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WITHOUT BORDERS



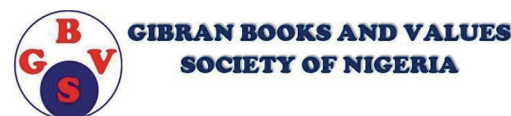
LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION **CHALLENGES IN SANITATION AND HYGIENE PROMOTION**

Language affects community engagement with
sanitation and hygiene services

(MAIDUGURI / JERE)



Funded by
European Union
Civil Protection
and Humanitarian Aid



This project was commissioned by the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO), through the International Migration Organisation (IOM). The views expressed in this report should not be taken, in any way, to reflect the official opinion of ECHO nor IOM.

Translators without Borders believe that everyone has the right to give and receive information in a language and format they understand. We work with nonprofit partners and a global community of language professionals to build local language translation capacity, and raise awareness of language barriers.

Originally founded in 1993 in France (as Traducteurs sans Frontières), TWB translates millions of words of lifesaving and life-changing information every year. For more information on our work, visit translatorswithoutborders.org/ or contact info@translatorswithoutborders.org

Using feedback from communities, the study aimed to produce a set of guidance notes that provide accurate, appropriate and understandable information in local languages. They can be used by hygiene promoters and community health workers to engage in more effective dialogue with communities in their mother tongues. We looked at the effectiveness and cultural appropriateness of the languages, terms, and pictograms (if applicable) used by field staff and in existing IEC materials on hygiene messaging.

Conflict-affected people and humanitarian organizations often struggle to communicate effectively with one another in northeast Nigeria. Language diversity, low literacy levels, and structural inequalities combine to place women, older people, and other less educated individuals at a particular disadvantage when receiving and sharing critical information. This disconnect has implications for ensuring humanitarian services achieve their full reach, impact, and accountability.

Northeast Nigeria is populated by diverse communities, with dozens of languages spoken throughout Borno state. Until now, information relating to disease risks, transmission routes, and mitigation methods has predominantly been communicated in Hausa, Kanuri, and English, yet targeting communities whose mother tongue is largely not the latter.

Communication is translated into some local languages, although not always into all participants' mother tongues. It is unclear to what extent and with what accuracy health and WASH-related terms are reflected in local language, or how well they are understood by communities at risk. This study aims to understand the impact – in terms of understanding, engagement, and intended practice – of basing communication hygiene messaging on better understanding of related terminology and concepts in local languages for communities at risk of WASH-related diseases in northeast Nigeria.

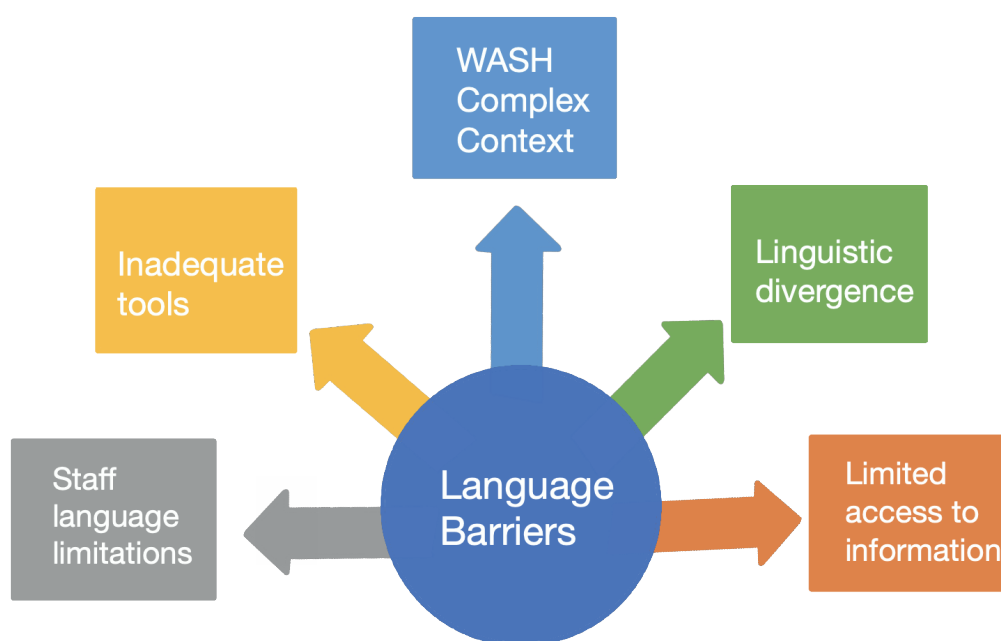


Fig1: Language barriers in humanitarian and development action matter in achieving the core humanitarian standards

Poor communication leads to poor decisions

When people are unable to access information in a format and language that they readily understand and can identify with, this impacts their ability to make the best decisions for themselves, their families, and their communities. The idiomatic language used by communities to talk about particular diseases can offer clues to their understanding of who is affected and why, how a disease is contracted or transmitted, and appropriate treatments.

An exploration of the terms used in local languages, and what they indicate about understanding of these concepts, will inform the development of more targeted communication strategies and materials.



WASH Community consultation in Mashidimami camp with womens' group conducted by Catholic Relief Services staff (credit: Catholic Relief Services)

Who was involved in the research?

This qualitative study funded by European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO), a direct implementing partner of International Migration Organisation (IOM), Translators without Borders (TWB) partnered with WASH Sector Nigeria and WASH Partners: IOM, ZOA, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Gibran Books and Values Society of Nigeria, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Center for Integrated Development and Research (CIDAR). To understand challenges and potential solutions, the joint partnership conducted a qualitative study with 360 conflict-affected participants and 48 humanitarian staff including data collectors in EYN CAN Center, Mashidimami, Ajilari, El-Maskin Center, Gidan Mandara, Farm Center, Muna Garage from February to March 2021.

Limitations

The community consultation process in Maiduguri and Jere was undertaken during a 2-week period in February 2021, with some follow-up meetings and discussions during another 1-week period in March 2021, where a number of awareness raising and capacity development activities were taking place. This limited the number of people and communities it was possible to meet, and some findings were based on limited interactions. However, with triangulation of information between a range of in-depth studies, meetings, visits, observations, and facilitated discussions, a reasonably clear picture was developed from which recommendations for the roadmap have been proposed.

Information is available in local languages

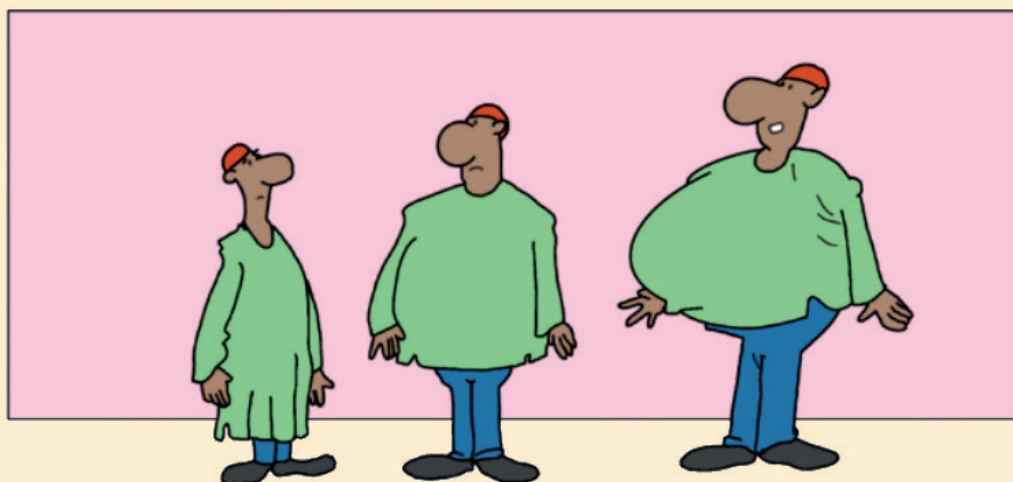
TWB produced a set of guidance notes that provide accurate, appropriate, and understandable information in local languages. Hygiene promoters and community health workers can use them to engage in more effective dialogue with communities in their mother tongues.

We found that humanitarian organizations largely prioritize verbal communication in a context of low literacy, particularly among women and older people. But a reliance on spoken Hausa, Kanuri, and written English makes it difficult for all but the most educated and native Hausa speakers to engage in real dialogue with humanitarians.

Solutions lie in:

- recruiting more gender-based humanitarian staff who speak local languages
- training community members in the basics of interpreting
- and expanding the use of audio, pictorial and remote communication in local languages.

One size does not fit all - Hausa and Kanuri is not enough



Key findings and recommended actions to improve sanitation and hygiene promotion in northeast Nigeria through more effective two-way communication:

1. Language and literacy barriers limit access to verbal sensitization and awareness campaigns on WASH activities

Don't practice open defecation
Use hand-washing station
Have good food preparation habits
Prevent diarrhoea / cholera



Speak in our local languages
We don't understand WASH terminology
We are not fully informed
We want more visual and audio communication channels



Limitations

- Communities face difficulties understanding what is said and written during sensitization and awareness campaigns

Our research suggests that...

- 80% of interviewed individuals have noted that the sensitizations are carried out mainly in Hausa and Kanuri.
- Hausa, Kanuri and English were commonly used by humanitarian organizations.
- The language spoken at home ranges from Gamargu, Fulani, Shuwa, Marghi, Gulabda, Chinene, Mandara.
- There are low levels of literacy overall.
- Terminology and use of English words and WASH specific are not fully understood.
- Most respondents could not read or write the languages they speak.
- People who do not understand English or Hausa are often not able to communicate clearly in those languages.

So we recommend that responders...

- Develop data collection tools in the languages data collectors and survey respondents speak and understand.
- Work with local teams to ensure that all translated survey questions are culturally appropriate while retaining their original meaning.
- Recruit more speakers of local languages for community engagement roles.
- Expand the use of community meetings for listening to affected people's concerns and complaints on WASH related activities.
- Ensure that both humanitarian staff and individuals acting as interpreters receive training and guidance on good practice to better assure that people's concerns are accurately relayed.
- Training will be more impactful if customized for each audience – humanitarian staff and community volunteers – given their different roles and levels of engagement with communities.

2. Lack of access to information in a format and language that people speak and understand

Our research suggests that...

- When information is relayed through community leaders, they summarize it, and people feel they are not fully informed.
- Affected people voiced a strong preference for multilingual verbal and audio awareness campaigns.
- No audio information provision is available, but respondents expressed an interest in receiving information in local languages, for instance through loudspeakers in public places. They suggested this would be appropriate to provide responses to feedback that affected residents generally.

So we recommend that responders...

- Expand the use of audio recording systems and hotlines in local languages.
- Include people living with disabilities (PLWDs) and differently disabled people in the designing of communication and language materials. PLWDs are often left out of consultations and they are even more vulnerable to lack of WASH services.

3. People prefer to discuss hygiene and sensitive issues in person with an appropriate humanitarian staff member. However, female respondents are not comfortable discussing hygiene practices and other sensitive issues with male humanitarian staff

Our research suggests that...

- Women and adolescent girls prefer to discuss problems and sensitive issues around hygiene practices with female humanitarians in safe spaces.
- Adolescent girls interviewed said they would not want to raise menstrual hygiene with a male humanitarian.

So we recommend that responders...

- Expand remote communication tools such as hotlines and chatbots in local languages for reporting misconduct and other confidential issues.
- Consider the potential negative impacts of the gaps in the response of the WASH sector to understand and respond to gender, GBV and inclusion: feelings of shame, stress, exhaustion (such as for carers), fear, embarrassment, increased stigma, loss of dignity, increased risks of vulnerability to GBV, risks to health and reduced quality of life.

4. WASH Terminology Language Board - use of multilingual glossaries

Currently...

- Specific WASH terminology is not well understood by communities or words to be avoided when communicating with communities.
- In the absence of language support, data collectors are often forced to rely on neighbors and relatives, particularly children, to interpret.
- Some data collectors struggle to understand complex or technical English terminology in surveys, which they are often expected to translate on the spot.
- This raises both ethical and data quality concerns throughout the data collection process.



It is unclear to what extent and with what accuracy health and WASH-related terms are reflected in local language, or how well they are understood by communities at risk

Our research suggests that...

- WASH terminology is not expressed correctly by humanitarian staff as many of the WASH concepts are not commonly explained. This leads to enormous confusion.
- Examples include: Menstrual hygiene, word for defecation in Hausa, “Kashi”, using terms such as “gindi”, “jini” and “farji”, “duwawu”, “washing of private parts” “Kashi”, “Futsari” in public where children are present. Other examples include: “Zawayi”, “azzakari”, “maniyi”, “nono” by female humanitarian workers in front of men
- Humanitarians reported that they sometimes have difficulty translating WASH terminology to community members.
- Community members have expressed concerns when they are commanded to “go and use latrines”

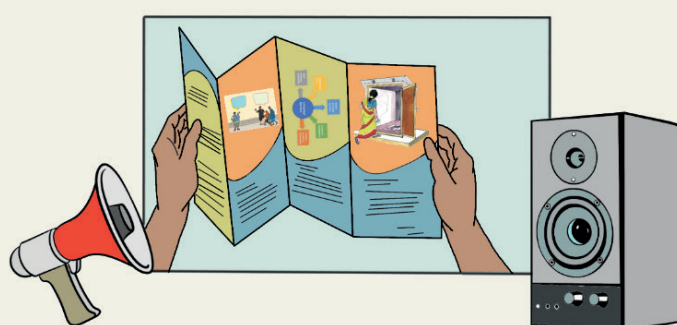
So we recommend that responders...

- Use TWB Glossaries. These are a tool to assist humanitarian field workers and interpreters working on responses across the globe. They improve communication between aid workers and communities by providing clear and accurate translations of humanitarian terms in an easy-accessible offline format. With the built-in audio feature, you can also hear the words spoken aloud.

	English	Hausa	Kanuri	Fulfulde	Shuwa A	Shuwa L
Mental health and psychosocial support	abandonment	watsarwa	wanam kolta	wudineego	التخلي	altakhili
Protection	abduction	kame	adamgana ndalta			
Mental health and psychosocial support	abuse	cin zarafi	njodkunoto	yaamugo nedfaku	مباير	mi'eyar
Mental health and psychosocial support	access	dama	duluru	lawol	شورك	tarrik
Housing, Land and Property	access	hanya	layi / zawal			
Mental health and psychosocial support	access to basic services	samun damar abubuwan more rayuwa	duluru cida-a maradeata fandobe	kebol lawol kujeji ko yonki yiidi	شورك منا الخديم	tarrik hana alkhidime
Protection	access to basic services	samun damar abubuwan more rayuwa	lamarwa muradeata fandem kendo			
CCM	access to critical facilities	samun damar wuraren bukata	diwal awna/karea faida dano fandobe	lawol hebuge ko maraa hasaje	التاريخ منا الاشيا المساعدات الناس	altarik hana allashiya albisaidan alnas
Mental health and psychosocial support	access to housing, land and property	samun damar gida, fili da dukiya ko kadara	duluru fato-a, cidi-a kuru kangarita fandobe	kebol lawol ci'a, babai ba jawdi	شورك لى كليت كارت و هي الاشيا	tarrik ley albuyut, aliturb wa bey ashayah
Protection	access to housing, land and property	samun gida fili da dukiya ko kadara	rakke fatowa, cidiya, lamanna gantobe			
Protection	access to information	damar samun bayanai	hawar fando			
Mental health and psychosocial support	access to justice	damar samun adalci	duluru haki fandobe	lawol kebol adilaku	التريع صحيح	tarrikal sahi
Housing, Land and Property	access to justice	hanyoyin samun adalci	lai hakku fandoye			
Mental health and psychosocial support	accessibility	samun dama	duluru fando	kebol lawol	شورك	durub
Housing, Land and Property	accessibility	samun shiga	layi / zawal			
Protection	accompany	rakiya	nzarta			
Protection	accountability	alhakin gudanarwa	kasamba naakoji			
Mental health and psychosocial support	acknowledge	amincewa	kasada	yeer' dago	التعريف	almar'arifah
Housing, Land and Property	acquired	samu	fando			
Housing, Land and Property	acquisition	mallaka	fando			
Housing, Land and Property	acre	eka	ngal			
	active screening for	tantance yaran da suka da	gayarta nduli kumbu ndaneyabe	saenditugo bikkey hafdata be	مصفات الرجال	musaffa hilal iyai

TWB Glossary for Northeast Nigeria

- Identify suitable translations of key words in local languages before any kind of interaction with community members. These can help build multilingual glossaries to ensure consistent and accurate communication.
- Avoid using jargon, abbreviations, and acronyms that assume a level of knowledge around a specific topic, except where relevant and appropriate.
- Do not reinforce stereotypes when developing behavior change communication materials.
- Refer to existing data on the languages people speak and understand locally and use those languages to communicate about WASH terminology and messaging, and in-person outreach in local languages to reduce rumor and confusion.
- Develop communication resources for the hardest-to-reach audiences in order to reach everyone.
- Consider pictorial communication including child friendly related hygiene practices.
- Integrate images of people of different ages and people with disabilities, to represent them as they occur in society.
- Develop data collection tools in the languages data collectors and survey respondents speak and understand.
- Work with local teams to ensure that all translated survey questions are culturally appropriate while retaining their original meaning.
- Explore what language challenges may occur during data collection, and how to mitigate them ahead of time. This includes considering the need to have a trained interpreter available or provide interpretation remotely using mobile technology due to safety or public health concerns.
- If collecting data in-person or via phone calls, use audio recorders (after seeking consent) as a simple quality control tool in multilingual data collection. Transcribing and translating even a small sample of recorded interviews can be useful for verification and training purposes.



Communities prefer:

- multilingual audio and verbal information provision
- targeted pictorial communication
- use of audio recording systems and hotlines in local languages

In conclusion:

Language affects community engagement with sanitation and hygiene services

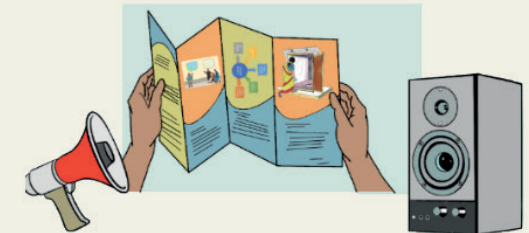
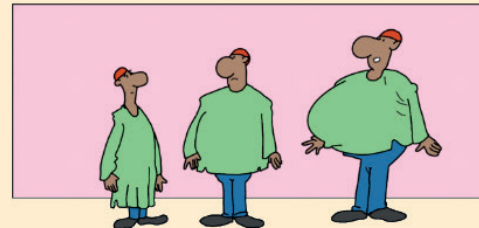
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Example of two- communication tool developed for communities and humanitarian staff based on the dialogue and consultations in the 7 sites around Maiduguri and Jere.

TWB can help

TWB improves the reach, impact, and accountability of humanitarian action in northeast Nigeria by supporting two-way communication with the affected population in their preferred languages and formats.

Our support is designed as a common service across the response. It builds on similar language advisory support and capacity building provided in Bangladesh, DRC, and Mozambique.

TWB's current and planned support to the humanitarian response in northeast Nigeria includes:

- conducting language and communication assessments and formative research
- developing training, guidance, and tools for the ongoing response as well as customized content and delivery for Covid-19 frontline responders
- building a community of translators for local languages
- providing language support for responders on the ground: multisectorial glossaries, pictorial messaging, audio translations, including a COVID-19 glossary
- supporting efforts to enable data collection and accountability in local languages
- offering language technology and communications solutions to improve information access.

Key Resources

- TWB, [Glossary for Northeast Nigeria](#)
- TWB, [COVID-19 Glossary](#)
- TWB, [COVID-19 or Korona Bairos? Communicating on the “disease that affects your breathing” in northeast Nigeria](#)
- TWB, [Comprehension assessment reports](#)
- TWB, [Write Clearly: TWB's guide to writing in plain language](#)
- TWB and People in Need, [Rapid Guide to Localizing and Translating Survey Tools](#)
- TWB and IDMC, [Case study on audio recording for verification in multilingual surveys](#)
- TWB, [Field Guide to Humanitarian Interpreting and Cultural Mediation](#) (contact us for versions in Bura-Pabir, Fulfulde, Hausa, Kanuri, Kibaku, Mandara, Marghi, Shuwa Arabic, and Waha)
- TWB provides custom online training and other remotely accessible content. [Email](#) us to learn more
- TWB, [Northeast Nigeria Language Map, by Local Government Area](#)
- TWB, [Northeast Nigeria Language Map, by primary language](#)
- TWB, [Communications Dashboard: Internally Displaced People in Northeast Nigeria, by IDP site](#)
- TWB, [Four simple language questions](#) for needs assessments and surveys
- TWB, [MSNA language data can help humanitarians communicate better with affected people](#)
- TWB Library <https://library.translatorswb.org/>. This library collates all of the language resources designed to help humanitarian staff, interpreters, and translators working with crisis-affected people in northeast Nigeria