by an armed militia and three staff members of the mission got seriously injured; Nigeria witnessed the abduction of a national staff member by militants that got released six months after, another national member of the mission was killed in an aerial assault in his native home in Ethiopia same year.

On the issue of security and how it affects the operations of the UNHCR particularly in Nigeria's, a Global Focus report (2019) stated that Nigeria's humanitarian and security conditions, particularly in North-East Nigeria, were unstable and unsafe in 2019 and that Nigeria was the country with the highest total anticipated risk in terms of socioeconomic fragility, inequality and shortages of food, according to the 2019 Global risk index. This situation did not abate as a similar study carried out in the same country a year after-2020 reinforces the fact that the protracted humanitarian crises associated with the ongoing insurgency in the North-East, which had not shown any indications of declining, disputes between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt, and sectarian disruptions throughout the nation continue to dominate and undermine UNHCR's operational setting in (Nigeria Global Focus report, 2020).

Also, poor funding has impacted UNHCR's operations globally. A UNHCR underfunding Report (2023) stated that in order to protect, aid, and find answers for millions of individuals who are stateless or have been forcefully displaced around the world, the UNHCR is essential. However, the agency's underfunding of its operations presents a big issue for 2023 and that the global response to forced displacement has been negatively impacted by this financial deficit, which has made the already terrible circumstances faced by stateless and forcibly displaced individuals worse and increased the strain on host nations and communities. One of the host communities affected by this underfunding crisis is Nigeria. For instance, the nation ranked 6th in a UNHCR's top 10 underfunded emergency situations in 2021.The report indicates that out of a total of $128.4 million required in 2021, only 43% funding was gotten, giving a funding shortfall of $72.9 million (UNHCR'S Most Underfunded Situations, 2021) Validating this position, an Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-OCHA report (2023) on Humanitarian Dashboard in North-East Nigeria indicates that funding crisis in Nigeria's North-East, ongoing and incessant insecurity cases, or restrictions on movement continued to be some of the drivers to the humanitarian crisis in the region, and that the inaccessibility of several regions to aid agencies, reduces the total humanitarian presence.

In another vein, Adeleye and Osadola (2022) concluded that while foreign assistance particularly that provided by the UN, under the auspices of the UNHCR,has been crucial to managing Nigeria's humanitarian issue, the large number of internally displaced people has continued to eclipse these efforts. This scenario is not far from what a UNHCR Global Trend Report (2018) unveiled when it stated that Nigeria at the close of 2017, ranked eleventh out of those with high number of IDPs.

Discussion of Key Findings

The UN Refugee Agency, in delivering her mandate of protecting refugees, asylum seekers, Internally Displaced Persons, etc in North-East Nigeria, encounters numerous challenges and operational difficulties. These challenges have, to a large extent, undermined its operations in the region.

Betts (2023) is of the view that the idea of challenged institutions which emphasizes the difficulties experienced by multilateral organizations in rapidly shifting global governance finds full expression in the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees as it responds to an increasingly competitive institutional setting. This is indeed factual as overlaps have been presently created by the proliferation of humanitarian institutions. Also, the issue of insecurity, insecurity of UNHCR staff and underfunding act as major challenges to the proper functioning of the UNHCR in the Nigerian section of the Lake Chad Region. (UNHCR underfunding Report 2023; Global Focus Report, 2019). UNHCR, Annual Results Report (2022) indicates thatmultiple factors hinder the response efforts of aid agencies, the UNHCR inclusive. Some of these factors include flooding, insecurity, and drought. The resultant effects of these challenges are new displacements, which have also had an impact on the region under review. Some 338,000 Nigerians fled to Cameroon (131,000), Chad (20,000), and Niger (187,000) and 17,000 have returned spontaneously to North-east Nigeria. This has given rise to more than 1,400 refugees from Niger in Borno State and an ongoing refugee influx in Adamawa State with over 16,000 Cameroonian refugees by the end of 2022. Key respondents from the UNHCR, reacting to the question:

How do security concerns impact UNHCR's ability to reach and assist refugees and internally displaced persons? Stated that:

> concerns about the security and safety of UNHCR-affected individuals as well as humanitarian workers still exist More, so threats, bloodshed, and overall lawlessness made it difficult to reach the beneficiaries and humanitarian personnel often deal with possibility of kidnapping or carjacking in a few different operations and this makes the accomplishment of some UNHCR goals difficult.

More so, the UNHCR staff members face threats to their lives in many parts of the world, with Nigeria not being an exception. For instance, Nigeria witnessed the abduction of a national staff member by militants that got released six months after. This state of affairs affects the mindset of the UN Refugee Agency staff members, who often work under fear in these troubled zones and are therefore selective of areas they want to be posted to UNHCR Executive Committee Report (2022).

Corroborating these positions, in a Key Informant Interview conducted on the ICRC -another agency rendering humanitarian services in the region under review, the key respondents, responding to the question:

What are the main resource constraints the UNHCR and other donor agencies encounter in responding to the humanitarian crisis in Nigeria's northeast?

Opined that: 'With regards to challenges in Nigeria's North-East, I would say security, humanitarian access and donor fatigue with protracted crises. The UNHCR Protection unit respondents added that:

> an overall lack of resources to meet the needs of forcibly displaced and stateless individuals in Nigeria occurred in 2022. Rising costs of commodities, inflation, poor road infrastructure, clashes among communities, insecurity, and continued to impact negatively on humanitarian programmes. In addition, the limited presence of UN agencies affected the delivery of protection to Cameroonian refugees and IDPs in the Middle Belt.

Respondents from the UNHCR also stated that:

> delays in procurement challenged registration activities and lack of required registration materials owing to the wider geographic spread of refugees, further compounded new displacements. The majority of Cameroonian refugees self-settled in border locations had very poor accessibility and mobile connectivity. Since the registration tools depend heavily on internet access, major challenges were faced in matching data in the deep field. Moreover, NCFRMI's technical capacity had limitations, prompting UNHCR to allocate a portion of its already limited resources towards capacity-building activities to improve the quality of registration. Other challenges, such as limited resources, sudden camp closures, seasonal floods, and insecurity, posed significant barriers to the effective targeting and provision of timely support and assistance to the displaced population. Furthermore, UNHCR and its partners were unable to reach communities in hard-to-reach and inaccessible areas, despite their best efforts.

Further more, funding shortfall poses a big challenge to the operations of the UNHCR in Nigeria's section of the Lake Chad Region. Underfunding act as major impediment to the proper functioning of the UNHCR in the region under review (UNHCR underfunding Report 2023). Respondents from the UNHCR Protection Unit, Abuja lending voice to the question: **How does funding gaps and financial limitations affect the scope and effectiveness of UNHCR's activities in the Nigeria's northeast?** Averred that:

> increased financial support from the international community is essential because the situation is uncertain and there are no imminent signs of a big improvement or resolution as the UNHCR and its partners require funds to build on the accomplishments made in 2016, and humanitarian needs must be addressed immediately.

The figure below is the funding snapshot of North East Nigeria. It indicates the monthly situation report in the area. The report shows that UNHCR funding needs until December 2018 stood at USD 62.5 million but only a total of USD 3.3 of these funds have been received, leaving the agency with a funding shortfall of USD 59.2.5 M. Overall, the funding gap in the area within the period under review stood at 85%.
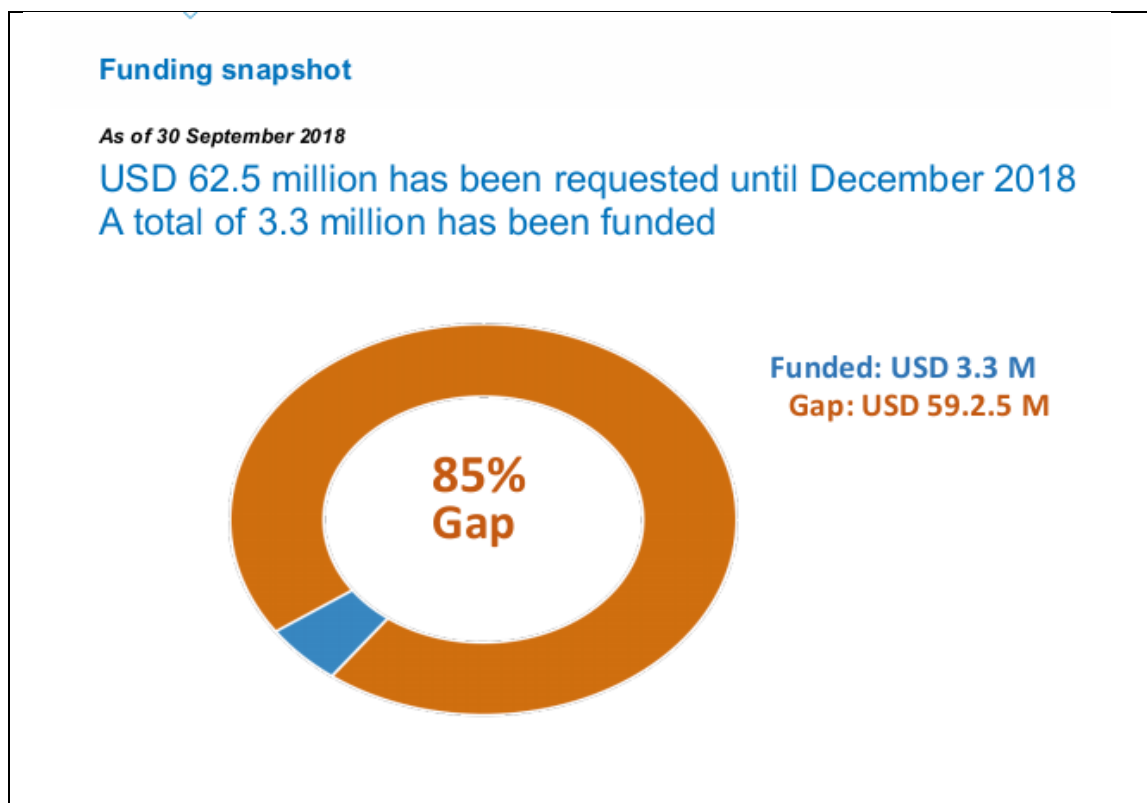
Figure 1: Funding Snapshot, North East Nigeria, 2018
Source: UNOCHA North East Nigeria Situation Report (2018)

In the same vein, funding by areas of intervention as indicated also in the figure below clearly shows that out of the eight areas of intervention earmarked for funding (in million USD), only five received minimal intervention and funding, leaving the rest unfunded. The rundown is as follows:

    i)   Shelter and infrastructure had 13,070,685 earmarked but only got 1,233,078

    ii)   Return and Reintegration 5,384,952 received 774,293

    iii)   Self reliance and livelihoods, 4,843,681 got 15000

    iv)   SGBV Prevention and response had 5,239,862 earmarked but received zero funding

    v)   Protection monitoring and referrals- 15,841,037 received 294,218

    vi)   Non food items was billed to receive 4,766,504, but got 949,098

    vii)   Operations management, coordination and partnerships had 6,419,781 earmarked but got only78,555

    viii) CCCM (Camp Coordination and Camp Management) received funding, although 1,776, 403 was earmarked

    ix)   Access to justice and legal assistance received zero funding with 1,849,721 earmarked.
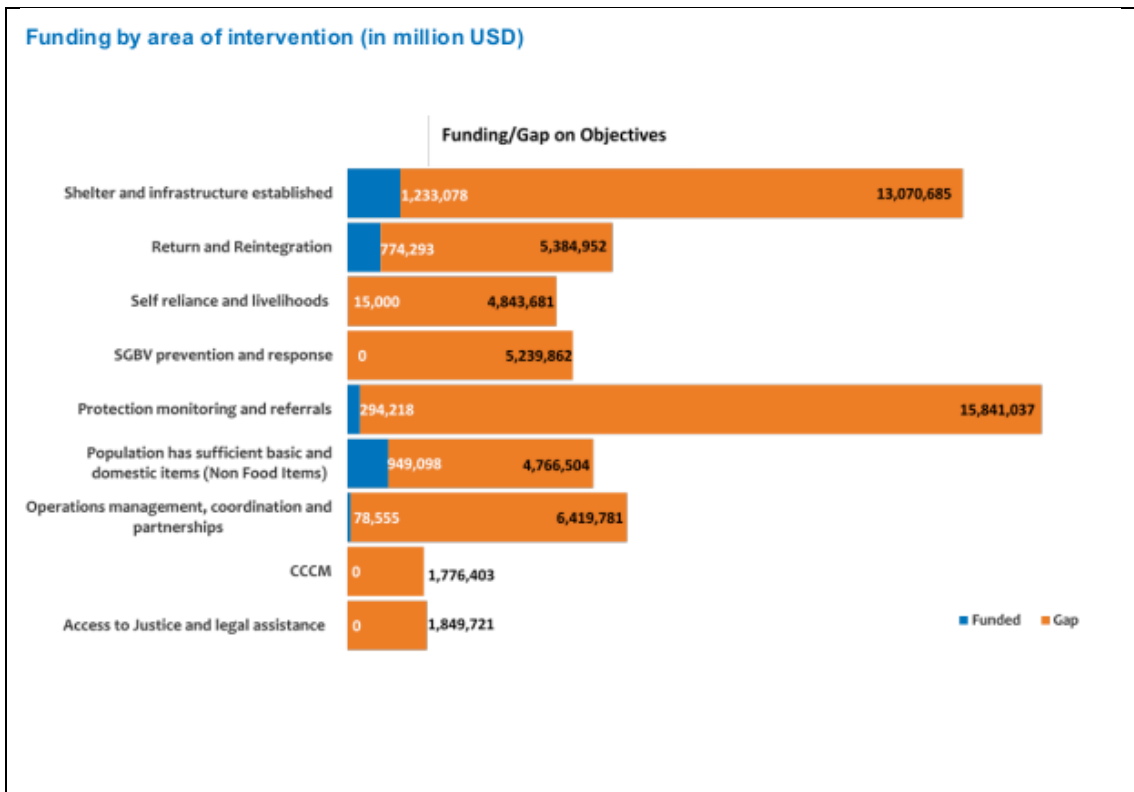
Figure 2: Funding by area of intervention (in million USD)
Source: UNOCHA North East Nigeria Situation Report (2018)

The chart below is indicative of UNHCR's funding shortfall in Nigeria as at December, 2023. It reveals that out of $98.2 funding required by the agency for its operations in the region, the percentage funded was (40%) and total funding amount ($39,058,540). This leaves an indicative funding gap of $59,180,836 representing 60% of the financial requirements.
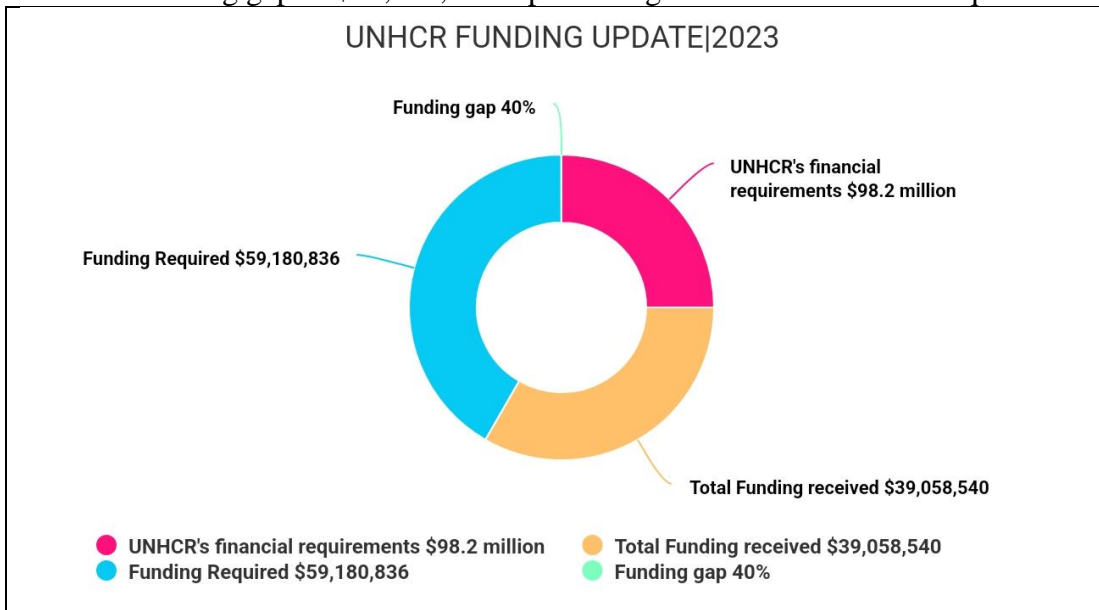
Figure 3: UNHCR Funding Update, 2023
Source: UNHCR Division of External Relations, Funding Update (2023).

In another vein, funding gaps have further affected the scope of UNHCR's operations in Nigeria at least in two specific areas- access to food and education. This is what the agency has to say in this respect:

> in the year, 2022, UN Refugee Agency was confronted with severe underfunding for food and relied heavily on private donors. The assistance value of USD 5.65 per individual per month for food needs remained below 40 per cent of the Minimum Expenditure Basket or covering only one meal per day. Inadequate resources prevented increase in transfer value despite the inflation (21.34 per cent in December 2022). With an estimated 33unemployment rate in Nigeria, refugees were forced to relocate to border areas with poor connectivity and no banking footprint or involuntatily return to unsafe areas in Cameroon in to make better living. Poor funding also hampered UNHCR Northeast Operation from reaching out and targeting more IDPs who were affected by the sudden camp closures in Maiduguri, Borno state in 2022.

Specifically, regarding underfunding in the provision of educational needs of PoC's (People of Concern), the respondents stated in clear terms that:

> UNHCR's education support at the primary and secondary levels accommodated only19 per cent of the population of school aged children because of funding constraints increasing the proportion of out of school children at the primary (56%) and secondary (67%) levels. Also, only few refugee youths had access to tertiary education due to limited scholarship opportunities making it difficult for secondary school graduates to further their education. The presence of refugees has also impacted on the available resources in the schools which are overburdened and faced with various challenges including inadequate classrooms' furniture, teachers, good libraries and laboratories especially in the host communities. The DAFI slots provided to Nigeria operation was also quite limited as only 40 new placements were catered for in the academic year 2022-23.

Conclusion

In the discharge of humanitarian duties in the Nigeria's North-East, the UNHCR is confronted with numerous challenges that adversely affect its operational capacity. For instance, overlaps occasioned by the proliferation of humanitarian institutions have brought numerous operational challenges to the Agency. The question that readily arises is: who has mandate to perform which humanitarian functions? What is the limit of such mandate and so on? The issue of insecurity is another worrisome challenge. UNHCR members of staff, world over are faced

with this challenge as they are the targets of Non State Armed Groups. Humanitarian personnel often deal with possibility of kidnapping or carjacking or outright loss of lives. This has been evident in Nigeria's North East where at one time, a UN Refugee staff was kidnapped but later released by members of the Boko Haram sect. This state of affairs puts member of staff of the agency on the edge and affects the overall discharge of their core duties. More, so threats, bloodshed, and overall lawlessness make it difficult for the UNHCR to reach the beneficiaries and this ugly situation adversely hamper the accomplishment of certain set and major goals by the UNHCR. Another vital challenge worthy of mention is the challenge of funding. UNHCR's funding shortfall in Nigeria as at December, 2023 indicates a huge funding gap of about of $59,180,836 representing 60% of the financial requirements. With this kind of scenario in place, the agency finds it hard, if not impossible, to continue to render the needed humanitarian task set before it. Indeed, poor funding, insecurity of staff, lack of access to some areas, overlaps due to the proliferation of humanitarian agencies, and a host of other challenges, have, as a matter of fact, made the agency not to execute several humanitarian services that ordinarily would have benefitted the needy in IDP camps, refugees, refugee returnees and host communities.

Recommendations

(i)   The basic challenges confronting the UNHCR in her humanitarian response in Nigeria's Northeast should be tackled head on. Issues of funding shortfalls have made the agency not to perform optimally. Proper financing to meet up with her goals and mandate is therefore advocated.

(ii)   Concerted efforts should also be made by the Nigerian government, and other relevant stakeholders, to fight insecurity in the region in order to protect UN staff, humanitarian actors in the region and communities in the northeast. If these wonderful steps are taken, they will definitely go a long way in reducing the humanitarian crisis in the region.

(iii)   Inter-agency collaboration will go a long way in abating the humanitarian challenges in the region. Overlaps in functions and jurisdictional challenges hamper effective operations of several non-state actors in the region. These agencies should harmonise their operations to achieve optimal results.

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