



SELINUS UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCES AND LITERATURE

**TOWARDS STRENGTHENING LOCAL
CAPACITY IN HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE: A
STUDY EXPLORING MONITORING AND
EVALUATION SYSTEMS OF NATIONAL NON-
GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS WITHIN
NORTH-EAST NIGERIA**

By JACOB OCHE ATTAH

UNISE2413IT

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty who has provided me with the knowledge and wisdom to undertake this study, and to the memory of my late father, Professor Mark Ochoga Attah, my role model and principal support through the years of academic pursuits.

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems of national and international organizations responding to the humanitarian crisis in Northeast Nigeria to establish standards for effective MEL activities, understand the performance of national organization's MEL systems, factors limiting their performance and areas to facilitate system strengthening. A cross-sectional methodology was adopted, using surveys and interviews with MEL practitioners to acquire insight. The findings reveal that MEL human resources, tools, documentation and budgets are required for effective MEL implementation to support humanitarian projects. National organizations have limited performance due to inadequate MEL staffing, documentation, hardware, software, structure and budgets. The study concludes that management or national organizations should approach humanitarian programming with an understanding of the vital role of MEL and facilitate structures that promote standard MEL practices. Recommendations are further provided for international organizations and donor agencies to approach capacity building for national organizations systematically to facilitate a tailored approach for improved MEL action. The study also recommends for future research to examine the approaches to capacity building and partnerships for improved MEL systems.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Population
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
BAY	Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CLA	Collaborating, Learning and Adapting
CSRF	Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSN	Food Security and Nutrition
HDP	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LGA	Local Government Area
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

NNGO	National Non-Governmental Organization
NSAG	Non-State Armed Groups
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PC	Personal Computer
RBM	Results Based Monitoring
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

1.0 CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Although humanitarian endeavors have been present throughout human history and the concept of humanitarianism have been traced to around the 19th Century, yet the modern concepts of humanitarian aid truly emerged at the latter half of the 20th Century (Rysaback-Smith, 2016). Humanitarian aid across the globe since then have been essential in providing lifesaving and life-sustaining interventions following occurrence of disasters which can be man-made or naturally occurring. Reinforcing humanitarian action are several major principles of humanitarian law, specifically the rules set out by the Geneva conventions of 1949. While they do not directly address aid organizations, they provide some justification for the provision of relief to civilians and wounded military, and impose upon the ratifying countries the obligation to allow assistance to be provided (Mackintosh, 2000). According to the Emergency Event Database (EM-DAT) there has been over 6800 disasters from the beginning of the millennium, meaning that natural disasters is on the rise, which can also be said for emergencies resulting from intra-state and inter-state conflicts (Rahman, Majchrzak and Sein, 2022). For decades now, responding to the need of humanitarian assistance anywhere in the world is expected following a disaster or emergency, however, to do so effectively, there must be set rules, policies and guidelines that both facilitate humanitarian interventions and protects the responders. Responding to the needs of affected populations encompasses a myriad of humanitarian actions which are all essential in facilitating relief. Hence, making the right decisions is essential at different stages of humanitarian action, even in a chaotic environment which is usually characteristic of any emergency. To assist in making the right decisions in humanitarian response over time, there have been the emergence and enactment of different

laws, principles, groups, modalities, methods and processes that guide actions across multiple clusters and themes that facilitate lifesaving and life-sustaining interventions.

Four established principles govern humanitarian aid, they are humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence. These principles were established over time by the UN General Assembly. Humanity, impartiality, and neutrality were established in the UN General Assembly of 1991, and independence at that of 2004. Humanity refers to the provision of aid to all who are in need at a place in a given time, wherever the need exists, and with the purpose of protecting and respecting all human beings. Neutrality is the stance of humanitarian aid actors not to choose sides in conflict or to favor a group based on political, religious or ideological identities, while Impartiality demands aid be given based on need alone and based on any other distinctions including gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, class, political party or religious belief. Finally, independence refers to the requirement that aid organizations are autonomous from any political or military objectives or with those goals in mind. Over the years, these principles have been the basis for the development and implementation of other initiatives such as the Code of Conduct of humanitarian action, Sphere standards, Core Humanitarian Standards, and Accountability to Affected Population (Roberts and Hofmann, 2004). Furthermore, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and subsequently the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were further established to govern both humanitarian and development endeavors towards having a favorable outcome for all, especially the vulnerable within populations. These have formed the basis for which humanitarian aid programs are ensured to be delivered in a compliant and quality manner, wherever they are implemented. They have remained important in ensuring that affected populations that need humanitarian aid are supported towards early recovery and development in the shortest possible period. Hence quality interventions are important to ensuring effective humanitarian aid. The need for effective life-saving and

sustaining interventions underlines a continuous need for quality management in humanitarian operations and disaster relief management. Quality in this regard can be defined as the degree to which envisaged results of the program at all levels are being or have been achieved. This definition does not only cover the scope of success in providing humanitarian assistance but also does so in compliance with the principles that guide humanitarian action and its associated initiatives. The necessity of ensuring that the quality and compliance of humanitarian interventions are ensured and improved upon is the basis for the establishment of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning systems within humanitarian aid.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning is a management function to assess if progress is made in achieving expected results (both intended and unintended) and to facilitate a commitment to improving humanitarian action. Monitoring of humanitarian interventions is the continual and systematic collection of data on actions to obtain information on a project's progress. Evaluation on the other hand is a systematic assessment of the methods and results of humanitarian endeavors, while learning is the application of information from monitoring and evaluation to deliberately take measures to improve humanitarian response practices. Accountability, which is often linked to monitoring, evaluation and learning is defined as commitment to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders, especially the affected population is balanced and responded to. The concept of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) has broad application and is used in multiple fields, hence tracing its exact origin is difficult. However, performance tracking systems for improving outcomes have been traced back to pre-modern societies such as ancient Egypt over 5,000 years ago who monitored their country's outputs in grain and livestock production (Ryan et al., 2022). Over time, the practice of MEL has developed and have been refined across multiple sectors where it has become key in ensuring effective models of operation. The overall importance of MEL is to ensure the

continuous application of knowledge that is gained from evidence and analysis to improve positive results through the best processes. Consequently, MEL has found a stay in government systems, companies, academics, financial institutions, development agencies and also humanitarian aid responders due to its important outlay (Toscano, 2013). Recently there has also been evidence established that M&E is gaining political recognition in the public sector due to its ability to influence the efficacy of policies, projects, programs and interventions through appropriate engagement (Goldman and Pabri, 2020). Hence, the application of systematic checks in humanitarian interventions has become paramount to ensure that more lives are saved, and people receive required support following a disaster.

From the onset of humanitarian aid, the modalities of response to bring humanitarian aid although being modified and refined over time, often consist of rapid action of key stakeholders including the affected state leadership, United Nations (and its bodies), donor agencies, international organizations, local organizations and community-based groups among others. Although few local actors and organizations might be present at the onset of an emergency or crisis that requires humanitarian aid, they are usually not equipped to effectively handle the demands of the response, hence the need for international led and coordinated efforts (Oyeaji et al., 2021). It has been recognized over time that to ensure effective delivery of humanitarian aid and to guarantee the sustainability of the interventions, the affected community and local actors must be put at the center of the humanitarian response. The European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO, 2023) highlights building local capacities during a humanitarian response as the main driver of ensuring localization, to facilitate effective aid delivery in communities before, during and after emergencies. The issue of localization in development and humanitarian aid gained prominence in the ‘Grand Bargain’, which was launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul may 2016. The ‘Grand Bargain’

is a unique agreement between some of the largest donors and humanitarian organizations to improve efficacy and efficiency of humanitarian action through deliberate commitments to localization.

Following series of conflict and crisis in different regions across Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, there have been massive displacements, loss of lives, properties and social infrastructures. Consequently, the need for humanitarian interventions became underlined to provide lifesaving and life preserving aid. Since around 2016, humanitarian organizations have been working to support of the Government of Nigeria in providing humanitarian and early recovery interventions in large scales. In 2023 alone, the Humanitarian Needs Overview of Nigeria published by the United Nations estimates that there are about 8.3 million people in need of humanitarian aid (UNOCHA, 2023). The protracted nature of this crisis, which has continued for years, have made the contribution of local actors ever more important. It is imperative that if the affected regions of the country dependent on humanitarian aid is going to shift to early recovery and development, local actors will have a key role to play. This study explores the monitoring and evaluation systems of national non-governmental organizations implementing humanitarian projects within Nigeria over this period with a view to gauging performance and identifying areas of improvements to facilitate a strengthened response to the humanitarian crisis.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Humanitarian aid on a big scale has been delivered for over 10 years in Nigeria since the onset of the crisis and has been largely led by international agencies, with its international contingencies controlling the management and use of bulk of resources allocated to relief within the country, while the knowledge of implementation processes and methodologies are

streamlined through international staff and expatriates. Due to the large scale and urgent need for humanitarian relief, little effort is directed toward ensuring contextualization of effort and ‘shifting of power’ to the local actors. This encompasses the move for dynamic shift of power from the ‘Global North’ to the ‘Global South’ in the response to humanitarian crises within each’s jurisdiction. A strengthened localization push facilitates resilience and the development of capacity for response in the event of future shocks not just in a specific country but also around neighboring regions. Although the move for localization has remained paramount and become more pronounced in recent times, with commitments made to build local capacities and transfer responsibilities to local actors, there is still a long way to go for this to be a reality, especially across specific components of humanitarian response systems.

Monitoring, evaluation, and learning have been established as key components of humanitarian programming and go a long way toward ensuring the implementation of quality humanitarian programs. Hence, the ability of Indigenous organizations to operate their MEL systems to the levels of international organizations and agencies will go a long way to promoting improved local-led humanitarian actions.

As the drive for localization of humanitarian and development efforts continues to gain steam, there is also a need to ensure adequate capacities of local bodies to deliver humanitarian aid. In transferring responsibility to local actors as part of the localization drive, it is imperative that those responsible can implement effective and quality humanitarian aid responses to affected populations to ensure accountability. A limited capacity of local actors following the transfer of responsibilities will not only affect the delivery of aid but is also capable of reversing the progress made so far. It is therefore important to understand specific areas of capacity needs among local actors and identify the best approaches to meet those needs.

There are also knowledge gaps around the capacities and areas for development of the local actors around the different areas that facilitate effective humanitarian action. These knowledge gaps are pronounced in the field of monitoring, evaluation and learning which is essential as a mode for quality assurance and to facilitate continuously improved delivery of humanitarian aid.

1.3 Research Objectives

The overall objective is to assess the monitoring, evaluation and learning systems of some national non-governmental organizations responding to the humanitarian crisis within northeast Nigeria to highlight performance and identify areas for improvement, while the specific objectives are;

- I. To determine the unique and differing properties of monitoring and evaluation systems of some national and international organizations responding to humanitarian needs within northeast Nigeria.
- II. To compare monitoring and evaluation systems of national organizations with the standards of their international counterparts responding to humanitarian needs within northeast Nigeria.
- III. To identify areas for improvement within the monitoring and evaluation systems of national humanitarian organizations.

1.4 Research Questions

Are monitoring, evaluation and learning systems of indigenous organizations operating within northeast Nigeria at the required levels to adequately support the protracted humanitarian response compared with international partners?

- i. What are the standards for effective monitoring, evaluation and learning systems in humanitarian response?
- ii. How are the monitoring, evaluation and learning systems of national organizations performing when compared to those of international organizations?
- iii. What are the factors limiting the functionality of MEL systems of national humanitarian organizations?
- iv. Which areas do the MEL systems of national humanitarian organizations need strengthening?

2.0 CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to Chapter

This chapter consists of the theoretical framework of the study and the relevant literature around the research topic, ‘Towards Strengthening Local Capacity in Humanitarian Response: a Study Exploring Monitoring and Evaluation Systems of National Non-Government Organizations within Northeast Nigeria’.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 Monitoring of Humanitarian Interventions

Oxford’s learners’ dictionary defines monitoring as the process of watching and checking something over a period of time to see how it develops. This definition with the addition of a scope of what is being monitored and a defined system in which it is done depicts the process of monitoring in humanitarian interventions. Monitoring of humanitarian action is then the continuous collection and analysis of information throughout the period of a defined humanitarian action to track progress against targets and milestones.

The critical need for humanitarian relief delivery mandates it to be carried out in the best manner to ensure that resources allocated to it facilitate the best outcomes for those it is intended for. Over time humanitarian organizations and agencies have developed systems that facilitate a continuous review of its processes to ensure they are informed, and they can improve based on information collected. The Humanitarian Response Monitoring Guide (2016) by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee defines humanitarian response monitoring as a continuous process that documents the humanitarian aid delivered to an affected population as well as measuring the results of the intervention against the initial objectives set. Although the concept of

systematic monitoring of humanitarian projects emerged in the mid-19th Century, its practical application precedes that period to earlier days of humanitarian aid delivery (Dewalque, 2023).

Importance of Monitoring Humanitarian Interventions

Monitoring humanitarian programs is crucial for ensuring their effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. Key reasons why monitoring is important include:

- I. Assessing Progress and Performance - Monitoring helps track whether a program is achieving its initially intended objectives within the set timeline. It systematically measures the progress of the intervention using predefined indicators and targets.
- II. Ensuring Accountability – It is important to be accountable to donors or taxpayers who facilitate funding of humanitarian interventions. Monitoring provides evidence through defined systems that resources are being used effectively and ethically for best outcomes.
- III. Improving Decision-Making - Real-time data from monitoring of humanitarian projects allows implementers to make informed decisions for improved action. Monitoring processes lead to the identification of challenges and opportunities for improvement during program implementation.
- IV. Enhancing Efficiency- Monitoring helps identify inefficiencies or bottlenecks in resource allocation or service delivery. Programs can be adjusted to make better use of time, funds, and materials.
- V. Promoting Transparency - Regular reporting and sharing of accurate data promotes accountability and builds trust among beneficiaries, donors, and other stakeholders. Hence overall integrity of humanitarian actors is anchored on effective program monitoring.

- VI. Identifying and Addressing Challenges – monitoring facilitates the identification of potential issues and provides an opportunity for it to be addressed timely.
- VII. Ensuring Relevance and Adaptability- Humanitarian needs can change rapidly due to shifting circumstances, hence the approach to response to it needs to be adapted. Monitoring ensures that the implementation strategy remains relevant and effective.
- VIII. Improving Impact – Through the analysis of monitoring data, the impact of interventions can be gauged. This provides evidence for stakeholder action and also informs future strategies.
- IX. Enhancing Learning and Capacity Building – Information from monitoring systems provides insights into best practices and areas for improvement. This promotes systematic learning which in turn improves program quality.
- X. Safeguarding Beneficiary Welfare - Regular monitoring of intervention ensures that programs are serving affected populations fairly, safely, and without harm.

Monitoring and project/program management

In humanitarian programming, different models of project or program management are adopted in providing relief, and monitoring features in all of them, albeit in different forms and scopes. Initially monitoring was viewed and included in the project cycle as one of the phases. This model of project management cycle envisaged monitoring processes to be most effective when the implementation of the project is going on. This has been previously depicted across several project management guides as monitoring is seen as the fourth phase in a humanitarian project management cycle. In this phase, project managers work to ensure the project is going according to plan, and if it isn't, work out solutions to get it back on track. (Ben, 2023).

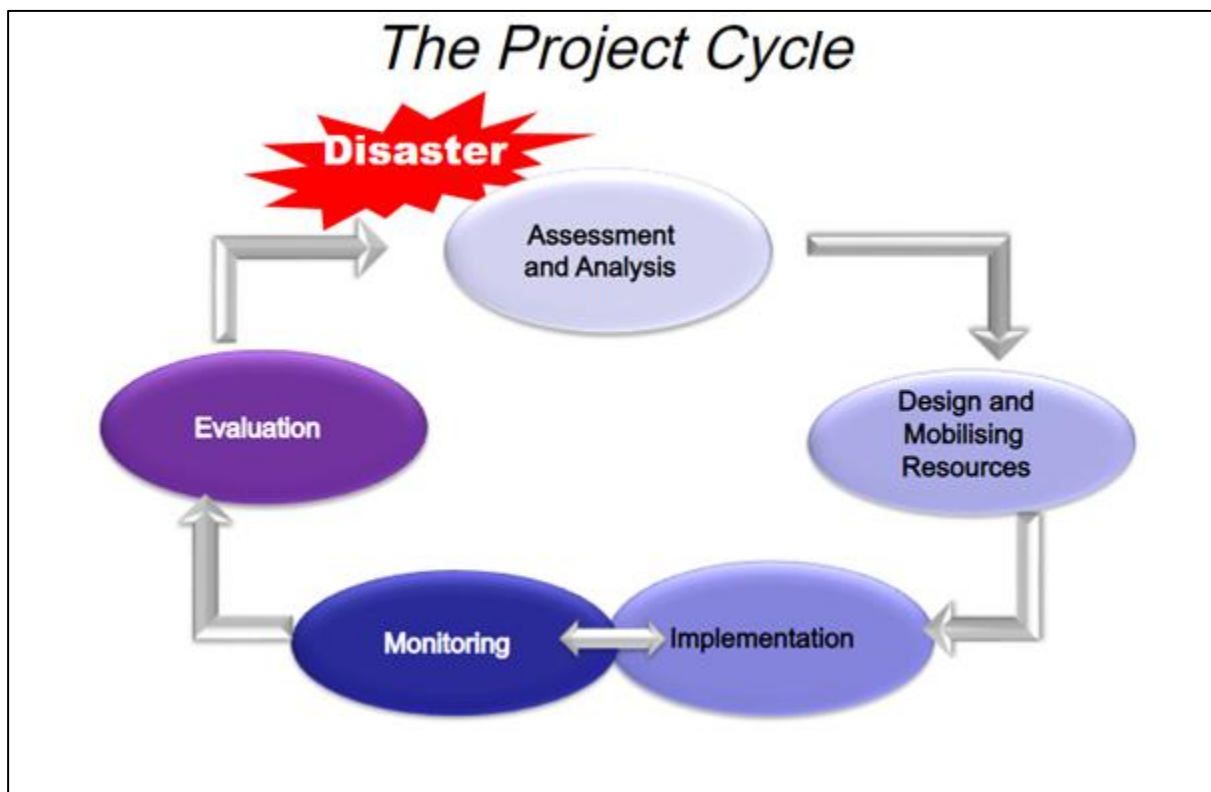


Figure 1: Project management cycle with monitoring as a phase (Adopted from context project management cycle guide)

However, over time, monitoring has evolved from being one of the phases of a project management cycle to being implemented across the project management cycle. Monitoring, alongside evaluation have been included to be engaged with across each phase of the project. Incorporating monitoring and evaluation provides an integrated approach to project management which ensures that there is monitoring throughout the entire life of the project, facilitated through a monitoring framework (PM4NGOS, 2020).

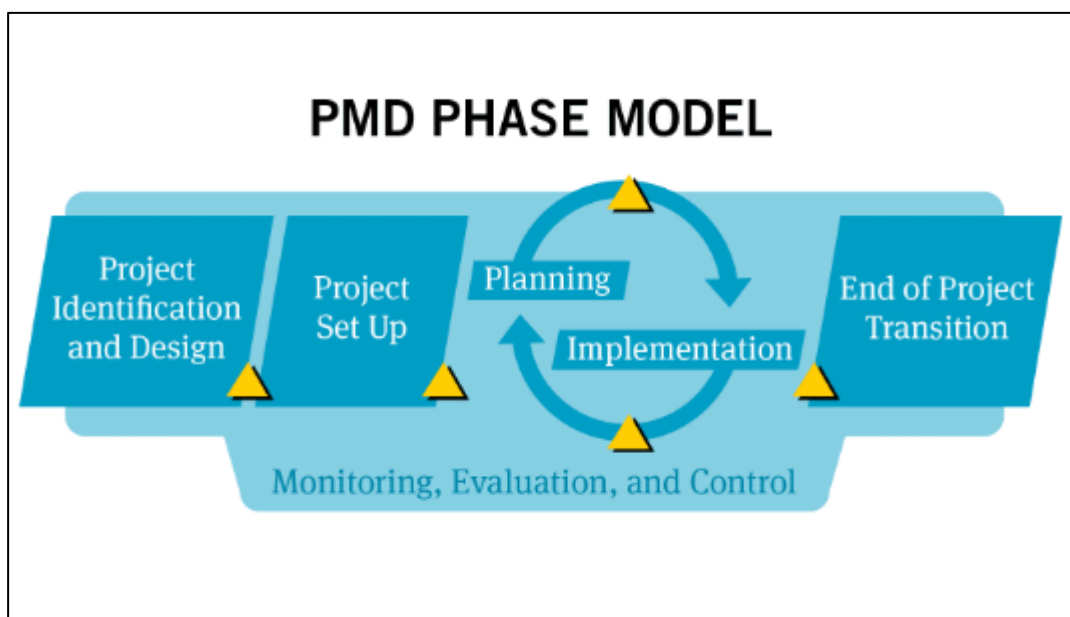


Figure 2: Project management cycle model with monitoring implemented across phases (Adopted from Project DPRO)

Humanitarian action is principally carried out to save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain human dignity during and after natural disasters or crises. This important mandate of humanitarian action makes facilitating its continuous success and improvement a necessity, which can only be achieved with effective monitoring in place. Monitoring enables a continuous reflection to know if the objectives of humanitarian actions are met (ALNAP, n.d). Jeremiah, Kabeyi and Kabeyi (2019) in their work on the evolution of project management, monitoring and evaluation, identified project monitoring and evaluation as the two most important processes in a project management cycle which has continually grown in significance and has become embedded in the project cycle from conception to termination and beyond.

Types of Monitoring

Humanitarian monitoring can be of different forms depending on the specific needs, institution and agreed framework for monitoring of the action. According to Toladata (2019), the

following are the monitoring types employed in tracking different components in monitoring and evaluation;

- I. Process/Activity monitoring
- II. Compliance monitoring
- III. Context/Situation monitoring
- IV. Beneficiary monitoring
- V. Financial monitoring
- VI. Organizational monitoring
- VII. Results monitoring

- I. Process/Activity monitoring: Process monitoring is also referred to as activity monitoring and in other contexts, real-time monitoring. It is the routine checks on the processes by which humanitarian aid is delivered. Activity monitoring seeks to establish that the implementation of humanitarian activities has been carried out according to plan and the anticipated results are being met (Angela, 2022). Process monitoring is generally used to refine humanitarian projects based on monitoring data collected and analyzed.
- II. Compliance monitoring: This monitoring is conducted to check the adherence of humanitarian interventions to established international humanitarian response standards or similar standards. This monitoring method varies in relation to the type of humanitarian aid provided, the sector standards, culture of the organization and their established standards of operation. This monitoring also seeks to ensure that processes are compliant with requests and guidelines set by the donor, government regulations

and also the law. This monitoring seeks to ensure quality in relation to certain standards through routine checks to facilitate humanitarian programming in line with set standards also outlined in the monitoring and evaluation plan.

- III. Context/Situation monitoring: Context monitoring, most times also referred to as situation monitoring, is the tracking of overall setting in which the humanitarian intervention will be operating. This monitoring entails the collection of information about conditions that are external factors in project implementation that could affect the results or efficacy of implementation. This monitoring follows up on assumptions, risks and unexpected situations that may arise within the political, environmental, political and policy context at any point of implementation (Toladata, 2019).
- IV. Beneficiary monitoring: The purpose of this monitoring is to check the perception of both direct and indirect beneficiaries of the humanitarian intervention. This covers tracking of beneficiary complaints and feedback about a project, understanding the beneficiary level of participation, satisfaction, treatment and access to resources. It further provides information on how different groups within the community are affected by the intervention.
- V. Financial monitoring: This is the monitoring of finances in relation to the implementation of humanitarian aid activities. Financial monitoring is incorporated into program or project monitoring to ensure that resources allocated for delivery of relief intervention is adequately used for such. It also has within its scope monitoring value for resources invested. This provides information on the best ways to ensure that resources allocated for relief are used to produce maximal impact.
- VI. Organizational monitoring: Every organization or agency that responds to humanitarian needs has mandates that align with the principles of humanitarian action. Also, they

have an institutional culture of best practice by which it carries out its operation. This form of monitoring is done to track the institutional performance against the framework of its operations as an entity.

- VII. Results monitoring: This form of monitoring is closely related with evaluation as it seeks to monitor the impact of humanitarian interventions. It also has links to results-based management as it seeks to identify performance of project based on results achieved rather than input used (Rawlings, 2009). It is the collection of data to track the tangible achievements that have been obtained from activities of the project, identify which results have been achieved and inform actions to further implementation success.

2.2.2 Evaluation of Humanitarian Interventions

Evaluations of humanitarian interventions have been identified as the best way to know the level of preparedness of humanitarian responders and their ability to conduct efficient and effective humanitarian operations (Paciarotti, and Valiakhmetova, 2021). An important process that seeks to uphold human rights, protect life and promote human dignity requires a system to check that it is not just carried out but carried out effectively and in the best way possible. Evaluation meets that requirement as the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed intervention that seeks to assess its design, implementation, and results. Evaluations of humanitarian interventions are commissioned for multiple reasons and by different entities, which could be a donor, government entity, stakeholders, the implementing organization, monitoring and evaluation support personnel of the intervention or a combination of any of these.

Purpose of Evaluation

The course reference manual on the Evaluation of Humanitarian action by ALNAP and Clinical Research identifies the main purpose of evaluation to be either or a combination of ‘lesson learning’ or ‘accountability’. Evaluation for lesson learning entails the application of findings to facilitate better results in the future, it works to determine the worth of an intervention and provide valuable evidence-based insight for improving practices. On the other hand, evaluation for accountability involves auditing the humanitarian project to show donors, partners, government bodies or stakeholders that there has been effective and efficient use of resources to provide support to the affected population and to report the levels to which the desired results are being achieved.

The table below highlights characteristics of lesson-learning oriented and accountability-oriented evaluations.

Table 1: Characteristics of lesson-learning oriented evaluations versus accountability-oriented evaluations (Adopted from evaluation course reference manual by ALNAP and Channel Research, n.d)

Characteristic	Lesson-learning oriented evaluations	Accountability oriented evaluations
Objective of evaluation and terms of reference	Likely to be set by those directly involved in the project	Likely to be set by those external to the project.
Evaluating team	Internal team or a mix of internal and external evaluators.	Independent external team

Approach to evaluation	Emphasizes a reflective approach in reaching conclusions- more subjective	Emphasizes standardized methods in data collection and analysis- more objective
Evaluation management style	Facilitative approach	Directive approach
Report dissemination	Usually internally circulated within the organization	In public domain

Types of Evaluation

Evaluations depending on the context, timing, scope, and objectives of its commissioning can be of different types. Hence, there are several types of evaluations that can be conducted, this is as a major attribute of evaluations is its ability to be innovative and be designed in line with the intervention that is to be assessed (Levin-Rozalis, 2003). Commissioned evaluations can therefore be a combination of attributes of the different types depending on the specific objectives of the evaluation. The following are types of evaluations that can be applied to humanitarian action.

- **Formative evaluation:** These are evaluations that are undertaken before or during the implementation of the action with the aim of improving the design of the humanitarian intervention or performance of the strategy being implemented. The objective of this evaluation is usually not to measure progress in entirety but in relation to structure and processes to ensure the intervention is on the right path. It is hence a measurement

approach that can provide critical and useful information about implementation (Stetler, *et al.*, 2006).

- Process evaluation: Evaluations that are conducted within implementation or as soon as implementation begins to assess whether activities are moving in line with intended plans and identifying any possible shortcoming that can affect desired results. Process evaluations are closely aligned with monitoring and formative evaluations. A process evaluation aims to answer questions about the processes through which interventions are implemented (Ellard and Parsons, 2010).
- Summative evaluation: It can be also referred to as outcome evaluations, however, in some instances they are identified as separate forms of evaluations. These types of evaluations are conducted to assess the results at outcome levels from implementing interventions. The major differentiating factor between outcome and summative evaluations are the fact that outcome evaluations can be conducted before the end of the project implementation while Summative evaluations are usually conducted near or at the end of the project cycle.
- Impact evaluation: These evaluations attempt to measure the relationship between the humanitarian intervention and the outcomes of interest. It seeks to determine the causal impact of a project (Glewwe and Todd, 2022). The United Nations World Food Programme defines impact evaluations as assessments of the direct or indirect, positive or negative, intended or unintended changes brought about by humanitarian interventions. Impact evaluations are concluded at the end of interventions or at key transition stages following a period of humanitarian response. Puri *et al.*, (2017) highlights impact evaluations as being key in providing evidence on the best intervention strategies in a humanitarian response. It also expands that despite the huge

investments on humanitarian response, impact evaluation methods are still being underused to study humanitarian assistance.

Evaluation criteria

The criteria for evaluating humanitarian interventions are the standards or identified factors by which the relief activity is measured to have been successful, and to what extent. According to ALNAP (2023) following a review of the standard six OECD and DAC evaluation criteria, there are seven criteria that can be used as a framework to determine the worth of a humanitarian intervention. These are;

- I. Relevance
- II. Coherence
- III. Effectiveness
- IV. Efficiency
- V. Impact
- VI. Sustainability
- VII. Coverage

- I. Relevance: Also referred to as appropriateness refers to the whether the project is in line with the needs on ground and priorities within the affected area and could include government or donor priorities. Relevance examines the extent to which the objectives of the humanitarian programming responded to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries.
- II. Coherence: The coherence of humanitarian action examines the level to which the intervention supported or undermined the activities of other responders such as

government bodies, institutions, and other organizations. It also seeks to measure the extent to which project activities aligned with international standards and synergized with set policies that guide humanitarian aid.

- III. Effectiveness: This refers to the extent to which the project aimed at provision of humanitarian relief achieved the set objectives in line with the identified needs. This evaluation criterion links it more to monitoring than any other as the aggregation of routine monitoring data will be used to gauge the effectiveness of the intervention.
- IV. Efficiency: This relates to the relationship between resources put into humanitarian aid and the results thereof. The efficiency of humanitarian aid is hence the cost effectiveness of taking input resources to results (outputs), it identifies if the most efficient approach has been used in providing aid. Alda and Cuesta (2019) in their study on efficiency of humanitarian aid highlights that ensuring efficiency of interventions facilitates a faster shift from emergency to recovery and development.
- V. Impact: The impact of humanitarian aid looks at the wider consequence of the intervention. This involves assessing how the project affected the social, economic, technical or environmental contexts of the affected population. Assessing impacts also involves examining the effects on individuals, gender and different age groups. Puri, Jyotsna., *et al.* (2022) underlines the importance of impact evaluations for a refined humanitarian action.
- VI. Sustainability: This criterion is also identified as connectedness in humanitarian action. It is the need to ensure that the responsive short-term emergency identity of humanitarian aid takes into consideration the longer-term development objectives into account. The drive to incorporate development efforts into humanitarian aid has gained ground in recent years and hence incorporating sustainability actions into

humanitarian activities is key to facilitating development in affected communities (Shehu and Abba, 2020).

- VII. Coverage: The extent to which an intervention reaches the affected population receiving humanitarian aid is the coverage. With regard to individual humanitarian projects or programs, coverage entails the level to which the implementation was able to achieve desired results in line with identified needs, project design and objectives (ALNAP, 2023).



Figure 3: The seven (7) criteria for humanitarian evaluation.

2.2.3 Application of Learning in Humanitarian Interventions

The basic application of monitoring and evaluation in humanitarian response is to generate evidence of work done to provide information on the successes or limitations of the intervention. However, the practical application of information obtained from monitoring and evaluation to improve on the overall delivery of humanitarian aid is the basis that enables and facilitates learning. The Learning Report published by World Vision (2017) points out that operations in fragile and affected contexts do not have a simple roadmap for operation, it

therefore needs continuous learning, adaption and revision. The application of learning varies from organization to organization, and it is engaged with at varying degrees depending on priorities. Different concepts of learning exist, and it can be engaged with through evaluations, research, and processes related to collaborating, learning and adapting (CLA). A search on the net for publicly available materials yields limited studies on the concept of learning in relation to monitoring and evaluation activities. However, humanitarian organizations have developed frameworks for facilitating learning which might vary and developed based on organizational needs but seeks to achieve the collective goal of learning and adaptation of practices. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its humanitarian arm, Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) have a defined framework for CLA that enables it and its implementing partners to improve effectiveness of action and sustainability. The framework highlights in it the practical ways through which the organization will ensure an intentional learning and adapting of interventions across the different stages of project implementation. Humanitarian organizations and agencies with priorities in learning and adaptation have developed similar systems or modified this accordingly.



Figure 4: USAID CLA Framework (Adopted from the USAID Collaborating, Learning and Adapting Framework and Key Concepts paper)

2.2.4 MEL Systems in Humanitarian Organizations

MEL in practice have been called a wide array of names by various organizations and institutions depending on strategy, priority, and operational direction. Hence, it can be termed either as Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL), Monitoring and Reporting (M&R), Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) or Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, Research and Learning (MEARL). Irrespective of the nomenclature, their activities revolve around facilitating the positives brought about by functional Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems. MEL Systems at an organizational scope entails all the resources and processes within the organization that is attributed to ensuring effective MEL is engaged with. MEL Systems require finding of the right balance between elements of monitoring, evaluation and learning and

turning them into a comprehensive MEL approach which will require financial, technical, and human resources to accomplish (Louise and Marina, 2019). These requirements require that for MEL systems to be set-up, operational and functional, it is imperative that it be adequately funded. Hence, MEL budgets per project are usually pegged between 3% to 10% of the project or program's overall budget depending on the donor or funding partner (Derrick *et al.*, 2021).

According to Otundo (2019), there are twelve (12) key components required for a monitoring and evaluation system to function effectively in achieving results, these components are organizational structures with M&E functions, human capacity for M&E, Partnerships for planning, coordinating and managing M&E system, M&E frameworks, M&E workplans and costs, M&E communication, advocacy and culture, Routine Programme Monitoring, surveys and surveillance, national and sub-national databases, supportive supervision and data audit, evaluation and research and data dissemination and use.

Generally, a functional MEL system in a humanitarian organization or agency is made up of components categorized broadly under five (5) groups. These are,

- i. MEL Human Resources: This entails the total available workers, of different levels and grades, that are available to either directly implement MEL activities or facilitate and support its activities.
- ii. Equipment/Hardware for MEL: These are all the different hardware or equipment that are required to facilitate adequate MEL support for humanitarian interventions. These include electronic data collection devices, computers, communication devices among others.
- iii. Software for MEL: Ibrahim and Sah (2022) highlight that organizations could better standardize the monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian interventions using

appropriate software solutions. Software for MEL includes applications and solutions employed to facilitate MEL processes.

- iv. Essential MEL documents, guidelines, and processes: These are products and documents necessary for implementing MEL and include guidelines, strategy documents, plans, frameworks, and tools related to MEL.
- v. MEL Budget: The budget entails financial commitments readily available to support the different activities under MEL.

2.2.5 Localization in Humanitarian Response

The concept of localization has gained prominence and is widely discussed in the humanitarian cycle today. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) defines localization as the increased international investment and respect for the role of local actors, with the optimal goal of increasing the reach, effectiveness, and accountability of humanitarian action. The “Grand Bargain”, a platform that brought together donors, UN agencies, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, international organizations and local actors to agree on ways to make humanitarian action more effective and efficient had localization as a key part of the resolve. Enabling Priority 2 in the Grand Bargain 2.0 Framework was defined as providing greater support for the leadership, delivery and capacity of local and national responders in addressing humanitarian needs (Metcalf-Hough *et al.*, 2023). These commitments, thereafter, led to the incorporation of the localization agenda into the framework of operations of participating donors, agencies, and organizations, albeit at different levels.

The calls for localization have been prominent across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus and not only within the humanitarian cycle. The widespread crisis and conflict,

with the incidences of failed interventions, which leads to a waste of resources has led to a coalescing around the search for effective local responses to ease the suffering and destruction that comes with emergency and conflict. The World Humanitarian Summit held in May 2016 brought the concept of localization in the “Grand Bargain” agreement signed by 52 national, international humanitarian, and development organizations, which further underlined the drive to strengthen local response in humanitarian endeavors around the world (Barakat and Milton, 2020).

In the humanitarian response within Nigeria, the push for localization just as in other contexts of the world has gained prominence over the last decade. Many humanitarian organizations and agencies have developed frameworks for strengthening local actions alongside their humanitarian interventions (NGO Coordination, 2019). Although the appetite for localization has increased, its implementation in reality has presented numerous challenges including, a perceived limited capacity of local actors in some areas leading to funding agencies preferring international organizations (taking lower risks), difficulties of local entities to meet strict funding requirements, complex due diligence and reporting requirements, and limited opportunities and flexibility for innovative approaches to strengthen localization (The Youth Café, 2014). To further ensure the leveraging of indigenous knowledge and experience of local actors for an effective humanitarian response, sustainable approaches to facilitating localization have to be prioritized.

2.2.6 Strengthening Local Capacities in Humanitarian Interventions

Nightingale (2012) highlighted that a common message coming from humanitarian contexts and emergencies across Africa, Asia, South America and others, is that among other things, investment in strengthening local capacity enables the saving of lives and speeds the recovery of populations. It further added that the strengthening of local capacities enables local communities to prevent, prepare for, mitigate, and respond to humanitarian crises. With the recent surge in humanitarian crises and emergencies around the world, it is important to ensure that there is local representation in humanitarian response for effective and sustainable action.

As the humanitarian sector experiences a transformation in the approach to resource mobilization, pivoting towards empowerment of local capacities, the focus is also on ensuring that local actors are capable of delivering the required humanitarian support at similar levels to which the more experienced international organizations carry them out. This is even as limited training opportunities, lack of strategy, and limited capacity sharing have been identified as barriers limiting the building of local capacities (Alaa, 2024). Another approach to building capacities is fostering partnerships between international organizations and local actors to enable collaboration, sharing of knowledge and technical expertise (Nightingale, 2012).

In the Nigeria Localization Framework, produced by a collaboration of international and local humanitarian actors outlines Outcome 2 as “Strengthened national and local actors’ technical capacity to design, manage and deliver effective and impactful humanitarian response programs”. The areas underlined for strengthened capacity include governance and leadership, strategic planning, research, monitoring and evaluation, proposal writing among other areas (NGO Coordination, 2019).

2.2.7 Knowledge-gaps

Although the importance of promoting localization in humanitarian efforts through the building of local capacities has been established, a lack of evidence-based strategies to facilitate the strengthened capacity of local organizations to perform humanitarian core functions has also been identified as a barrier (CSRF, 2019., Alaa, 2024). This is because most organizations have employed different frameworks, with limited published research or widely shared evidence-based studies guiding approaches to build capacities within targeted core areas key in facilitating humanitarian aid.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning is a key component of humanitarian program implementation and accountability that enables effective humanitarian response with many donors and agencies including its efficacy as a requirement for partnership (Porter and Goldman, 2013). Despite its importance and wide variations in practice and application, there have been limited efforts to identify the common MEL gaps in local organizations to adequately provide tailored support, especially within Nigeria's humanitarian response. This gap necessitates the need for a deeper understanding of the common challenges in implementing effective MEL within local humanitarian responding agencies, and the best approach to strengthening the system.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Introduction

This study explores the level to which monitoring, evaluation and learning systems of National and International NGOs function, taking into account the different factors that play roles in influencing system culture or practice. The theoretical framework underpins the research on humanitarian MEL systems and provides a lens through which this study examines their structures and processes. This research engages largely with an interdisciplinary approach that draws from different core theoretical perspectives that are explored in this chapter.

2.3.2 Organizational Theory

According to Paula *et al* (2018), organizational theory refers to a management insight obtained that helps describe in detail organizational behaviors, designs or structures within systems and their activities, processes and environments. The theory is the study of structures and operations of organizations, agencies or companies that lean towards an understanding of the dynamics that facilitate success or otherwise. The history of organizational theory can be traced as far back as the 1950s when Herbert Simon promoted his different works on organizational theories. Over time, different scholars have further refined and used the theories, expanding their application in social and management studies (Oyibo, 2020). This theory studies the structure of organizations both internally and externally, looking at behaviours of internal systems and considering how external forces affect the organization. Key concepts under the organizational theory to be considered include the institutional theory, resource dependence theory and organizational learning.

Institutional theory

The institutional theory seeks to explain how social choices are shaped, mediated and channeled by the institutional environment (Pinto, 2017). In sociology and organizational studies, it is used to understand aspects of the social structure of an organization which includes the rules, norms and routines that affect it. According to Kauppi (2022), institutional theory aims to elucidate isomorphism in organizational practices and norms, exploring the causes of such similarity. A key principle in institutional theory is the increase of organizational legitimacy as a result of isomorphism; this is a result of the conformation of the organization to widely accepted practices. Overall, institutional theory is used to explain the adoption of quality practices across a defined area that shapes its acceptance. It further helps to understand the different factors that affect the dissemination and use of data.

Resource dependence theory

Resource dependence theory explores how organizations depend on external resources to facilitate their actions, ranging from behaviours to decision-making processes. The theory further covers the power dynamics associated with access to resources between organizations and how it shapes status and practice. The theory was devised by Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) to explain how organizational behaviour is affected by external resources they possess. The application of resource dependence theory is valuable for organizations that largely depend on external resources to facilitate its actions. This affects several actions such as organizational structure, employees at all levels, contract structure, strategies, organizational links, and other components of the organization.

Organizational learning

Organizational learning encompasses an improvement in organization practices through a better understanding of its environment. Carol (2011) proposed two distinctive schools of thought as the focus of organizational learning, these are;

- i. the cognitive school, that highlights the “thinking” element of organizational learning;
and
- ii. the behavioral school, which focuses on its “doing” dimension.

These two present a thinking-based and action-oriented model of organizational learning. The cognitive puts forth that learning occurs through our mental models and structures that facilitate understanding of situations and events to foster improved practices. The behavioural school reasons that learning occurs by gaining insight from experience through observation, analysis, experimentation and examination of outcomes.

Organizational learning enables organizations to transform knowledge gained by individual persons into organizational knowledge. The level to which an organization can improve its practices through learning depends on how systematic the learning process have been made. Learning within organizations occurs regardless of whether it is systematic or not. However, this does not imply that the learning will lead to higher effectiveness in practices (Basten and Haamann, 2018).

2.3.3 Systems Theory

Systems theory is a multidisciplinary exploration of the systems that make up an organization. It takes into consideration both the interrelated and interdependent components that play different roles within a system. Adams *et al.*, (2013) highlight the broad nature of systems theory as its cuts across General Systems theory, Living Systems Theory, Mathematical

Systems Theory, Cybernetics, Social Systems Theory and Philosophical Systems Theory. Hence, tracing the historical perspective and evolution of the theory will be separated in tandem with these different components. Concerning the perspective of humanitarian organizations and their systems, core theoretical perspectives under systems theory include complex adaptive systems, interdependence and feedback loops and boundary-spanning activities.

Complex adaptive systems

The theory of complex adaptive systems highlights a framework that is used to describe systems that encompass phenomena across many diverse environments and a range of disciplines. This framework explores the many parts of a system within organizations and how they dynamically interact with each other. Holland (1992) highlights that complex adaptive systems have no single governing rule or equation that controls the system; instead there are many distributed, interacting parts governed by their own rules. These different parts operate and interact in different ways, with the various interactions affecting the overall operation of the organization.

Interdependence and feedback loops

Interdependence and feedback loops just like complex adaptive systems focus on the interactions between systems, however, in interdependence and feedback loops the focus is on describing the connections between elements of the system and how information is circulated to improve practices. It seeks to understand the framework of systematic processes by which circular patterns of cause and effect occur within a system. Theories have proposed that interdependence and subsequent interaction among individuals and groups are the bases for organizations (Tjosvold, 1986).

Boundary spanning activities

Boundary-spanning activities explore organizational commitments that connect it to its environment. An organization possesses an interdependent relationship with its environment and is hence dependent on its environment not only for resources but also to distribute products and services. Boundary-spanning activities encompass those skills that facilitate building relationships that transcend institutional boundaries (Ariwibowo *et al.*, 2024). Boundary-spanning activities hence include capacity building and training, coordination, meeting and setting up inter-functional groups.

2.3.4 Rationale for Chosen Theories

This study explores the operation of Indigenous humanitarian organizations, their institutional framework for MEL and how they interact and are affected by both internal and external systems including international organizations and donors. The combination of organizational and systems theories provides a comprehensive framework to explore the monitoring, evaluation and learning systems of humanitarian organizations. The organizational theory provides insight into the internal functionality of both national and international humanitarian organizations operational in Nigeria and provides insight into their governance structures, decision-making processes and operational strategies. Resources are key to the functioning of humanitarian organizations hence the use of resource dependence theory to explore how access to donor funds impacts MEL systems. The concept of organizational learning explores how humanitarian organizations adapt their MEL processes and systems in reaction to occurrences both within and without. Overall, organizational theory provides an approach to understanding the culture, resource-allocation, leadership and governance of humanitarian organizations and how they affect their MEL systems.

Systems theory provides a structured approach to examine the operationality of humanitarian organizations comprehensively, to have a better understanding of the interconnected components of a larger ecosystem of humanitarian actors and the role that each plays in shaping the MEL systems deployed. Through the engagement of complex adaptive systems, boundary-spanning activities, and interdependence and feedback loops, a better understanding of how MEL systems are affected by the complex humanitarian environment and the different interactions that occur within the ecosystem.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction to Chapter

This chapter presents the methodology by which this study was carried out. It presents an overview of the context of the study, approaches and tools that were used to meet objectives.

3.2 Study area

This study area is the northeastern region of Nigeria and covers humanitarian organizations active in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe (BAY) states of the country that have been hit worse by the protracted conflict and hence recorded the most humanitarian interventions. The aftermath of conflict and crisis in Nigeria led to massive displacements and the need for humanitarian interventions became underlined. Since 2016, humanitarian organizations have been working to support the Government of Nigeria in the response to diverse needs of the affected population. In the year 2021 alone, about 5 million people received humanitarian assistance in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states (UNOCHA, 2024). North-east Nigeria remains one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, with 8.3 million people estimated to need assistance in 2023.

The most serious conflict stemming from the insurgency of non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in north-east Nigeria continues and has spread to other areas of the country affecting more people. As the conflict progresses past its 13th year, the attacks and insecurity have displaced millions of people, devastated agricultural production and other livelihoods, cut off essential services, and caused a crisis of protection. Over 7 million people in the north-east states of Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states (BAY states) will need humanitarian aid in 2024. This is in addition to others in dire need of support around the country (UNOCHA, 2024).

In this regard, International and National NGOs and UN bodies have joined forces with the government of Nigeria to ensure relief is brought to those in need. The Nigeria Humanitarian Fund (NHF), launched in February 2017, is a rapid and flexible funding mechanism supporting Nigerian NGOs, international NGOs, and UN agencies, to respond to the most pressing or critical emergencies in a fast-changing environment. It is a pooled fund managed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and has received contributions from Belgium, Canada, Germany, Ireland, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Norway, Qatar, Sweden and Switzerland for urgent actions in 2020 (UNOCHA 2020b).

Humanitarian organizations working in north-east Nigeria are aiming to provide life-saving aid to over 7.8 million people. This assistance provided spans sectors such as nutrition, food, shelter, health, education, protection, water and sanitation sectors. Support also includes early recovery and livelihood interventions, while special attention is given to addressing the long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in north-east Nigeria.

From the period in which the Federal Government of Nigeria declared a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states in May 2013, people affected by the crisis have received relief aid provided by different donors and organizations in the form of humanitarian assistance through United Nation (UN) agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) both National and International as well as multinational companies and individual philanthropists. The number of food-insecure people has remained high further escalated by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and has shown no signs of abating due to elevated inflation, events climate and environment hazards, and access limitations for humanitarian actors attempting to reach affected populations in hard-to-reach areas. In the 2022 lean season, 4.1 million people were estimated to face severe food insecurity in addition to other key needs, these figures all

necessitate the need for an adequate response, which now is provided by different international and national actors (Food Security Cluster, 2022).

3.3 Study Design

This research employed a cross-sectional research design to meet its objectives. The approach entailed the collection and analysis of data from a sample in a defined target group or population. Surveys, Interviews, and desk reviews were used to obtain information from identified key personnel across international and national humanitarian organizations responding to the humanitarian crisis in Nigeria. The target respondents for this study are experienced MEL personnel within National and International organizations. This study hence categorizes the respondents into two groups:

National Organizations – NNGO group

International Organizations – INGO group

The study entailed defining an ideal standard for MEL systems in humanitarian contexts through a systematic process of desk reviews and obtaining information from subject experts through surveys and interviews. A standard for operational MEL systems in humanitarian response was defined using data collected from the international organizations included, alongside information obtained from documented global MEL best practices to gauge performances and provide recommendations. The organizations included in this study were identified using a defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Before being included in the research, the MEL technical lead and representatives of the various organizations were approached and debriefed on the tenets of the study and permission obtained to participate, with emphasis laid on confidentiality and anonymity in participation. A semi-structured custom tool

was used to collect data to answer research questions. The tool will explore indicators around organization monitoring, evaluation and learning systems. To triangulate findings from the data collected, Interviews will be conducted with other humanitarian MEL professionals. The study inclusion flow diagram is illustrated in Figure 5 below.

3.4 Inclusion Criteria

The national organizations (NNGO group) through their MEL representative to be included in the study will meet the following criteria.

- I. Be a Nigerian-founded and led humanitarian organization duly registered with the regulating bodies.
- II. Be currently operational in one of the core north-eastern Nigeria states affected by the humanitarian crisis (BAY states).
- III. Have been implementing humanitarian projects in the region from 2020 or earlier.
- IV. Currently have a donor-funded humanitarian project being implemented in the region.

National organizations that do not meet these criteria or have affiliations with international arms will be excluded from this study.

The international organizations (INGO group) to be included will meet the following inclusion criteria,

- I. Be an international organization operational in multiple countries, with at least 20 years of experience implementing humanitarian projects.
- II. Be currently operational in one of the core north-eastern Nigeria states affected by the humanitarian crisis (BAY states).
- III. Have been implementing humanitarian projects in the region from 2020 or earlier.
- IV. Currently have a donor-funded humanitarian project being implemented in the region.

International organizations that do not meet these criteria will be excluded from the study.

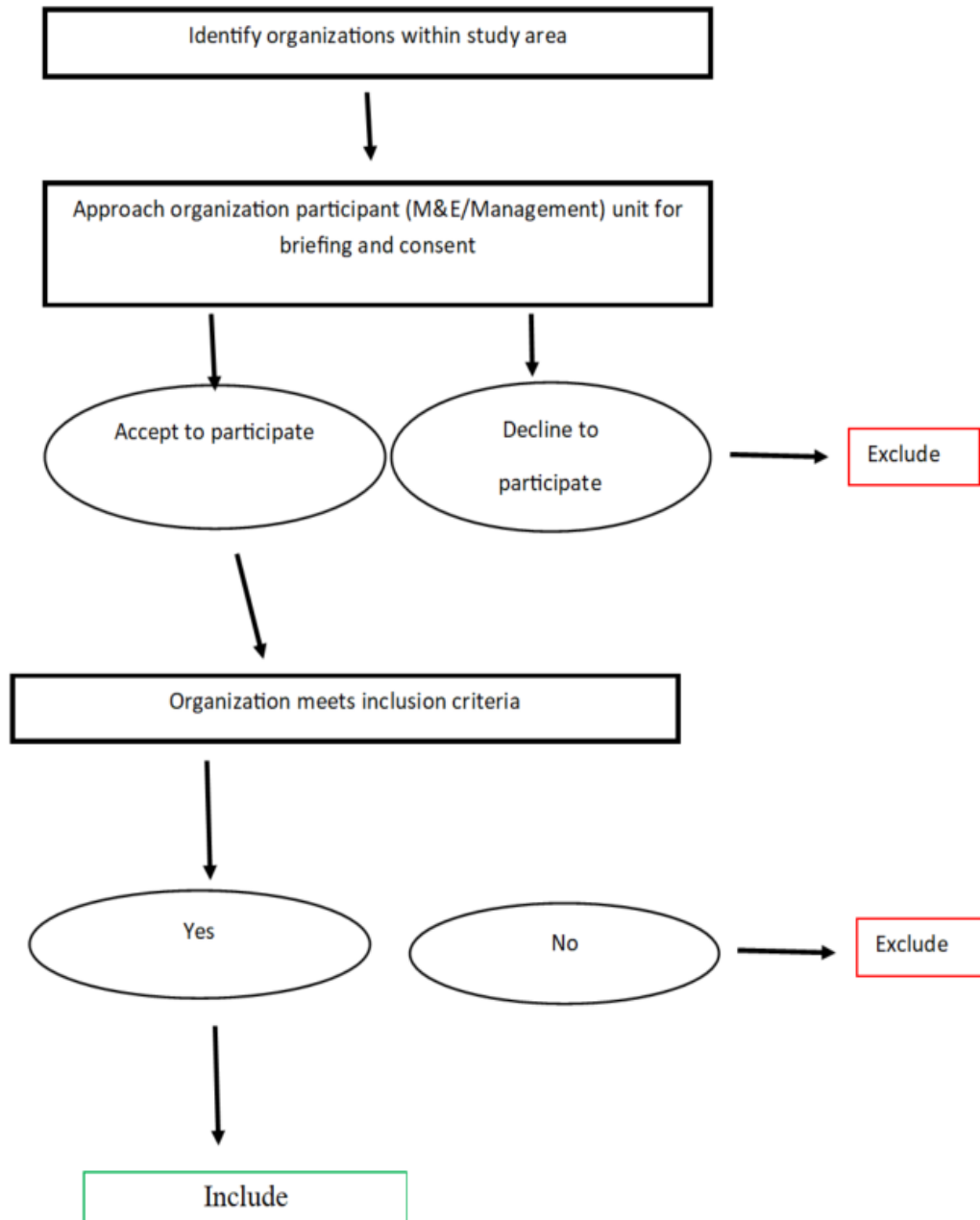


Figure 5: Study inclusion method flow diagram

Sampling and Sample Size

Due to the defined nature of the target organizations identified for this study, the sampling approach was tailored to meet the research objectives. A purposive and snowball sampling approach was used to identify international and national organizations that were approached to be included in the study. It entailed identifying humanitarian organizations operational within the study area that meet the inclusion criteria and asking for similar organizations operational in the area. The final sample size constituted respondents from organizations that met the study inclusion criteria and also accepted to participate in the research.

Data collection and management

Data for this study was collected electronically and through direct interviews for follow-up. A link with a structured anonymous questionnaire coded on Google Forms was shared with the organization's humanitarian MEL focal person identified to participate in the study to capture the properties of the organization's MEL system. Key informant interviews were further conducted with MEL professionals in the humanitarian sector.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR – RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction to Chapter

This chapter presents the data and analysis of this study. It reflects on the responses across included participants from international and national organizations operational in Nigeria. It highlights results obtained from the analysis across respondents reached.

4.2 Inclusion and Profiles

Respondents across 20 organizations operational within northeast Nigeria were approached for consent to participate in the study, out of those, 12 were NNGOs while 8 were INGOs. Following consent and an initial debriefing with prospective respondents, the organization profiles were screened in line with the study inclusion criteria. Following the screening, 5 national organizations did not meet the study inclusion criteria and were hence excluded from the study. A final 15 organizations were hence included in the study to obtain responses, seven (7) were from national organizations and eight (8) from international organizations (Figure 6). Although the five (5) national organizations that didn't meet the inclusion criteria were excluded from the study, the MEL professionals still served as key informants to provide insight across areas of the study.

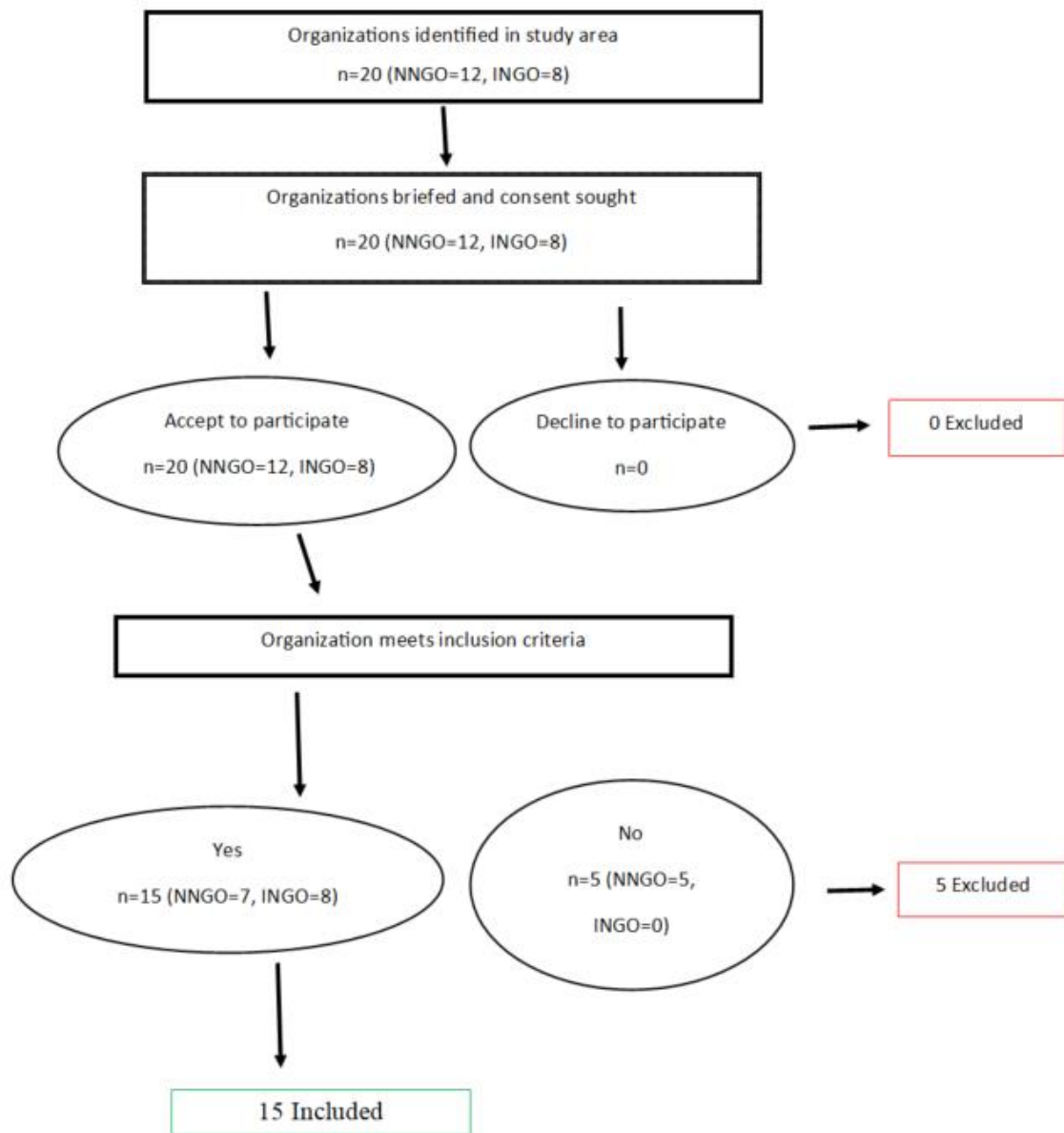


Figure 6: Response inclusion flow chart

The profile of respondents representing the included organizations showed a fair spread as there were representatives at Director, Manager/Coordinator and technical specialist level across respondents of both the international and national organizations.

Table 2: Respondent profiles

Respondent profile	INGO	NNGO	Total
Director/Program Lead/Country Lead	13% (1)	43% (3)	27% (4)
MEL Manager/Coordinator	13% (1)	43% (3)	27% (4)
MEL Technical Specialist/Lead	75% (6)	14% (1)	47% (7)

4.3 MEL Human Resources

With regards to the number of dedicated MEL staff available within the organization to support the implementation of MEL activities, the results indicate that across the INGOs there is an average of 10 dedicated MEL staff while NNGOs report an average of 3 staff. Furthermore, 100% (8) of the INGO group indicate that all the projects being implemented have at least one dedicated MEL personnel supporting the project while that for NNGOs 57% (4) had dedicated MEL staff for projects while 43% (3) did not.

Organograms showing HR setup and reporting connections within organizations help to clarify roles and responsibilities, including working relationships and communication channels which is key for effective MEL implementation. On having an organogram 100% (8) INGO group reported having organograms while 71% (5) in the NNGO group reported having organograms with 29% (2) not having one.

Table 3: Table showing the availability of a functional organogram across groups

Have an organogram defining MEL reporting lines?	INGO	NNGO	Total
No	0% (0)	29% (2)	13% (2)
Yes	100% (8)	71% (5)	87% (13)

High-level technical MEL Advisor usually seated at national, regional and/or global levels with multi-context experience implementing MEL are vital in providing technical guidance to MEL staff supporting different projects. The INGO group had 63% (5) who reported having a technical MEL Advisor while only 14% (1) in the NNGO group had such support. Also, while all respondents in the INGO group indicated having regional or global MEL support, NNGOs indicated no such support.

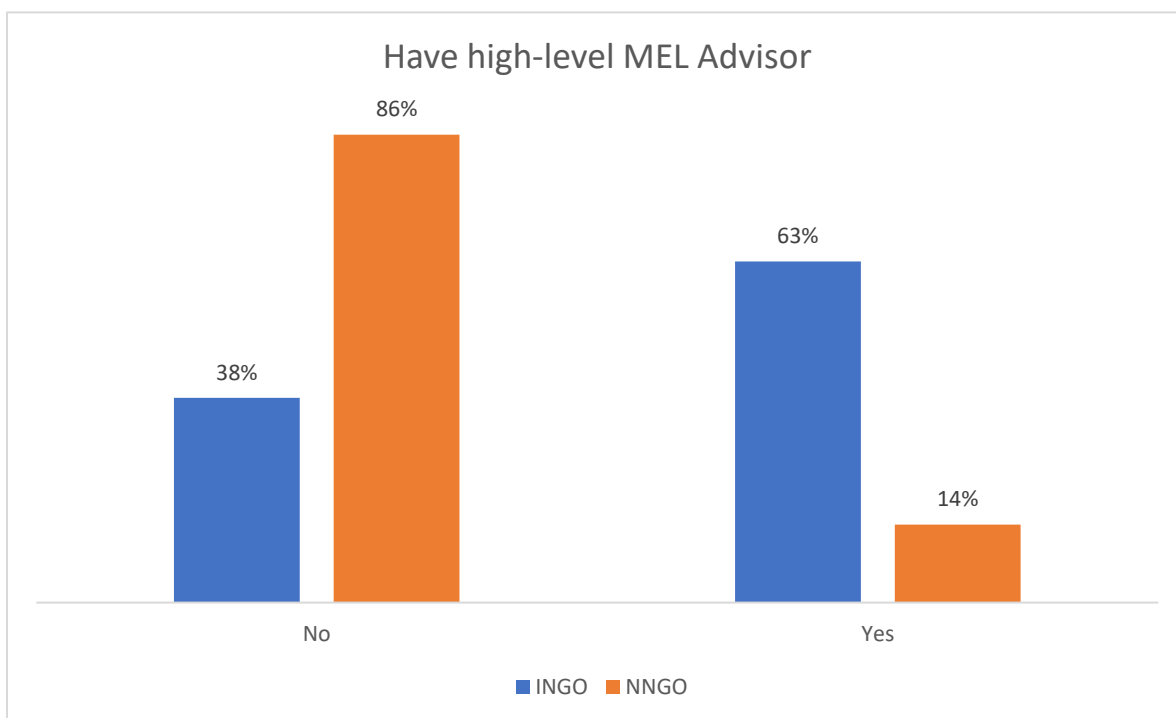


Figure 7: Chart showing the availability of high-level MEL Advisor across groups.

When asked about MEL training opportunities or capacity buildings facilitated by the organization, the results showed similarities across both groups as 63% (5) INGO indicated

there were and 38% (3) maintained there were no such opportunities, while for NNGO 57% (4) indicated there was and 43% (3) said there was none.

The values across both groups were similar as across both they reported minimal MEL focused training and the reason given was due to the nature of emergency projects in the humanitarian sector and the quick turnaround of yearly project which give little or no opportunities for specialized training and capacity building. The organizations that facilitated those training indicated they were intentional in doing so and planned for it.

Out of those who said they had training capacity buildings focused on MEL across both groups, the figure below shows the different time-frames in which those trainings were held.

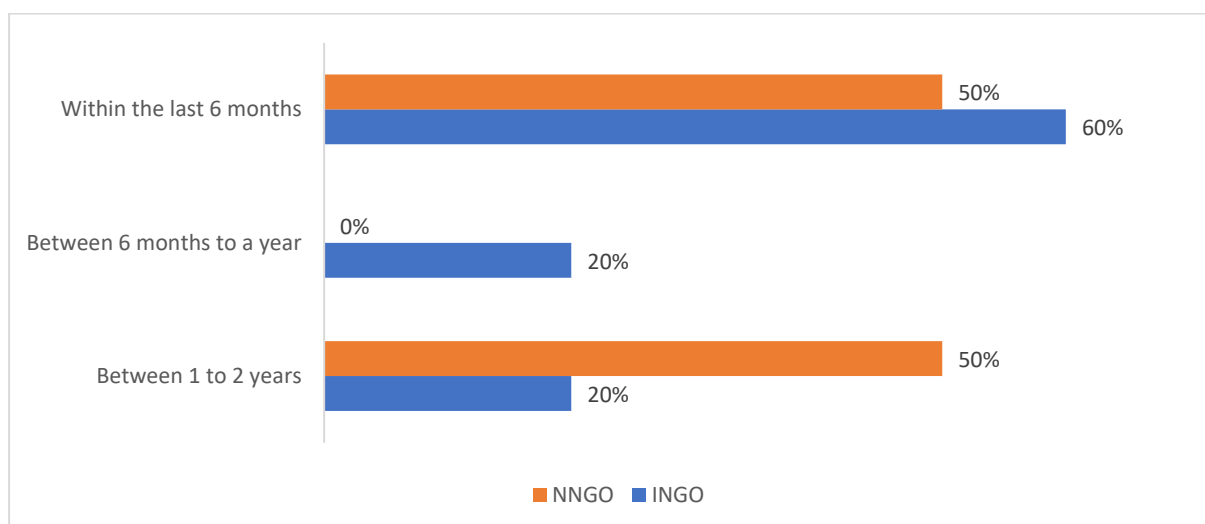


Figure 8: Chart showing the date of last MEL-focused training

Staff attrition could pose a big threat to humanitarian organizations implementing projects across affected areas. When asked about staff attrition across their organizations where experienced MEL staff leave, the response was even in the INGO group with 50% (4) indicating there is such a pattern and the same 50% (4) saying there was none. However, in the NNGO group there was a higher number (71%, n=5) that highlights there is a trend of experienced

MEL staff leaving. Out of the number of those that reported occurrence in the NNGO group, 33% indicate it was very frequent while for those in the INGO group 75% say it rarely occurred.

The main reasons provided by the departing MEL staff when asked are summarized in the chart below. It can be seen that the most reasons provided across was departure for better remuneration, higher MEL roles and broader MEL experience.

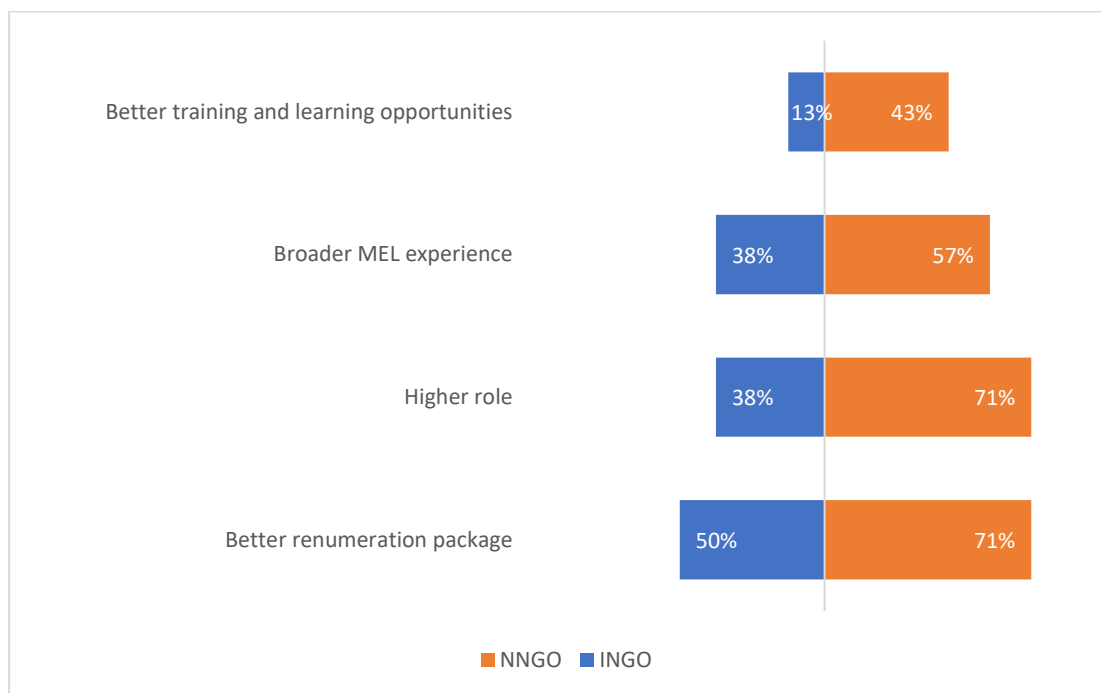


Figure 9: Chart showing major reasons for MEL staff attrition across both groups

Across both groups, there was also a unanimous indication that MEL staff attrition affects humanitarian implementation. The major areas highlighted by which it affects implementation include limited staff support, reduced program quality, inadequate reporting and limited evidence for decision-making. The indication across both groups is also that it is quite difficult to replace an experienced MEL staff in time and within the running project cycle. This was especially highlighted by respondents in the NNGO group as their smaller scale operations and lower remuneration packages limit their ability to replace the departing MEL staff with skilled or experienced personnel. In the words of one of the respondents

“Replacing the MEL staff (departing) is always difficult and most of the applicants have no experience” – NNGO Respondent

4.4 MEL Equipment/Hardware

Implementing MEL activities requires appropriate hardware. The basic ones being laptops, tablets/smartphones, digital cameras and mobile phones/subscriptions for communication. Across both groups, there was a 100% availability of laptops to MEL personnel. However, for the other identified MEL equipment/hardware, MEL personnel in the INGO group had more access. This is as highlighted in figure 10 below.

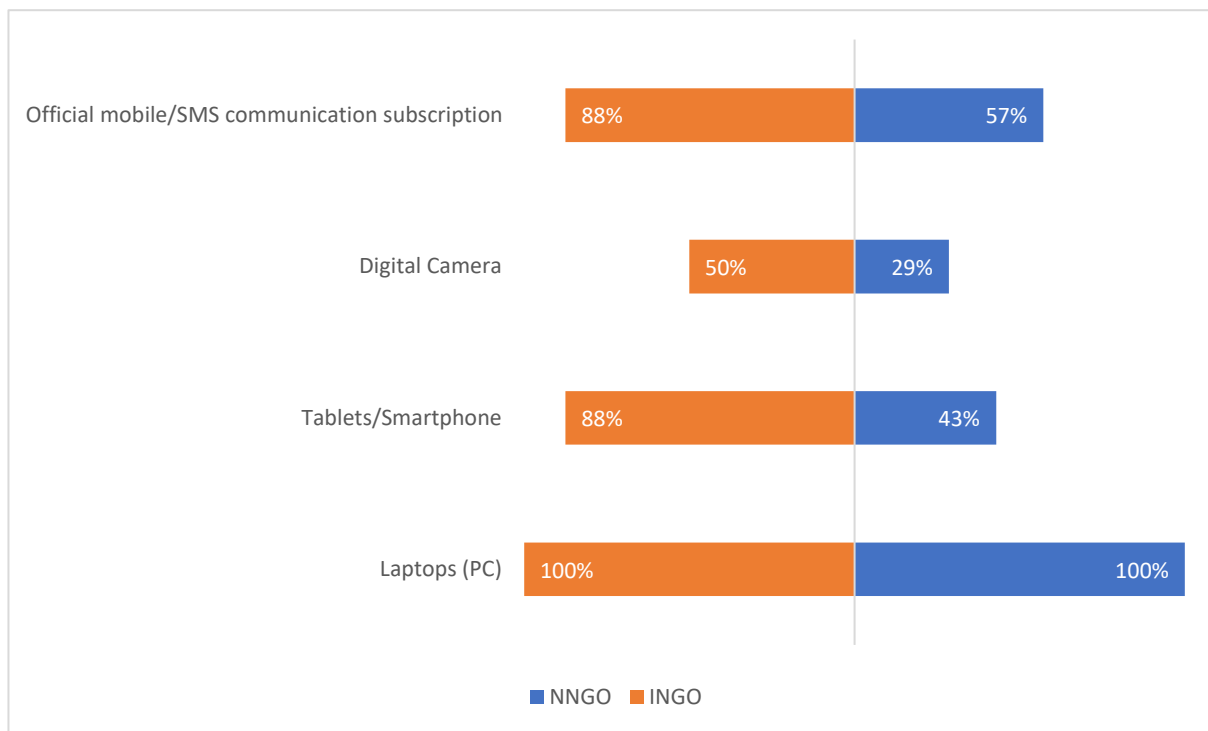


Figure 10: Chart showing the availability of MEL hardware across both groups

When asked about the condition of the MEL hardware available, 88% (7) in the INGO group highlighted they were in good condition and 13% (1) said the condition was okay. While in the NNGO group, 43% (3) said hardware was in good condition, another 43% (3) said their

condition was okay, while 14% (1) said the condition was poor. Overall, more respondents within the NNGO group expressed that although they had some of the hardware required for MEL, they were obtained a while back and are no longer in top condition. Quoting a key informant;

“A lot of the laptops were received as donations from partners when they were upgrading theirs, which meant at the time they were already outdated, but for us it is what we have to use”

Overall, 88% (7) of the INGO group feel that the hardware available in the organization is sufficient and adequate to support MEL activities. For the NNGO group, 57% (4) feel that they have sufficient MEL equipment/hardware that is adequate while 43% (3) do not.

When probed on major reasons for the inadequacy of MEL hardware, limited access to funding was the most documented by respondents in the NNGO group.

4.5 Software for MEL

Ensuring the availability of appropriate software for MEL is key to making the best use of the hardware acquired for MEL activities. The absence of MEL software limits the extent of analysis and data management that can be done. Hence facilitating access to relevant software for MEL is as important as acquiring the hardware. The vital MEL software includes those for quantitative analysis, word processing, presentations, data visualization, and qualitative data analysis. It is important to note that some of the most crucial software used for various MEL activities are not unique to the function alone, they are also cross-cutting and are also used for other programmatic or support functions, hence they being essential to organizational functionality.

Across both groups, there was fair access to the basic software for MEL, although at varying levels. In the INGO group, there was 100% (8) access to both Microsoft Office 365 and a paid BI software, 38% (3) reported the MEL unit had access to a GIS software, while 25% (2) each also indicated there is active usage of SPSS/STATA/R and a qualitative analysis software.

For the NNGO group, there was 86% (6) with access to Microsoft Office 365, 43% (3) with access to paid Bi software and 14% (1) reporting the use of SPSS/STATA/R. For GIS software and Qualitative Analysis software, there was a 0% (0) access within the group.

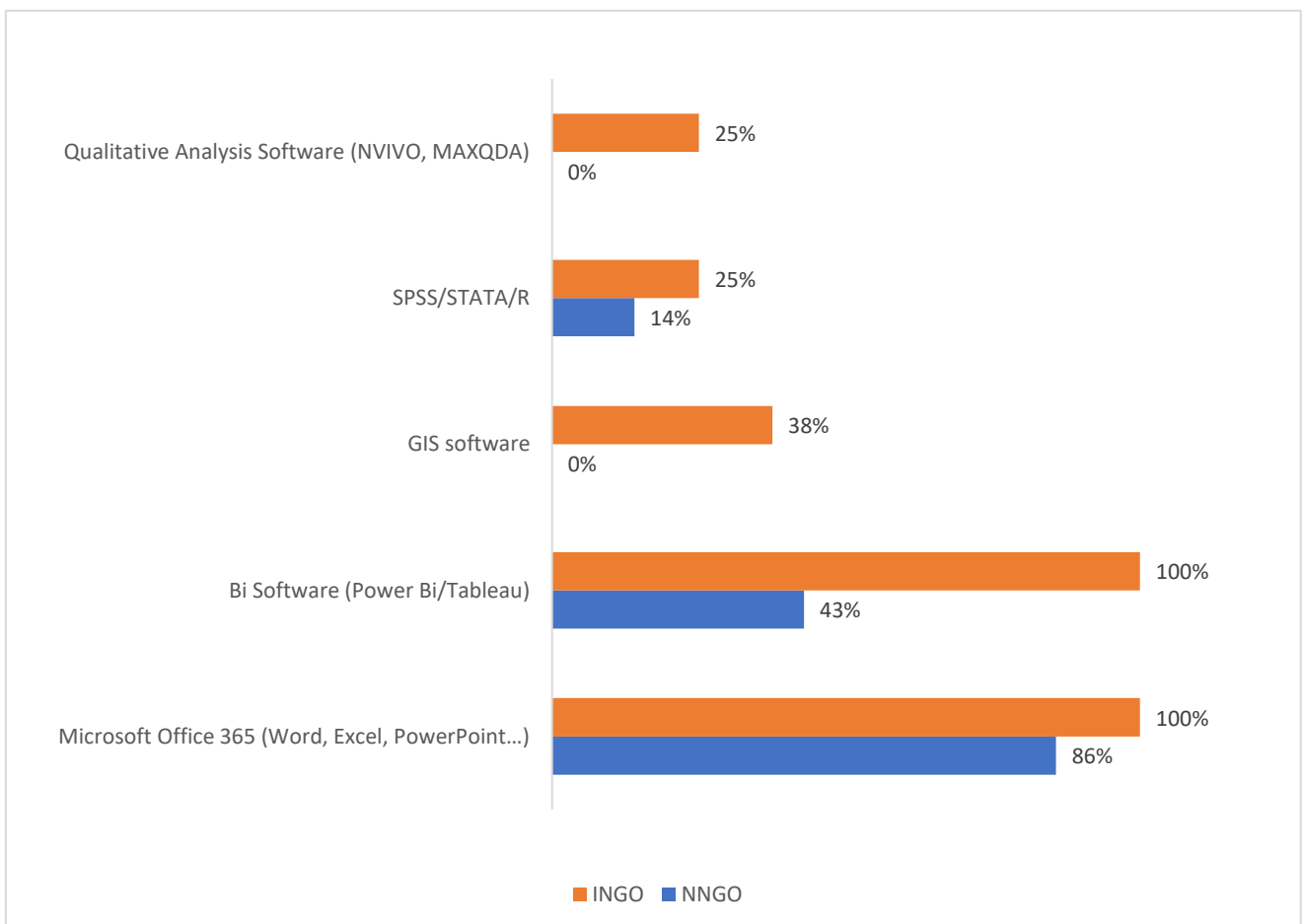


Figure 11: Chart showing the availability of MEL Software across both groups

Across both groups there were varying levels of perception of adequacy of the MEL software available for use. In the INGO group, 75% (6) feel that the software available is adequate to facilitate MEL support while 25% (2) feel there are still needs to address. In the NNGO group,

57% (4) believe the MEL software is adequate while 43% (3) indicate there are still software needs to enable MEL activities.

When speaking with respondents across both groups on the rationale and reasons behind the responses provided on the availability and adequacy of MEL software, the INGO group mostly referred to the absence of more specialized analytical tools for in-depth analysis such as STATA, NVIVO and GIS software as the reason for feeling the software is inadequate. They also mentioned that some of the software were available previously for use when there was MEL staff with capacity within the team to use this software or at initial stages where it was pushed for, however, the licenses were not renewed after a prolonged inability to utilize it due to staff turnover or demonstrate the added value of the software in MEL.

For the NNGO group, inability to acquire licenses due to limited funding was the major factor identified. From both key informants and respondents, there was a unanimous view that irregular access to funds limits the ability to keep up with the requirements of yearly license subscriptions. It was summarized by a respondent below;

“..... We cannot afford the yearly subscriptions for licenses, in fact some of the ones we use currently are unlicensed” – NNGO Respondent

4.6 Essential MEL Documentation

Essential MEL documentation is a set of documents that exist within a humanitarian organization to either facilitate or guide MEL implementation. These are important to ensure that the organization is both adequately prepared to carry out MEL effectively and does so using established frameworks.

A key document that outlines the organization's MEL strategy, systems and operational procedure is an organization's MEL Policy, Framework, SOP or Guidelines. An organization may possess one or multiple of these documents to complement each other. However, they all play the role of ensuring MEL within the organization is properly structured and fits well with the overall strategy, hence enhancing its functionality. Results from data collected show that among the INGO group, all (100%, n=8) indicated that there is an operational MEL policy/SOP/Guideline/Framework that guides MEL within the organization. In the NNGO group, 43% (3) indicate that they have an operational MEL policy/SOP/Guideline/Framework and 57% (4) highlight that such document is not available or operational to guide MEL activities.

Table 4: Table showing response on availability of MEL Guidance document

Does the organization have a guidance document/policy/SoP/Guideline/Framework for MEL?	INGO {% (n)}	NNGO {% (n)}
No	0% (0)	57% (4)
Yes	100% (8)	43% (3)

The results from this study show that both groups all indicate (100%) that MEL staff contribute to project proposal development, however, when followed up to know the level of contribution, some differences were observed.

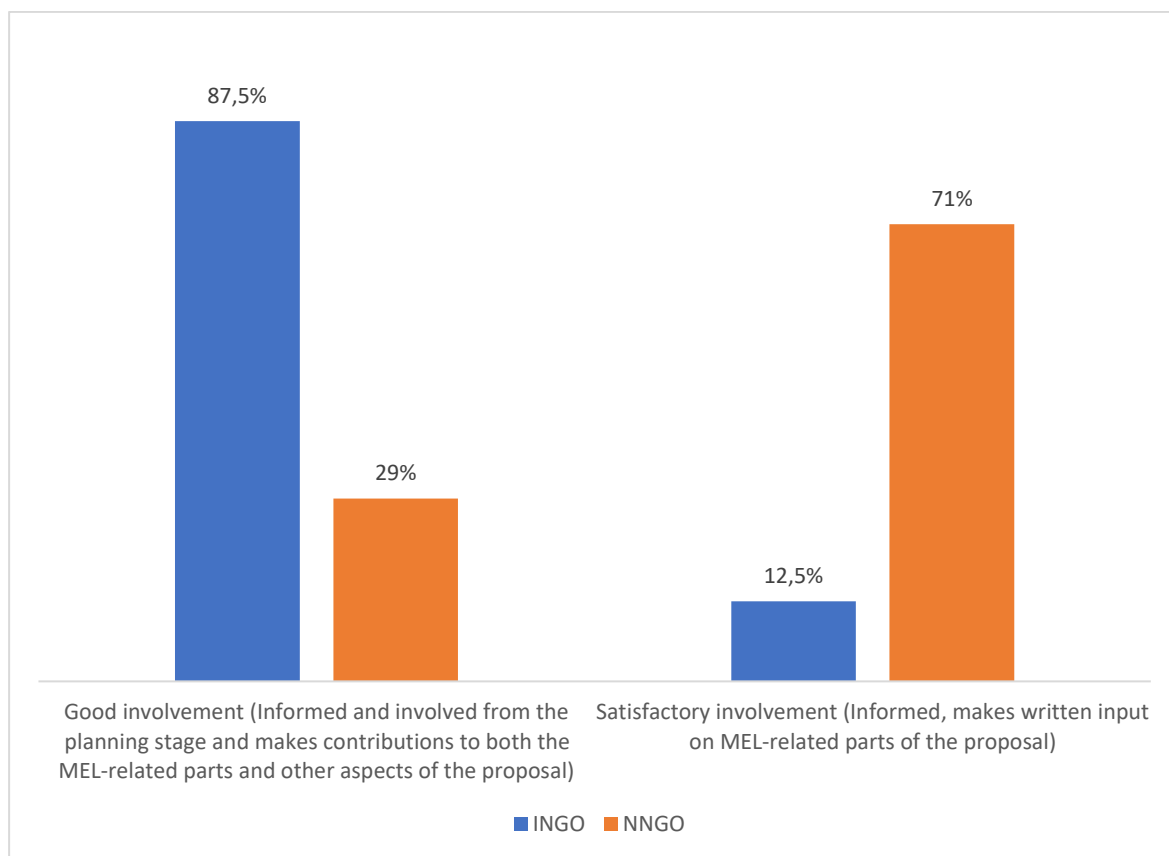


Figure 12: Chart showing the level of involvement of MEL in project proposal and development by group.

About 88% (7) of the INGO group reported that MEL staff had good involvement in project development and proposal writing, where they made contributions to both the MEL-related areas of the proposal in addition to other key sections. While in the NNGO group, the majority (71%, n=5) indicated that MEL played a satisfactory role in proposal development, which implied making input only in MEL-related sections of the proposal.

4.7 MEL Budget

MEL budget entails financial resources that have been earmarked specifically for MEL activities. Financing remains an essential facilitator of MEL activities and functionality within an organization. It is the basis by which MEL staff, hardware and software can be obtained. Findings from this study reveal that among the INGO group, 50% (4) indicate that the organization has a dedicated MEL budget set aside by the organization programme/projects for implementation of activities, 25% (2) say sometimes a budget is set aside and another 25% (2) said there is no budget earmarked for MEL. While in the NNGO group, 57% (4) indicated that there was no earmarked budget for MEL, while 43% (3) indicated that sometimes MEL budgets are earmarked for its activities.

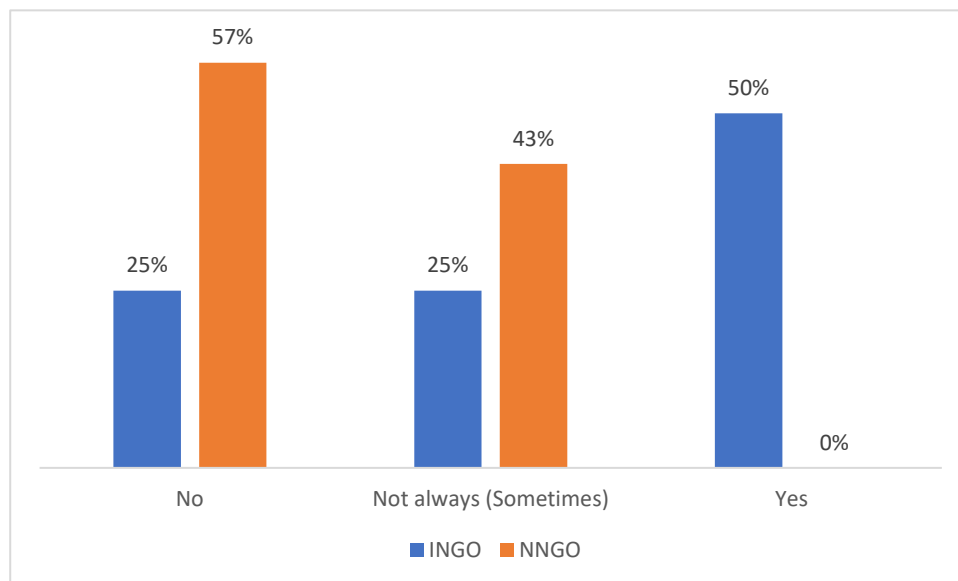


Figure 13: Chart showing the contribution of MEL in the development of project budgeting by group

When asked if the MEL unit is involved or represented in developing the programme or project budgets within the organization, 100% (8) of the INGO indicated that MEAL was involved or represented.

In the NNGO group, only 29% (2) indicated that MEL was involved or represented in the budgeting process. The major proportion, 71% (5) specify that MEL staff is not involved in preparing budgets.

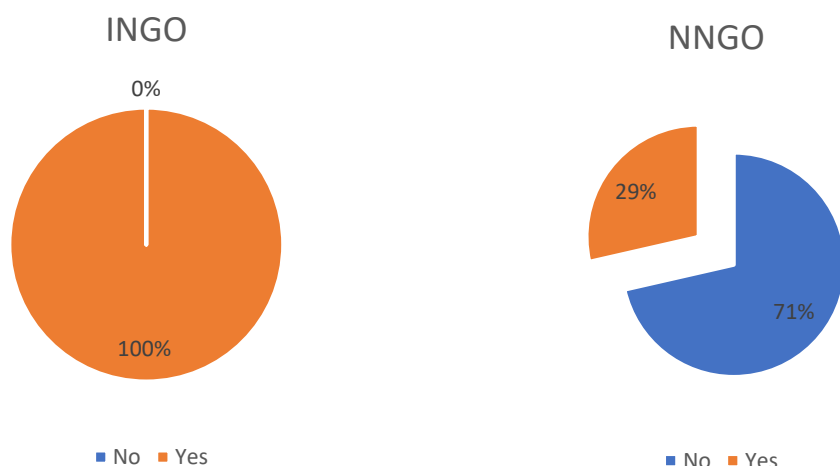


Figure 14: Chart showing the representation of MEL Staff in budgeting process across groups.

The results highlight a similarity in the perception of the adequacy of MEL budget within the organization across both groups, although with different perspectives. In the INGO group, 75% (6) believe that the MEL budget is not adequate to support core MEL activities, while 25% (2) feel it is adequate. Similarly, in the NNGO group, 86% (6) indicate the MEL budget is inadequate while 14% (1) believe it is adequate. The reasons given for the response in the INGO group included inadequacy of the budget to cover requests for new licenses, MEL hardware and more staff cover. While in the NNGO group the reason for the lack of enough funds to cover both the project and the MEL basic requirements and staff. The following are quotes from participants.

“Although best practices states that 5-10% of a project budget should be set aside for MEL activities, it is not usually so. Most times we are told there are no funds for new licenses or

additional tablets for data collection. This limits our ability to carry out efficient monitoring and evaluation of activities” – INGO Respondent

“We have difficulty securing funds for projects, most of the money we received are sub-granted from INGOs. When we receive funds, they are non-earmarked for M&E, they are to implement activities” – NNGO Respondent

4.8 Challenges of effective MEL Implementation

Effective MEL delivery in humanitarian organizations often face various challenges, this study explored the challenges faced by MEL through the lens of international and local humanitarian organizations operational in the Northeastern region of Nigeria, the results is as depicted in the chart below;

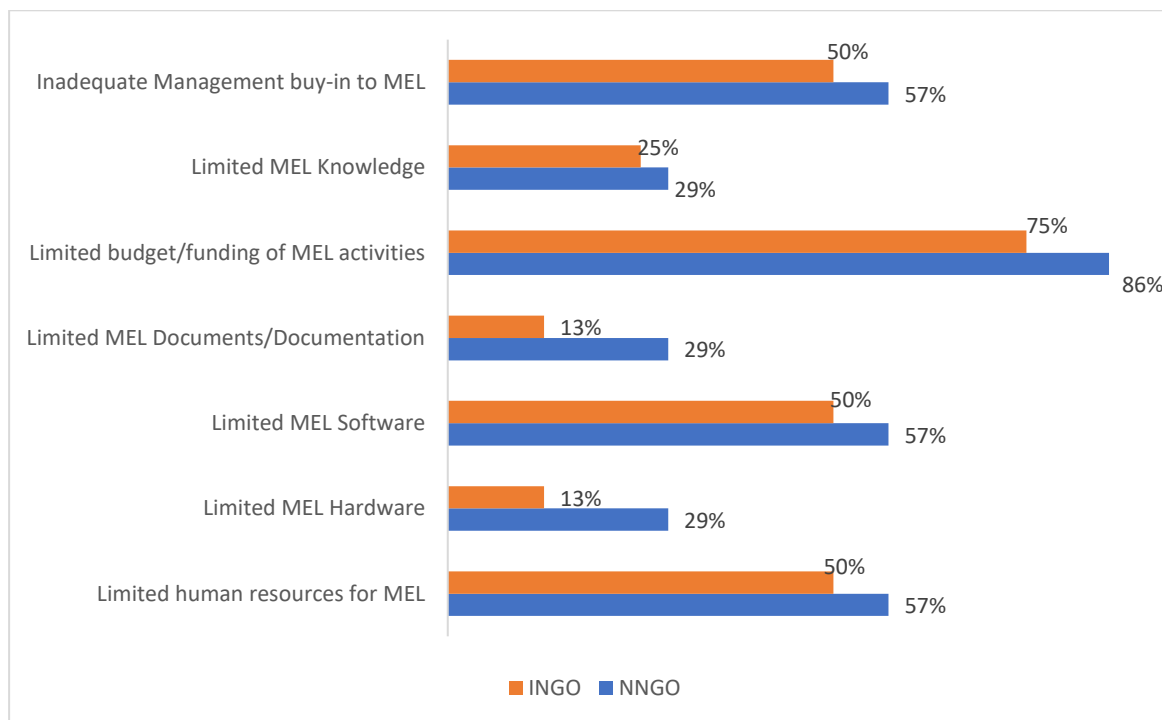


Figure 15: Chart showing the representation of MEL Staff in budgeting process across groups.

Overall, the perceptions on the major challenges affecting MEL implementation across humanitarian organizations were similar across both groups. The major issue identified was limited budget/funding of MEL activities (86% mention for NNGO and 75% for INGO). This was followed by inadequate management buy-in to MEL, limited human resources for MEL and Limited MEL Software (all had 57% mention for NNGO and 50% by INGO group).

4.9 Approaches to strengthen MEL Systems of National Organizations

The study further explored the perspectives of MEL professionals across both international and national organizations on the best approaches to strengthen the MEL systems of indigenous organizations.

The provision of capacity building, training and mentorship by donor organizations and international organizations was the most mentioned approach to strengthening national organization MEL systems. The following are some quotes across both groups;

“To strengthen the local organizations, there is a need to facilitate capacity building through training for MEL staff, mentorship and peer-learning programs” – INGO Respondent

“Donors should include partnership and capacity building of national NGO MEL systems as a requirement for seeking funds” – INGO Respondent

““There should be a focus on building MEL staff capacity through regular MEL training for not just MEL staff but other program staff also” – NNGO Respondent

Another key area emphasized across both groups to ensure adequate MEL systems for national organizations is effective funding and resources for MEL. Various respondents highlighted the

need for adequate allocation of MEL funding as an approach to strengthen MEL systems of indigenous based organizations, some quotes are as follows;

“The first step of improving the system is to make sure their MEL units are adequately funded and staffed.....” – INGO Respondent

“National organizations should be provided opportunities by donors and international bodies to access funds that are not strictly attributed to project implementation only, but allow for use to strengthen other program support functions” – NNGO Respondent

In addition to increased capacity building and funding for stronger MEL systems, other areas identified by respondents include the development of standardized processes for MEL implementation, ensuring management support and buy-in for MEL development, leveraging robust data management processes, incorporating feedback from beneficiaries and learning mechanisms in place and ensuring that national organizations have skilled and experienced MEL personnel.

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction to Chapter

This chapter examines and interprets the result of the study in relation to the defined objectives and research questions to be explored. The chapter explores how the results from this study align with or deviate from existing literature on the subject matter. Additionally, this chapter will assess the limitations and strengths of this study, addressing possible methodological shortfalls and considerations made to counter them.

5.2 Standards for Effective MEL Systems

Although there are no established and universally accepted standards set for MEL systems to be effective, the efficacy of a MEL system is determined by its ability to effectively support humanitarian response in line with organizational demands, learning and accountability to affected populations. It has also been established that in order for MEL systems to be effective, there must be the required components for a MEL system to be put in place and functional (Otundo, 2019). This study explored the areas of MEL human resources, MEL equipment/hardware, Software for MEL, essential MEL documentation and MEL budget, which are the main components required to ensure an organization can effectively implement MEL activities. Exploring these components of MEL systems across both national and international organizations highlights areas within them that ensure MEL systems are not just functional but effective in delivering on their objectives.

Human resources for MEL, for instance, comprises MEL staff available to support the implementation of MEL activities, which may be a few persons covering multiple projects in an organization. However, effective MEL systems should be able to allocate appropriate MEL

support for each project in addition to having a high-level experienced MEL Advisor or technical lead to support with MEL delivery, overall oversight, framework development and capacity building. This further establishes a standard for effective delivery and a strengthened human resource for MEL implementation that is proportionate to the organization's scope.

This study also established as a standard the availability of MEL guidance document or SoP within an organization which outlines the framework for which MEL is to be applied in its operations. Findings highlighted it is a common factor available across international organizations but is absent in a good proportion of national organizations. The culture of participation of MEL in the program design and budgeting shows that standards are not only tied to acquiring resources but also to practice and management buy-in. This study also highlights this area as a standard for effective MEL practices in an organization.

Another MEL standard is having the required hardware and software to support MEL activities. This study highlights that it is not enough to have basic operational computer hardware and software, but it is essential to have MEL-specific hardware and software that help facilitate MEL activities if it is to be effective. The result from this study highlight key MEL hardware such as mobile-phones/tablets for electronic data collection and specialized visualization/data analysis software as essential in facilitating effective MEL activities.

For the most part, MEL financing has been established as important in ensuring that MEL systems are effective and able to contribute to organizational objectives (George et al., 2023, Amai and Ruguru, 2022). The respondents in this study underlined the importance of MEL budgeting as it allows for expressing its functions and in cases where there was no allocation for MEL, it affected implementation of MEL activities. The lack of appropriate allocation of funds for MEL has remained an issue across organizations, hence a recommendation made that

5%-10% of every project budget be allocated for monitoring and evaluation activities (Letsolo *et al.*, 2022).

5.3 Performance of MEL Systems of National Organizations and contributing factors

The ability of a MEL system to perform optimally depends on the availability and functionality of the components of a MEL system put in place. Across the different areas of the MEL system explored in this study, there was a highlighted limitation in the ability of national organizations to implement MEL activities at optimum levels when compared to standards set by their international counterparts. National organizations reported having insufficient MEL staff as projects were being implemented for which there was no dedicated MEL support. Attributed MEL support for projects is key to ensuring the effective delivery of M&E activities and in turn project objectives, this is because there will be a dedicated MEL technical personnel responsible for implementing the frameworks for continuously and systematically measuring project performance. This is in line with the findings of Mahyoub (2024) who confirmed there is a significant influence of the Monitoring and Evaluation team capacity on overall project performance. In addition to limited performance due to inadequate MEL staffing, the issue of MEL staff attrition which is more prominent in National organizations (71% in NNGOs to 50% in INGOs) could further limit performance. This is as findings from this study further highlight that across both group it is difficult to replace a departed experienced and skilled MEL professional.

The absence of a defined organizational framework or SoP to implement MEL activities will also limit the performance of MEL systems in National organizations when compared with standards operated by international organizations and requirements for MEL implementation.

Munkvold and Rustenberg (2024) underlined the importance of a well-drafted and implemented framework or SoP in emergency response in ensuring a coordinated and effective implementation of project activities. This ensures that there is overall guidance in the way MEL is applied to different projects within the organization. It further ensures a MEL-inclined culture towards humanitarian project implementation and minimizes organizational memory loss in the event of MEL staff attrition.

An effective MEL system requires the right resources to implement directly implies that organizations with limited financial, technical and human resources will struggle to have a MEL system that meets the required performance levels (Louise and Marina, 2019). The results from this study have established that limited financing of indigenous Humanitarian Organizations' MEL systems is an issue, this has also been documented by the NGO Coordination (2019) in Nigeria. George et al., (2023) highlighted that lack of financial resources for M&E activities leads to incomplete or ineffective M&E systems. Similarly, Amai and Ruguru (2022) inadequate budgetary allocation for M&E will adversely affect the ability of the M&E system to effectively support and inform programme implementation. It is hence imperative that MEL systems of National Organizations facing limitations in access to resources will be unable to perform optimally when compared with their international counterparts that boast more established frameworks, resources and budgetary allocations. Mbogo and Mirara (2022) echoed the importance of M&E inputs in project budget as a key determinant of the efficacy of humanitarian project planning and the results of the intervention thereof. With National Organizations having limited input from MEL technical persons during budgeting and project planning, there will be limitations in the performance and delivery of its MEL systems as there will be little communication and incorporation of MEL demands and requirements.

This study also highlighted the disparity in overall access to MEL hardware and software when the INGO and NNGO groups were compared. With the exception of personal computers, the INGO group had access to more hardware than the NNGO group and also reported their hardware being in better shape. Furthermore, the NNGO group accessed less MEL software overall than the INGO group, which minimizes the capacity to carry out certain MEL activities or analyses. All these in turn contribute to the limited performance of the national organizations.

5.4 Areas for Improvement for National Organizations

MEL Systems

Christoplos (2004) highlighted the essential role of institutional capacity building amid humanitarian action, emphasizing that capacity building is a wholesome process that encompasses more than a single approach to ensure that local capacities can provide humanitarian response at all stages of an emergency or disaster. Results from this study highlighted several areas in which MEL systems of national organizations struggle to meet the required MEL standards for supporting humanitarian response. To ensure that the localization drive to facilitate local-led actions must approach capacity building the right way applying evidence-based strategies to enable improved MEL actions.

The importance of having adequate MEL personnel to support project implementation cannot be underemphasized, especially due to the crucial nature of humanitarian programming. Richard (2024) in his study put forward that technical M&E skills and resource allocation had the strongest positive influence on project performance as the application of MEL ensured projects were adapting effectively to achieve project objectives. It is therefore important that national humanitarian organizations are also able to leverage their performance on an adequate number of technically skilled and experienced MEL personnel available to support project

implementation. In the set-up of MEL human resources, in addition to having the required dedicated MEL staff to support the project, an organogram that facilitates both managerial and technical support for MEL to be effective is also necessary.

With an adequate MEL human resource structure in place, the availability of the required tools for the expression of their responsibilities is necessary. In this study access to different MEL hardware and software was explored between international and national organizations, and across all areas, the national organizations had lesser or no access to some, this needs to be addressed to ensure personnel can carry out MEL functions effectively. Specialized MEL functions such as quantitative and qualitative analysis, secure electronic data collection, visualization and communication require the appropriate hardware and software to function. Furthermore, for these tools to be applied to MEL functions, the required technical knowledge and skills need to be facilitated and reinforced. Chukwudi *et al* (2022) asserted that training which facilitates learning and development is key to ensuring organizational productivity which is in line with findings from this study that calls for increased training of MEL staff for better humanitarian actions.

This study further highlighted limitations in MEL documentation of national organizations as 57% of the included national organizations had MEL systems operating without an organizational MEL framework, guideline, policy or SoP. Effective M&E frameworks ensure efficacy, accountability, enhance transparency, and foster learning within development and humanitarian organizations (Michael *et al.*, 2012). MEL documentation at the organizational level and project level is needed to ensure that all scope of support by MEL is guided by best practices and standards in line with the organization's mandate and humanitarian objectives. Having the essential documentation also provides a basis through which MEL can contribute

to proposal and project design which is also necessary to improve the integration of MEL into humanitarian programme planning and conceptualization.

Adequate budgeting for MEL remains a key area for improvement across national humanitarian organizations, this is as results highlight that budgeting for MEL remains inadequate. The findings from this research highlighted adequate budgetary allocation as the most critical issue in strengthening the MEL systems of national organizations, this is in line with the work of Amai and Ruguru (2022) who identified MEL financing as a difference maker. National organizations need to strengthen their management buy-in to facilitate MEL implementation and ensure that an adequate budget is allocated from the overall humanitarian programming budget.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

A possible limitation of the study is the relatively low sample size when compared with the overall number of both international and national humanitarian organizations operational in Nigeria, which somewhat limits the overall generalizability. However, the focus of the study was to establish the characteristics of MEL systems of both national and international organizations since they operate generally within similar parameters and contexts. Also, establishing a set of strident inclusion criteria made sure that organizations that met a certain standard threshold were those included to ensure coherence in establishing findings.

The possibility of response bias by MEL focal persons and respondents representing organizations could lead to flawed insight. To mitigate this, anonymity was emphasized and triangulation with other MEL experienced respondents, and secondary information was done to ensure accuracy of overall information collated.

6.0 CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Introduction to Chapter

This chapter provides a summary of this study including the key findings and draws conclusions. It also outlines recommendations and suggestions for practical applications and future research.

6.2 Conclusion

This study explored the MEL systems of national non-government organizations within northeast Nigeria to assess effectiveness, challenges and areas for improvement when compared with international counterparts to facilitate strengthened capacity for improved humanitarian response within the context. The result highlights MEL human resources, hardware, software, documentation and budget as key components of the MEL system required for effective MEL implementation within organizations. Findings also indicate that the performance of MEL systems of national organizations in supporting humanitarian implementation is limited by inadequate MEL staffing and capacity, lack of defined organizational MEL operation framework, insufficient MEL tools and tight budgets. To improve the performance of MEL systems of national organizations, this study identified ensuring the availability of experienced and skilled MEL personnel who are supported with the right organogram, adequate hardware and software for MEL, proper documentation and adequate budget in line with standards as areas for improvement.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made.

1. For National Humanitarian Organizations:

- The leadership, management or top hierarchy of the organization should approach humanitarian programming with an understanding of the importance of MEL in ensuring effective, impactful and accountable humanitarian programmes.
- Ensure compliance with the allocation of a proportion of humanitarian project funds towards monitoring and evaluation of the projects.
- Facilitate the operation of MEL activities through an established framework, guidance document and SoP that aligns its actions with the organizational and humanitarian objectives.
- Organizations should invest in regular technical MEL training for staff to ensure skills meet required standards and adequate MEL hardware and software are available for use.
- Strategies that promote sustainable MEL practices and leverage on local resources should be identified and not solely donor-dependent.

2. For International Organizations and Donors:

- The localization drive through capacity building for national organizations should be approached as a systematic process that requires an understanding of the limitations that need to be rectified with the appropriate support for impactful and sustainable results.
- MEL system strengthening through partnership and mentoring approaches should be engaged in during the humanitarian response to enable the adoption of standard MEL practices and possible sharing of resources towards efficient humanitarian interventions.

- Efforts should be made to streamline standard MEL requirements in addition to local capacity strengthening as key criteria to access humanitarian funding across the different donor agencies.
- Encourage the sharing of knowledge and best practices obtained from partnerships or capacity building between International and National Organizations to facilitate access and availability of evidence to improve locally driven humanitarian action.

3. *For Future Research:*

- Future research should look deeper into understanding more of the practical delivery of MEL systems within different humanitarian programs to provide more insight into the different challenges faced in providing MEL support.
- Further studies should examine the best approaches to capacity building and partnerships between international and national organizations in the humanitarian space.

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Appendix 1

MEL SYSTEM QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1: Basic Information

Question	Options	Comment
Current position/level in Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	Officer/Technical Specialist Manager/Coordinator Director/Program Lead/Country Lead Other	Select one
Current organization type	National Organization/Agency International Organization/Agency	Select one
Does the organization you represent currently have a humanitarian project running in the NE region of Nigeria?	Yes No	Select one

How many years of experience do you have in MEL	0-3 years Between 4-7 years Above 7 years	Select one
How many projects (estimate)	Between 1-3 3-5 Above 5	Select one
Who are your major donors?	International donor agencies/Counties (BHA, ECHO....) UN agencies (WFP, UNICEF...) International organizations (NGOs) Private funds Other	Select one
Any other basic information you wish to share?		Open-ended

MEL Human Resources

Question	Options	Comment
How many dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation staff do you currently have in your organization (or precise estimate)		Numerical
Is there an active organogram for MEL personnel showing technical reporting lines?	Yes No	Select one
Do all projects have a dedicated MEL staff supporting them?	Yes No	Select one
If no, who covers MEL responsibilities in dedicated staff absence?	Project Manager Other project staff No MEL cover	Select one
How likely do you get adequate MEL staff for projects approved when included in proposals?	Very unlikely Unlikely Frequently	Select one

	Always	
Does the organization have a MEL technical director or advisor with multi-context MEAL experience providing advisory in the country?	Yes No	Select one
Is there regional or global MEL support?	Yes No	Select one
Have there been MEL training opportunities/capacity building facilitated by the organization?	Yes No	Select one
When was the last MEL-focused training/capacity building?	Within the last 6 months Between 6 months to a year Between 1 to 2 years Over 2 years ago	Select one

Has there been an identified trend of most experienced MEL staff leaving the organization for other organizations/roles?	Yes No	Select one
If yes, how frequent is the staff departure in MEL?	Rarely Frequently Very frequent	Select one
What are the main reasons provided by the departing MEL staff	Better remuneration package Higher role Broader MEL experience Better training and learning opportunities Other (please mention)	Multiple select
Do you feel MEL staff departure affects project implementation?	Yes No	Select one

If yes, in what ways?	Reduced program quality Limited staff hands to support Inadequate reporting Other (please mention)	Multiple select
How convenient is replacing departing MEL staff with a similarly experienced person?	Very easy Easy Just fine Quite difficult Very difficult	Select one
Do you feel the current number of dedicated MEL staff in the organization is adequate to support MEL activities?	Yes No	Select one
If No, Why (what is currently obtainable/Issues faced)		Open entry

Please provide any other information/comment about MEL HR in your organization		Open entry
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MEL Equipment/Hardware

Question	Options	Comment
Please select which of the following is available in your organization to support MEL activities	Laptops (PC) Tablets/Smartphone Digital Camera Official mobile/SMS communication subscription Other	Select multiple
Does every MEL staff possess a dedicated laptop/PC for MEL work?	Yes No	Select one

What is the current state of MEL hardware?	Good condition Okay condition Poor condition	Select one
Is there a dedicated MEL Office in the organization office structure or workspace that enables effective MEL work?	Yes No	Select one
If No, where does MEL staff operate from?		Open entry
Do you feel the MEL equipment/hardware in the organization is adequate to support MEL activities?	Yes No	Select one
If No, Why (what are the current issues faced)		Open entry
Please provide any further relevant comments/information about MEL Equipment/Hardware in your organization		Open entry

Software for MEL

Question	Options	Comment
Please select which of the following software is available (with license) for use in your organization by the MEL unit	Microsoft Office 365 (Word, Excel, PowerPoint...) SPSS/STATA/R Tableau Power bi ArcGIS/QGIS NVivo/MAXQDA Other	Select multiple
Are there training/capacity-building opportunities available and provided by the organization for MEL-related software and tools?	Yes No	Select one
Do you feel the MEL software available in the	Yes No	Select one

organization is adequate to support MEL activities?		
If No, Why (what are the current issues faced)		Open entry
Please provide any further relevant comments/information about MEL Software in your organization.		Open entry

Essential MEL documentation

Question	Options	Comment
Do MEL leads/focal persons contribute to project proposal and development?	Yes No	Select one
If yes, how involved is MEL in project design and proposal development (select an appropriate rating from options)	Minimal involvement (informed in process, and makes verbal contribution)	Select one

	2.. Satisfactory involvement (Informed, makes written input on MEL-related parts of the proposal) 3.. Good involvement (Informed and involved from the planning stage and makes contributions to both the MEL-related parts and other aspects of the proposal)	
Which of these are available to store MEL-related documentation and data.	Internal/PC hard disk External hard drive Secure cupboard/drawers for physical/paper-based data	Select multiple

	Electronic drive/Online storage platform (e.g. Google drive, SharePoint....)	
Does the organization have a guidance document/policy/SoP/Guideline/Framework that specifically detail guides for MEL activities?	Yes No	Select one
Does the program/projects have a MEL plan that details MEL activities, indicators, timelines and responsibilities?	Yes No	Select one
Please provide further relevant comments/information about MEL Software in your organization (if any).		Open entry

MEL Budget

Question	Options	Comment
Is there a dedicated MEL budget set aside by the organization/program/projects (as applicable) for MEL activities?	Yes No	Select one
Is the MEL unit/department directly represented by a member of the unit in program/project budgeting?	Yes No	Select one
Do you feel an adequate budget is available to support core MEL activities?	Yes No	Select one
If No, what do you think is the most significant cause?	Donors not providing sufficient to cover for MEL Organization do not include MEL budget demands in proposals	Select one

	MEL not involved in project planning and conception. Other	
Please provide further relevant comments/information about MEL budget in your organization (if any).		Open entry

General Questions

Question	Options	Comment
What is (are) the major challenges limiting the implementation of an effective MEL system in your organization?	Limited human resources for MEL Limited MEL Hardware Limited MEL Software	Select multiple

	Limited MEL Documents/Documentation Limited budget/funding of MEL activities Limited MEL Knowledge Inadequate Management buy-in Other	
In your opinion, What are the top three (3) most important components to have an effective MEL system?	Human resources for MEL Hardware for MEL Software for MEL MEL Documents/Documentation Budget/funding for MEL activities	Select only three

	Other	
From your experience, what are the ways in which MEL unit/systems of national (local) humanitarian organizations can be improved or strengthened?		Open entry
Please provide any further input (if any) that you feel is relevant to the subject matter.		Open entry