

From Words to Impact

An evaluation of CLEAR Global's work
in northeast Nigeria from 2017 to 2025

June 2025



Foreword


CLEAR Global works to bridge communication gaps and improve information access for marginalized language communities through language services, technology, and research. In 2017, we established a program in northeast Nigeria to collaborate with humanitarian partners and strengthen the humanitarian response by ensuring language accessibility for communities requiring essential services.

Due to budget constraints and the widespread downscaling in humanitarian and development activities that began earlier this year, we transitioned our northeast Nigeria program to standby status in June 2025 and closed our physical offices. We continue to support language access in the region remotely, including with team members based in Nigeria.

This report provides guidance and insights for humanitarian and development organizations seeking to implement language-informed approaches in northeast Nigeria and similar contexts.

We remain committed to supporting language access in Nigeria and look forward to continuing our collaboration with partners in the region. We extend our gratitude to the donors and partner organizations whose commitment to an inclusive humanitarian response has enabled our work in northeast Nigeria over the years.

Sincerely,



Alyssa Boularès

Head of International Programs, CLEAR Global

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“Language is very central to [...] how people want to receive information [...] and, trust me, CLEAR Global certainly helped in shaping that up in the northeast Nigeria response.” – external key informant interview

Summary: what you absolutely need to know

CLEAR Global works to bridge communication gaps and improve access to information for marginalized language communities through language services, technology, and research. Since 2017, the organization has partnered with humanitarian actors in northeast Nigeria to address language barriers that prevent vulnerable groups from accessing critical services. With an office in Maiduguri and a network of volunteer linguists, CLEAR Global has expanded language services and supported communication efforts through a range of program activities, including language mapping, research, language- and AAP-focused training, language technology, graphic design and terminology support. This evaluation assesses effectiveness and impact of the program, gathers stakeholder feedback and provides lessons learned, applicable in northeast Nigeria and beyond.

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, including a desk review, key informant interviews (KIIs), an online survey, and a field visit. The desk review analyzed internal documents, project reports, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data to establish a foundational understanding of CLEAR Global's work in northeast Nigeria. A total of 36 KIIs were conducted with CLEAR Global staff, partners, donors, and training participants. An online survey was distributed to partner organizations, though the response rate was low (26 responses). A field visit included focus group discussions with project participants, providing additional qualitative insights.

Key findings

- **CLEAR Global provides high-quality services with strong technical expertise.** External KIIs and survey results confirmed high satisfaction with CLEAR Global's work, with 88.5% of survey respondents reporting positive experiences. 80.8% of survey respondents felt the organization effectively met their needs. External key informants (KIs) especially recognized CLEAR Global for its high-quality translation services and its critical role in improving communication with crisis-affected communities. According to external KIs, the quality of CLEAR Global's translation work remains unmatched and many have ongoing difficulties in finding a suitable alternative after CLEAR Global stopped providing translation

services as part of a grant-funded common service.

- **CLEAR Global greatly improved access to humanitarian information in northeast Nigeria through local language translations and visual materials.** While it was impossible to comment on the number of people reached based on the data available, CLEAR Global convinced and enabled humanitarian actors to move beyond Hausa to include Kanuri, Fulfulde, Shuwa Arabic, Mandara, Marghi, Kibaku, Waha, and Bura-Pabir. Expanding to these languages meant that the proportion of affected people who could be reached in their primary language rose from 31% to potentially 83%. Some concerns were raised about the effectiveness of written translations alone considering low literacy rates among affected people. This highlights the added value and effectiveness of CLEAR Global's decision to increase the volume of audio work and pictorial work to improve accessibility.
- **The flexibility in working across sectors was seen as both a strength and a limitation.** On the one hand, it allowed CLEAR Global to support diverse humanitarian and development initiatives. On the other hand, a few external KIs mentioned multiple rounds of revisions needed for one project because of a lack of subject matter expertise.
- **CLEAR Global's training was highly effective in raising awareness of language barriers and strengthening participants' capacities in Accountability to Affected People (AAP).** Many training participants, regardless of the specific training they participated in, described it as a turning point in understanding the importance of linguistic inclusion. Those who participated in AAP (Accountability to Affected People)-focused training, highlighted it as instrumental in recognizing the value of AAP in humanitarian work. Key learnings mentioned in interviews emphasized inclusion of people with disabilities and the need to enhance interpreting skills. Participants also highlighted learning about effective engagement with marginalized communities, identifying protection concerns, and strengthening AAP mechanisms within their organizations.
- **CLEAR Global's work was widely trusted, even if evidence of its effectiveness for communities remains difficult to gather.** Internal KIs primarily cited high donor/partner satisfaction, sustained demand and their own observations as indicators of effectiveness, often assuming that translation success or successful application of skills gained during training would be self-evident. While anecdotal evidence highlighted potential positive changes in awareness and behavior for communities, partners didn't share data to confirm such changes.
- **CLEAR Global has contributed to a lasting shift toward greater linguistic inclusivity in the humanitarian response in northeast Nigeria.** Interviews confirmed a strong sustained awareness of the importance of assessing language needs at the start of a project and of translating materials into minority languages. Many organizations began translating into more languages because of CLEAR Global and continue to do so today—even without direct support from CLEAR Global. Further, many external KIs reported to still rely on communication materials developed or translated in the past by CLEAR Global. Survey findings support this, with 42.3% of respondents reporting that most or all changes brought by CLEAR Global were sustained and integrated into present work. Finally, there was some evidence that CLEAR Global also contributed to a more linguistically diverse humanitarian workforce, with organizations adjusting hiring practices to prioritize multilingual staff. However, interviews also showed that the scale and quality of language-inclusive communication have diminished with the end of language services provided by CLEAR Global for free as part of a common service to all members of the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) cluster.
- **CLEAR Global has shaped sector-wide data collection on language needs.** More specifically, CLEAR Global has successfully influenced data collection practices within two major humanitarian coordination mechanisms practices. Both the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix and REACH's Multi-Sector Needs Assessment have included language-related questions. However, while language data is now collected and published more

systematically, its analysis and application remain inconsistent.

- **CLEAR Global has advanced localization efforts and contributed to the harmonisation of AAP practices, though the overall impact on communities is difficult to measure.** Through CLEAR Global's co-leadership of the Community Engagement, Accountability and Localization (CEAL) Working Group, the organization has increased participation and representation of local NGOs and strengthened awareness and implementation of AAP practices for members. The successful handover of the CEAL Working Group's co-leadership to a local organization suggests a degree of sustainability. However, external KIs noted that activity within the working group has since declined. Since this effort focused on coordination, further concrete examples of impact on communities were difficult to gather. A similar example was a project funded by FCDO¹ which produced valuable resources and research, but its influence on organizational practices from the implementing partners was yet to be seen.
- **There is some evidence from communities that CLEAR Global's work has contributed to improved language inclusivity in the humanitarian response.** Survey data shows that 84.6% of respondents thought CLEAR Global had a positive impact on project participants' communication outcomes. Qualitative research on AAP practices conducted in 8 communities in northeast Nigeria in March 2025 indicates that across 47 focus-group discussions, many community members receive information in their priority language with a reported improvement over time. The sampling techniques employed do not allow any conclusions with regards to generalizability or CLEAR Global's role in the observed change.
- **CLEAR Global's language technology projects had limited effectiveness due to short timelines, and low budgets, but brought important learnings that shaped future strategy.** Among 37 projects implemented over the years, seven focused on language technology. They covered four different solutions, including the building of two chatbots and their respective datasets. Internal KIs working on chatbot projects reported that limited time and resources meant the products weren't particularly effective. Both chatbots were primarily accessible to literate, tech-savvy users with stable internet, limiting their reach among the most vulnerable groups. While chatbot development was perceived as groundbreaking at the time, the organization primarily demonstrated feasibility rather than achieving sustained impact. However, these initiatives generated valuable insights, particularly recognizing the importance of voice technology for low-literacy populations, the need for better integration with existing communication channels and for iterative development. Internal KIs suggested that CLEAR Global's future role should focus on developing foundational tools, language data, and frameworks to enable partners to build their own solutions.
- **Translation services remain highly relevant in humanitarian programming, but funding constraints limit their accessibility.** External KIs emphasized the continued need for CLEAR Global's expertise in translation and communication support. However, securing funding for language services remains a challenge, as translation is often deprioritized amid competing financial demands. While some external KIs suggested integrating translation into broader communication budgets, others highlighted the need for stronger advocacy at sector-level coordination meetings and within the Humanitarian Country Team to position language access as essential for localization. External KIs recommended increasing outreach, participating in sectoral working groups, and consolidating translation needs across organizations to improve sustainability and funding prospects.

¹ Third-party monitoring project, 2024-25.

Introduction

The mission of CLEAR Global, formerly known as Translators without Borders (TWB), is to help people get vital information, and be heard, whatever language they speak. CLEAR Global is a nonprofit organization dedicated to bridging communication gaps and empowering marginalized language communities. It promotes linguistic inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and social equity to improve access to vital information, services, and opportunities. With a network of over 100,000 language volunteers (the TWB Community), partnerships with development and humanitarian organizations across the globe, AI-driven language solutions, and research initiatives, CLEAR Global enhances global communication and information access.

CLEAR Global's expertise spans both high- and low-tech solutions in social impact contexts, including language services, communication support, language mapping, human-centered language technology, sociolinguistic research, and advocacy. The organization also provides capacity strengthening and training to help partners address language barriers as a key factor of marginalization.

Since 2017, CLEAR Global has partnered with humanitarian organizations to address critical language gaps in northeast Nigeria, a region heavily impacted by violence and poverty. Recognizing that language barriers excluded some of the most vulnerable groups from accessing essential information and assistance, CLEAR Global launched its operations in the region with funding from the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF). In 2018, CLEAR Global solidified its presence by opening an office in Maiduguri, supported by a team of management, administrative, and language specialists. This local team is further strengthened by a global network of approximately 800 volunteer linguists, both within northeast Nigeria and abroad, working to ensure that humanitarian information is accessible in the languages spoken by affected communities.

Despite the significant work done in northeast Nigeria, no comprehensive evaluation of the program had been conducted to date. With the funding landscape becoming increasingly challenging, this evaluation has been commissioned to assess the impact and effectiveness of CLEAR Global's work in the region. This report aims to examine the program's achievements, identify lessons learned, and provide actionable recommendations to inform future strategies.

Methodology

This program-level evaluation assesses the overall effectiveness, relevance, and impact of CLEAR Global's work in northeast Nigeria since 2017. Rather than evaluating individual projects in isolation, it takes a holistic approach meaning that key projects are referenced to illustrate broader trends, but the focus remains on collective outcomes, challenges, and lessons learned. Selected projects were analyzed in greater depth where data was available and where they provided critical insights into programmatic trends.

The evaluation did not assess the organization's broader advocacy efforts beyond specific project activities or its overall funding strategy. While some relevant insights emerged, they were not the primary focus of this assessment. The evaluation questions and criteria are detailed in Annex A.

Data collection

The **desk review** provided an overview of all CLEAR Global projects in northeast Nigeria from 2017 to the present, analyzing internal documents, project reports, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data, and other relevant sources. This review established a foundational understanding of the program's scope, activities, and key themes.

To assess partner satisfaction and the perceived impact of the northeast Nigeria program, an **online survey** (see Annex C) was distributed to a broad cross-section of partner organizations. However, the low response rate (26 responses out of 534 people contacted) limited the ability to draw statistically significant conclusions.

Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with CLEAR Global team members, partners, and donors. In total, 36 interviews were completed, including 17 interviews with CLEAR Global staff or consultants and 19 interviews with partner organizations, donors and training participants (see Annex B for details). Interviews were conducted both remotely and in person.

Initially, six projects were selected for **case studies** to provide a deeper analysis of successes, challenges, and contextual factors. However, this could not be done due to:

- Limited availability of interviewees with detailed project insights.
- Gaps in project documentation.
- Stakeholder capacity to recall and articulate key outcomes.

Direct interviews with community members were challenging to implement due to resource constraints. Alternative approaches were considered:

- Partner organizations were asked whether they had relevant anonymized community data they would be able to share, but none could provide usable information.
- A project's data collection component in February 2025 included relevant questions to capture participant perspectives; these are included in the report.
- During the evaluator's field visit to northeast Nigeria, a site visit provided an opportunity for direct engagement with community members through focus group discussions. Insights from these discussions are reflected in the evaluation findings.

Measuring impact

In the absence of a formal Theory of Change or predefined indicators/objectives for CLEAR Global's Nigeria program, this evaluation adopted an exploratory approach to assess project outcomes and impact. A review of available project and internal documents followed by consultations with key stakeholders helped uncover implicit objectives, expected outcomes, and priority areas which then informed the themes that were prompted/asked for within the interviews. Consequently, rather than measuring progress against predefined goals and indicators at the impact level, the evaluation focused on capturing what CLEAR Global key informants identified as impact. This included using the Most Significant Change technique to collect qualitative insights from stakeholders. Interviewees were invited to share examples of the most significant changes they had observed as a result of CLEAR Global's Nigeria program offering an opportunity to capture both intended and unintended outcomes and impacts in the absence of clearly defined impact statements.

Limitations

Identifying output numbers proved challenging due to gaps and inconsistencies in project documentation. This was particularly evident in larger projects, due to discrepancies across project documents and communication channels. As a result, any figures presented should be interpreted as approximations of CLEAR Global's achievements rather than definitive metrics.

Existing data at the outcome level was limited. Few projects had conducted systematic outcome or impact measurements. This means that this evaluation relies heavily on anecdotal evidence gathered through interviews. The reliance on qualitative data limits the ability to draw firm conclusions about the organization's overall effectiveness and impact.

Despite multiple follow-ups and outreach efforts, securing interviews was difficult. Consequently, the final sample is skewed toward individuals with established relationships with CLEAR Global or those who had more positive experiences. There were similar challenges for the online survey. Of more than 500 outreach emails sent, only 26 responses were received. This low response rate weakens the generalizability of the findings. This means that any statements of effect or impact are based on anecdotal evidence of comparatively few KIs. While there is evidence supporting the findings in the report, it is impossible to determine the full scale of impact or know whether findings are representative.

This evaluation originally aimed to quantify outputs across all projects to gain a comprehensive understanding of key program activities, such as the number of words translated, number of training sessions conducted, research products developed, needs assessments completed, and plain language edits completed. While this effort was initiated as part of the evaluation, it could not be fully completed due to the time required to extract and analyze the available data.

Findings

Project overview

Since 2017, CLEAR Global has implemented 37 projects in northeast Nigeria. These projects included a range of diverse activities, including translation and interpretation services, glossary development, the creation of multilingual information materials, capacity-building efforts and the development of technological solutions, such as chatbots, speech recognition tools, and digital feedback systems. The projects covered a wide range of themes including accountability to affected people, protection, emergency response, coordination support, third-party monitoring, and public health campaigns—including COVID-19 response and explosive ordnance risk education (EORE).



As of March 2025, only one project remained ongoing: a third-party monitoring initiative, funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

Effectiveness

CLEAR Global provides high-quality services with strong technical expertise

All external KIs expressed strong satisfaction with CLEAR Global's work, particularly highlighting the remarkable quality of services, the professionalism of the staff, and their solid subject-matter expertise. This positive feedback was reflected in the online survey as well. 88.5% of respondents reported being satisfied, with 46.2% agreeing and 42.3% strongly agreeing. A small percentage remained neutral (3.8%), while 3.8% disagreed and another 3.8% strongly disagreed. Similarly, the majority of respondents felt that CLEAR Global effectively addressed their organizational needs. A total of 80.8% agreed, with 46.2% strongly agreeing and 34.6% agreeing. Meanwhile, 11.5% remained neutral, and 3.8% each disagreed or strongly disagreed.

"Well, I would say I was very highly satisfied. I think they were very professional. They had a really nice, small team. [...] I think they were very effective, very good, very passionate at what they did." - External KI

"Well, you know, one thing with regards to your question—many organizations do translations, but CLEAR Global has a unique way of doing it. If you were to rate their translation quality, it would be at the highest level—it's very close to perfect. Other organizations that believe they can handle translations themselves—just because they speak the local language—often struggle. They think, "Yeah, we can do it too," but the professionalism, the technical know-how, the methodology—what CLEAR Global brings is exceptional. It can't really be compared with any other organization." - External KI

The key reasons for dissatisfaction among external KIs were a) concerns about CLEAR Global being overstretched, therefore causing delays in the timeline and b) CLEAR Global being primarily accessible only through remote channels as opposed to having staff available in-country, working alongside partners. This was only reported by KIs who had worked with CLEAR Global more recently. This limited availability was seen as affecting the organization's responsiveness and effectiveness. As one KI observed: *"Most times, they have multiple demands. So sometimes, at that point of need, you may not be able to get it, and sometimes, it has a way of impacting the programming."* Another KI noted the limitations of remote engagement: *"I had wished they had a team member on the ground with us. For most of the work we did, it was remote."*

"So the initial process [...] was more vigorous [...] because it's designing at the first stage where we had the entire document with them. And the team were a full team. [...] I think the technical persons were on board and on the ground. So it's easier to work with them in the first stage. When you come to the second stage of redesigning, we find it a bit difficult because [...] of having some of the technical person [...] not on board." - External KI

CLEAR Global improved humanitarian access through local language translations and visual and audio materials

In 2017, organizations in northeast Nigeria communicated largely in Hausa, the first language of 31% of the population in the conflict-affected area. By 2019, CLEAR Global offered support in eight additional languages, increasing the potential proportion of people who could be reached in their first language to 83%. The organization enabled humanitarian actors to move beyond translations in Hausa to include

Kanuri, Fulfulde, Shuwa Arabic, Mandara, Marghi, Kibaku, Waha, and Bura-Pabir. Importantly, CLEAR Global not only advocated for the importance of translating materials into previously overlooked languages but also provided the tools and expertise needed to make it possible. As one internal KI stated: *"We convinced people it was needed, but more importantly, we made it possible for them to do it."*

While there is clear evidence of improved accessibility, the actual number of people reached remains unknown. Due to inconsistencies in output tracking, it is difficult to estimate reach. However, data taken from monthly updates illustrates CLEAR Global's high production levels over the years. For example, in June 2020, 95 materials, including glossaries, audio files, language datasets, guides and posters, were produced and 191,185 words translated in a single month. These numbers were similar for the whole year.

"Organizations, like those in the Mine Action Working Group, went from providing mine risk information to communities in Hausa and maybe occasionally Kanuri, to providing it in nine languages." – Internal KI

CLEAR Global was widely recognized and trusted among KIs for its translation services. Informal conversations and external KIs consistently reinforced the organization's unique and highly valued role in supporting the humanitarian response. This reputation is not only due to its broad language coverage—CLEAR Global, at its peak, maintained an in-house team of nine language leads, covering more languages than any other actor in the region—but also the consistently high quality of its translation services. According to external KIs, this level of quality remains unmatched. Several interviewees noted ongoing difficulties in finding a suitable alternative.

"I mean, certainly from my experience in northeast Nigeria, and I would argue as well globally, I think CLEAR Global are very much the default organization when you think about [...], communicating with communities, ways in which this can be done, [...]the impact of language and information in humanitarian responses. You know, I don't think you will come across many experienced humanitarians who would not think of TWB or now CLEAR Global." – External KI

CLEAR Global's translation work received overwhelmingly positive feedback and only very few concerns were raised among KIs and survey respondents. Two online survey respondents reported being unable to use certain materials due to poor translation quality. One respondent in the survey said that CLEAR Global initially struggled to account for the specificities of their sector. It reportedly took multiple rounds of feedback before the final outputs met the organization's expectations, but this was achieved in the end. The few concerns raised by interviewees are consistent with the generally low level of negative feedback that CLEAR Global typically receives for its translation work.

There were some concerns raised about the effectiveness of projects which included written translations only. One KI doubted that these had been fully effective due to low literacy levels. This highlights the added value and effectiveness of CLEAR Global's decision to increase the volume of audio work and pictorial work to improve accessibility. In line with that, the projects that included the production of pictorial materials were widely regarded as the most effective. One cited example was the use of pictorials in materials for the ICLA (Information, Counseling, and Legal Assistance) program run by the Norwegian Refugee Council, which provided clear guidance on actions to take and available services. As one interviewee noted: *"At the end of the day, after we implemented that project, it was really a success because we got to register a lot of people in the Monguno community back then."*

"That was when the ID card was implemented in Nigeria, and it was mandatory for everybody to have that ID card. It was the only way the Nigerian government could recognize you as a citizen. IDPs [internally displaced persons] had lost their documents, and there was no way they could prove their identity. So, for that reason, we had the pictorials and the people behind them explaining the process. Then we placed billboards in

different areas written in local languages. The response was incredible. Before we implemented the pictorials, we had only used voice to reach people, and it was difficult to get numbers in our registration centers. But after using pictorials, the response was massive, and we got more funding as a result.” – Internal KI

While most KIs agreed about the effectiveness of the pictorials, one internal KI raised concerns. This might reflect a broader challenge for CLEAR Global. While the organization excels in linguistic adaptation and communication design across various topics, its lack of deep technical expertise in specific subject areas can be both an advantage and a limitation. On the one hand, this flexibility allows CLEAR Global to support diverse humanitarian and development initiatives, adapting materials across multiple sectors. On the other hand, it means that when organizations require highly specialized content development, they may prioritize partners with direct subject matter expertise.

The radio programs developed in partnership with Mercy Corps were frequently highlighted as highly effective. Their interactive format, which allowed listeners to call in and engage directly, contributed significantly to their success according to internal KIs. According to one internal KI, the program attracted more listeners than any previous show aired by the station.

High trust in CLEAR Global’s translations as well as information, education, and communication materials, but limited data on effectiveness

When asked for evidence of the effectiveness of materials produced (especially translations, pictorials, audio work and and information, education, and communication (IEC) materials), internal KIs primarily cited high partner satisfaction and sustained demand as key indicators. External KIs also mostly described the effectiveness of translations in general terms, such as stating that “people could now understand,” but offered few specific examples or before-and-after comparisons of community understanding when prompted. One external KI told the story where they could initially not engage with the community but after using translation services by CLEAR Global, they could do so effectively: *“And then I started, and there were no complaints again, because they were understanding the language, it’s straight to their language.”* This suggests an implicit assumption that translation success is self-evident, with limited critical reflection on its measurable effects or tangible outcomes.

When asked about the direct impact of CLEAR Global’s translations on communities, stories from external KIs showcase potential significant shifts in awareness and behavior across different areas.

- **Empowering women with knowledge of their rights:** CLEAR Global’s translations helped women in the community better understand their rights, fostering greater confidence in decision-making and gender equality. *“Some of them, they know better than before. They know what gender equality means, they know how to say no on certain things. Most of the women, especially when it comes to community engagement, sometimes they feel, okay, it’s only the men that can do the decision making. But when we were able to translate some of these women’s rights, they know their values.”*
- **Strengthening cholera awareness and hygiene practices:** Access to translated health information improved community awareness of cholera prevention and hygiene practices. *“Well, actually, it was really positive feedback. [...] the questionnaire was built [...] how does that change their understanding of the cholera? How does that help them improve their hygiene? How does that also help their children to be aware of this? [...] So the outcome is [...] majority of them were of the opinion that messages coming through the radio jingle [was most effective]. ”*

- **Encouraging inquiries about legal documents:** Having access to translated legal information motivated community members to seek legal documents, particularly for securing land titles. *“And this encouraged some of our participants to inquire about legal documents, securing title to land. And we were able to reach a huge number of people with that intervention and support as a result of them having the information from the pamphlet as to how to go about obtaining or the importance of obtaining such documentations.”*
- **Enhancing community engagement through radio messaging:** Radio messaging in local languages proved to be an effective tool for reaching remote communities. *“And when you go to the deep field, and we had a kind of a survey, we did a CAHPS [Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems] survey, end-line survey, to understand if this [...] messaging is going through these communities that we targeted. And we tend to understand that 10% of these people that were interviewed indicated that they heard it through radio program. And if they heard it through radio program and they understand the message, that is an impact for us, actually. And we cannot do that without the support of the CLEAR Global.”*
- **Promoting hygiene practices through translated materials:** Translated materials played a role in improving hygiene habits, particularly in the use of distributed hygiene kits. *“So, we do [...] a survey to find out whether [...] items we distributed are utilized by the people. So, we cross across diverse languages and we discover that people really understand when they are using those items, we understand that also. Basically, so part of our [monitoring] also helps us to understand whether our communication actually helps. [...] So, when you look at the results, it gives you the satisfaction that yes, our information sharing and the rest of them, people actually understand since they are using it well.”*
- **Facilitating complaint and feedback mechanisms:** CLEAR Global’s translated materials made it easier for communities to provide feedback on humanitarian programs. *“Yeah, I might not have the exact numbers on the impact, such as how many complaints we received before and after using the IEC materials. But what I can say is that when we had the IEC materials, it was much easier for the communities to give feedback. Now that we are no longer collaborating with TWB—maybe due to project constraints—it has become very difficult.”*
- **Mitigating gender-based violence:** Pictorial materials developed by CLEAR Global contributed to reducing household tensions during food distribution delays in internally displaced persons’ camps and thereby helped to mitigate gender-based violence. *“The food assistance has to take long before it arrives, or maybe they took a break before they resume, and a lot of fighting in the household. But, you know, by us going around, creating awareness with our key messages, it reduces a lot of quarreling in the camp [...] acts of gender-based violence used to happen in the camp because of lack of awareness. So we tried together with the protection partners to sensitize the community on the dangers, the risks, everything, and then it goes down drastically.”*

Training sessions were highly effective in raising awareness and strengthening skills and capacities

Many internal and external KIs emphasized the effectiveness of CLEAR Global’s training in raising awareness of language-related challenges and AAP in the humanitarian response and strengthening participants’ capacity to address them. Internal KIs consistently highlighted the large number of training sessions delivered, the strong demand for these sessions, and the significant learning outcomes achieved by participants. While training data was often incomplete and not consistently monitored, one effort that tried this suggests that between 2017 and 2023, 3,637 people attended 37 trainings conducted by CLEAR Global. The available data did not allow to distinguish between different types of training. The primary participants came from organizations such as IOM, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and Plan International.

External KIs frequently noted that the sessions about language awareness and humanitarian interpreting broadened their understanding of language barriers, with many stating: *“Nobody has ever talked to us*

about this topic before.” Both internal and external KIs emphasized that, for many participants, the training marked a turning point in recognizing the depth and complexity of language barriers in humanitarian work. Initially, many participants believed that communicating in the main languages spoken in the region was sufficient. Like one external KI said: “And so, they made me understand that language is contextual. I actually saw the understanding for me to also adjust during my facilitation, you know, into languages that are commonly used around here and accepted, rather than use my general household understanding, you know, and borrow words that might not be understood here easily.”

KIs who had attended AAP training sessions most frequently highlighted the following takeaways:

- Ensuring the inclusion of people with disabilities and improving their access to services
- Enhancing interpreting skills and practices
- Effective engagement with marginalized communities
- Identifying and addressing protection concerns
- Strengthening AAP methods within organizations
- Increasing awareness among community members, including those with disabilities, about their rights

“We never knew we should be accountable to our beneficiaries. We thought we were only accountable to our donors. So when they provide funding, we try to see how we manage the funds. And then at the end of the project, we report back to the donors. We never thought that we are also accountable to the people we serve. So I think it's an eye-opener for me.” - External KI

“I always felt they understood what it was about and were a great advert for helping humanitarians understand that, you know, information is very critical in any response and that lack of information can place individuals and communities at the highest risk.” - External KI

“We had about three workshops, and in these three workshops with TWB, I learned a more professional approach to engaging with affected populations and my teammates. It also strengthened my responsibilities in understanding more about CFM [community feedback mechanisms] and accountability.” - External KI

One post-training impact assessment conducted by CLEAR Global with attendees of the humanitarian interpretation training in 2022 underscored effectiveness. 153 interviews with training participants were done up to eight months after the training. The sample aimed to be broadly representative, with interviews conducted face-to-face, via phone, and through mailed questionnaires by CLEAR Global staff. Findings indicated that 89% were satisfied with the training. Knowledge and skills increased by 41–60% immediately after training, with 67% retaining key learnings up to eight months later. Additionally, 60% said they applied the training in their work or daily lives, 62% reported improved confidence and work performance, and 89% would recommend the training to others.

“Before the commencement of this session, I normally assumed that everyone understands Hausa in Adamawa but now I know I was not being inclusive” - Training participant

“I have seen considerable changes [from ensuring language inclusion during CFM sensitization and awareness raising in the community]. People are coming to lay their complaints and feedback more often.” - Training participant

External KIIs highlighted that training involving community members effectively raised awareness of their rights, particularly in requesting assistance and giving feedback to NGOs, and strengthened their ability to engage with humanitarian actors. Training increased confidence and encouraged active participation. The impact was especially strong for persons with disabilities, who very often didn't realize they had the right to voice their needs.

"Most of the training they had attended before was combined training, where people with disabilities and non-disabled people were trained together in the same hall. The response we got from them was very positive because they were able to express themselves. They felt like they belonged—that we even invited them to this kind of training. After the training, they mentioned that the impact was high because they now knew they had rights. They never knew before that, as persons with disabilities, they had the right to express their opinions." – Internal KII

"After this training, a person came to install a solar panel. And we said we will face more challenges with this kind of solar. If you bring this to us, please, you should bring it together with a battery and inverter, if possible, we think it is better for the community. And they just say yes, they agree with our suggestion and so they did this. We really appreciate them. We really, really appreciate it often. Now I'm telling you it is now two months or three, that we are using this and we really appreciate it." – Community member

CLEAR Global's research drove advocacy for language inclusion

Internal KIIs consistently highlighted the organization's success in generating evidence that was previously unavailable and using it to advocate for a more language-inclusive approach. Research effectively uncovered the different ways language barriers manifested in an English-dominated humanitarian sector.

One notable example was CLEAR Global's early research on comprehension testing, which, according to internal KIIs, provided the first concrete data on language barriers in humanitarian settings in northeast Nigeria. This research revealed significant gaps in communication with affected populations, particularly among marginalized groups such as non-educated, minority-language-speaking women. Another major research success of the Nigeria program—now widely used for advocacy—was demonstrating how adding more languages can significantly expand the reach of humanitarian efforts.

Internal KIIs noted that these findings contributed to a shift in awareness among humanitarian actors, helping bridge the disconnect between field realities and senior-level decision-making. Almost all of the external KIIs confirmed that.

"I think that first piece of comprehension testing and the evaluation with organizations, the consultation of organizations, was huge because it was the first. It was the first data point that we had, the first really solid statement we had. People who were working—middle managers and field staff—knew that language was a problem, but that message was simply not getting to senior managers. So, there was this collective 'aha' moment." – Internal KII

However, internal KIIs also said that not all of the research conducted had been effective.

Limited effectiveness of language technology projects due to short timelines, low budgets, and capacity gaps

Among the 37 projects reviewed, seven projects included work on language technology, covering four different solutions and the building of two chatbots, Shehu and Hajiya, and their respective datasets. These

projects were generally less effective in delivering any direct support to communities with short timelines and small budgets. Like one internal KI said: *“Both the timeline, the approach to deliverables, and the budgets—it’s all too small to make it genuinely human-centered.”*

Both chatbots were primarily accessible to individuals who were literate, technologically proficient, and had stable internet access—typically those with the financial means to afford data. As a result, they had limited reach among the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. In line with this, one external KI noted that technology in humanitarian crises was particularly challenging because of who gets excluded. They added that such tools might be more effective in early recovery programs rather than in immediate humanitarian response.

In the case of the Hajiya chatbot for example, reliance on community leaders to facilitate chatbot access created barriers for community members, making the tool difficult to use. Additionally, the project ran for too short a period and had not undergone sufficient testing by the time it concluded. Although the Shehu chatbot had a clearer use case, it too faced limitations due to short implementation timelines and minimal testing.

Language technology effectively generated learnings

Despite less effectiveness in delivering direct support to communities, language technology as part of the northeast Nigeria program was effective in generating insights that have significantly shaped CLEAR Global’s approach, strategy and advocacy efforts. The learnings informed the organization’s evolving language technology work, including the development of TWB Voice, a platform to collect voice data, which aims to address many of the challenges previously encountered:

“Nigeria has shown us the importance of voice technology. Large segments of the population have lower literacy levels or simply prefer audio communication. This experience helped us recognize voice as essential to our future direction.” – Internal KI

Other key takeaways/learnings from the language technology work include:

- Language technology solutions are more effective when integrated into established information channels, such as radio broadcasts, community mobilization efforts, and other outreach activities.
- Developing early-stage prototypes, even without immediate results, proved useful for testing and refinement. Iterative feedback is essential for improving functionality and ensuring relevance.
- The deployment of tech products contributed to building internal expertise. This knowledge can now be applied to future technology initiatives, enhancing the organization’s ability to manage similar projects.
- Improved collaboration between technical teams and non-technical staff. Clearer communication processes and structured workflows helped reduce errors and improved project delivery.
- Lessons from chatbot development directly influenced improvements in other areas, including translation workflows.
- The initiatives generated datasets that can be repurposed for future projects, improving efficiency and reducing the need for new data collection efforts.

Two internal KIs also highlighted that CLEAR Global’s extensive language-related work in northeast Nigeria has positioned the country as a priority for global language technology initiatives. The foundation laid by the program has made it easier to mobilize communities and networks for new projects.

“Our global voice technology investments in Nigerian languages are possible because of our history here—because we’ve built a community and identified language needs.” – Internal KII

Impact and sustainability

CLEAR Global brought long-term improvements in language inclusion within humanitarian response efforts

There is evidence that CLEAR Global’s work has contributed to a lasting shift toward greater linguistic inclusivity and localisation in the humanitarian response in northeast Nigeria. This is reflected in:

- organizations that, due to CLEAR Global’s influence, began translating into more languages and continue to do so today—even without direct support from CLEAR Global
- organizations that continue to use previously translated materials in their programs, ensuring sustained impact beyond the initial interventions

Interviews with all external KIIs confirmed a strong sustained awareness of the need for translations into minority languages and language identification at the start of a project. All external KIIs confirmed this awareness and the necessity had been strengthened through CLEAR Global. Several external KIIs described how language assessments had become a standard part of project planning, ensuring that communication needs were addressed from the outset.

“We map out languages and then we know exactly, okay, this language, and we try to include all of the languages in our activities. All of the interventions, we make sure that everyone is being carried along, not sidelined.” – External KII

Many KIIs stated that they continue to rely on previously translated materials, particularly in sectors where the content remains relevant over time. Some organizations have also reused these materials with slight adjustments.

“For the IEC materials, the audio, up to now we are still using the audio, the IEC material, the banners, everything. We work together, we are still using it. It’s still relevant.” – External KII

“So they helped Plan International very well at that time in depicting most of our kits in local languages. It was very impactful because we illustrated all the pictures that were relevant to the community, and they still exist in some of the communities where intervention took place!” – External KII

The sustainability of such “physical paper” materials partly depends on the topic. For example, resources related to cholera outbreaks or COVID-19 tend to have a shorter lifespan, as their relevance diminishes when the context evolves. In contrast, materials on broader or recurring issues appear to have lasting value. Several external KIIs noted that they continue to use certain materials, indicating their long-term relevance and impact.

“Messages on education and hygiene promotion tend to last longer than emergency-response materials. IEC materials on WASH [water, sanitation and hygiene], hygiene, and general health messaging also have long-term value.” – Internal KII

This is confirmed by the survey findings. Most respondents indicated that their engagement with CLEAR Global had a lasting influence:

- 53.8% reported that some changes had been maintained.
- 42.3% stated that most or all changes were sustained and integrated into future work.
- Only 3.8% indicated that none of the changes had been sustained, suggesting that CLEAR Global's work has had a meaningful and lasting impact on organizations.

At the same time, many noted resourcing limitations for translations. With CLEAR Global no longer providing translation services for free as part of a common service agreement, translation efforts have diminished for most of the organizations that were previously supported. While several KIs reported that their organizations continue to translate materials independently, they acknowledged that quality control has become a challenge. Overall, while the scale and quality of language-inclusive communication may have diminished, CLEAR Global's influence has led to ongoing efforts within some organizations.

CLEAR Global contributed to a more language-diverse humanitarian workforce

There was some evidence that CLEAR Global's work has contributed to a more linguistically diverse humanitarian workforce in northeast Nigeria. One external KI referenced an annual AAP study which initially highlighted language gaps between IDPs and humanitarian staff.² The study suggests an improvement, with humanitarian workers now speaking a greater number of local languages. For example, in some locations where five languages are spoken, staff can now communicate in four of them.

Two external KIs stated having changed their hiring practices due to CLEAR Global's work. One noted: *"We try to give priority to multilingual people who can speak multiple local languages now."* Another described the process of identifying language needs within communities and then deliberately hiring field staff based on those findings: *"Even while advertising, we clearly spell out that we need people that can speak so-so and so-so languages, so when they come for interview, we do language tests, and so when we are recruiting them, we recruit from these languages."*

Publication of materials demonstrates a commitment to sustainability

CLEAR Global has actively worked to ensure its contributions remain accessible and impactful beyond its direct involvement. By publishing training materials, guidance, and linguistic data, the organization shows commitment to sustainability of their work. Glossaries and language maps were cited among the most sustainable resources by internal KIs, as they remain relevant across different emergencies and do not require frequent updates.

"I think we have [...] done quite a lot to try and ensure that the outcomes are sustainable. Everything we do goes into the public domain. We've developed training materials, guidance, and put our data out there so others can scrutinize it. Our glossaries are developed with and for humanitarian responders." – Internal KI

"The glossaries were shared with the team at that time, and I think I still have them. Quite alright, I still have them on one of my local drives, and I use them because they are very fascinating. They have both an online and an offline mode. You can scan them with your mobile phone, and they contain about five or six local languages that we predominantly use here in [location] in Nigeria. So you use them to transcribe difficult keywords. We have been using these glossaries up till now, and I think they are very useful." – External KI

² The KI did not remember the actual study and author.

Google Analytics data reinforces the usefulness of such public resources. One notable success was the addition of text and voice for protection and land rights terminology as part of the Nigeria glossary in Hausa, Kanuri and English that in the first seven days had close to 100 unique visitors to the site. Google Analytics data shows that the Nigeria glossary continues to attract interest even though less over time, with 486 views in 2024 compared to 714 in 2023 (no data available for earlier years). So far, 46 views have been recorded in 2025, suggesting some ongoing usage. The Nigeria language data pages in comparison have received over 4000 views over one year, between June 2024 and June 2025.

When online survey respondents were asked about their continued use of CLEAR Global's resources:

- 34.6% said they use them frequently,
- 26.9% use them occasionally,
- 15.4% reported benefiting from them all the time,
- 11.5% indicated that they no longer use them,
- 7.7% said they rarely do,
- 3.8% were unsure.

CLEAR Global has shaped sector-wide data collection on language needs

CLEAR Global's Nigeria program has played an important role in shaping sector-wide language practices and enabling more data-driven humanitarian communication.

One example includes CLEAR Global successfully influencing data collection practices within major humanitarian coordination mechanisms. A notable example is IOM, which, in June 2017, began incorporating language-related questions into its Displacement Tracking Matrix based on CLEAR Global's initial research. This made data on displaced populations' primary languages readily accessible to humanitarian actors for the first time. The findings later informed the inclusion of language-related questions in REACH's Multi-Sector Needs Assessment in 2019, which in turn influenced the organization's humanitarian needs overviews and response plans.

The REACH Multi-Sector Needs Assessment was frequently cited—especially at the management level—as the most significant outcome of these efforts. However, internal KIs also noted a disconnect between data collection and use of such data, with some acknowledging that while language data is now collected, it is not always analyzed or used effectively. As one interviewee pointed out, *“People are aware, but the follow-up might not be great—if nothing happens beyond awareness, what's the real impact?”* Internal KIs also mentioned the data is often not shared.

Further evidence of CLEAR Global advancing sector-wide awareness and best practices for language-inclusive humanitarian response comes from a 2021 [study by ODI Global](#), which found that language exclusion—specifically exclusion from two-way communication—was highlighted more frequently than other inclusion issues. The study recognized CLEAR Global as an example of best practice in promoting more inclusive humanitarian action, particularly in needs assessments and feedback mechanisms. According to the report: *“The presence of Translators without Borders/CLEAR Global (TWB/CG) was repeatedly mentioned as an example of best practice for supporting more inclusive humanitarian action, along with inclusive participation in needs assessments and in feedback and complaint mechanisms.”*

KIs largely agreed that the awareness CLEAR Global has built will likely endure in the long run, particularly in cases where the capacity of local organizations was built. Many identified the increased awareness of local actors as the program's most significant change, considering their continued presence on ground.

“I would want, first of all, to say, please, you shouldn't leave Nigeria. Because some of us very, very strongly believe in what Translators without Borders are doing. It has impacted

[...] what we are doing and we are using the capacity to improve our work. And I tell you, if anybody that has worked with them would sincerely tell you, sincerely, they'll tell you that there's a lot of shift. Because I've attended, not one, not two, some of the, what would I say, feedback sessions with Translators without Borders to ask what their work has done. And it has immensely helped people to improve." - External KI

CLEAR Global advanced localization efforts and contributed to harmonization of AAP practices

CLEAR Global has helped empower local organizations and advance localization, though internal KIs had mixed views on the extent of this impact.

A key achievement was the successful handover of the Community Engagement, Accountability and Localization (CEAL) Working Group's co-leadership to a local organization after the project funding CLEAR Global's engagement in the working group ended. Several internal KIs noted that the working group increased local participation in general, giving organizations a chance to engage more meaningfully and "have a seat at the table". One external KI shared that their relatively new local organization learned from larger, more established actors through this platform. Despite these gains as everywhere power imbalances persist. As one internal KI put it: *"I don't think we've been successful yet in flipping the power balance to amplify local voices more effectively. We need to engage more with the civil society ecosystem in Nigeria and less with the international humanitarian ecosystem."*

"We've managed to bring in local organizations that didn't have a seat at the table to actually co-lead a humanitarian working group. When we started, they were miles away from that. The humanitarian sector was miles away from even envisioning that national organizations could take on that role." - Internal KI

The CEAL Working Group successfully continued after CLEAR Global stepped down as co-chair, suggesting a degree of sustainability, while most external KIs acknowledge fewer meetings, less dedication and reduced activity since. Internal KIs noted that a more thorough handover could have been ensured with more time available.

Through its co-leadership of the CEAL Working Group, CLEAR Global has positioned itself as a key actor in AAP and has likely helped advance AAP practices within organizations. All interviewed organizations referenced the working group, emphasizing its role in building knowledge and sustained improved AAP practices.

Especially the AAP training provided to members of the CEAL working group by CLEAR Global were mentioned as impactful in driving change in AAP practices. While few external KIs provided concrete examples of specific changes, they spoke about stronger feedback mechanisms, more inclusive communication strategies, and a greater focus on two-way engagement with affected communities. One KI, for example, spoke about having introduced learning sessions in which they go back to the communities for learning sessions: *"This is something we didn't do before. Now, after implementation, we go back for learning sessions—discussing what worked well, what didn't, and how we can improve."* Another KI shared how adaptations were made for persons with disabilities during aid distributions: *"We mobilize communities and beneficiaries in safe spaces, but we also consider the barriers persons with disabilities might face. This informs how we distribute aid. For example, instead of requiring them to queue with the general population, we provide targeted support—delivering aid directly to their residences when necessary."*

"That is more broadening because we aspire to having a real client-centered agenda, you know, putting the clients at the heart of our interventions. And clearly, one of the things

which, a critical way in which you can ensure that that happens is being accountable to them, making sure those feedback mechanisms are things which they're able to access and processes they're able to engage with it, and having a mechanism in place by which you're able to communicate with communities so that they engage as best as possible, understand what you're doing, know what to expect from you, and also are in a position to influence what you are delivering for them. And language is very central to that and how people, beyond language, how people want to receive information as well. And so, and trust me CLEAR Global certainly helped in shaping that up in the northeast Nigeria response.” - External KII

“Before CLEAR Global’s workshop, we had CFMs [community feedback mechanisms], but we wouldn’t receive feedback for an entire month. Since working with CLEAR Global, we adapted our CFMs, made communities more aware, and now they function much better. Communities were consulted, provided input on how and when they wanted to give feedback, and as a result, the process is now more community-led.” - External KII

Box 1: Collective Accountability Information Management System

As part of a project funded by the Nigeria Humanitarian Fund (NHF) and Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), CLEAR Global coordinated an effort to improve engagement with affected populations by gathering feedback on their most pressing needs and priorities. A major outcome of the project was the establishment of a Collective Accountability Information Management System. Information Management Officers were trained across eight humanitarian sectors to act as frontline agents in collecting, analyzing, and relaying community feedback.

This system aimed to consolidate community feedback from multiple organizations into a single platform, enabling more coordinated responses and service adaptations based on real-time input. Previously, organizations operated their own independent community feedback mechanisms, often working in silos without sharing insights. The collective system sought to harmonize these efforts, providing a more holistic view of community concerns and service gaps.

Impact

The system has the potential to successfully harmonize feedback mechanisms across multiple sectors, offering a more structured way to integrate community input into humanitarian decision-making. While the full potential of the collective system has yet to be realized, the effort has highlighted the challenges of fragmented accountability mechanisms and the need for sustained collaboration and funding. One KI summed up the significance of this approach: *“Before, each organization had its own feedback mechanism, and no one was talking to each other. Now, we have a collective system where we can better understand community concerns and use that information to improve service delivery.”*

Challenges and limitations

- Limited UN engagement: Efforts to involve UN agencies faced challenges due to data-sharing restrictions and policy approval requirements, limiting the system’s integration into broader humanitarian coordination.
- Varying levels of use: While the system remained operational as of the writing of the report, external KIs were critical of the extent of its adoption, citing inconsistent use and a need for greater funding and coordination.
- Sustainability concerns: To maximize impact, the system requires more engagement from UN agencies, sufficient funding, and stronger coordination among humanitarian actors.
- Lack of breakdown of data by language: The system in its current format doesn’t disaggregate data by language. This includes the language the feedback was submitted in, whether language

was identified as an issue in the feedback itself or whether language was the reason the feedback was not processed successfully.

Feedback from community members shows an improvement of language inclusivity in the humanitarian response

The majority of online survey respondents indicated that CLEAR Global's work had a positive impact on serving project participants' needs. 50.0% reported a noticeable improvement, while 34.6% stated that the impact was significant. A smaller percentage (3.8%) felt that the impact was only somewhat improved, while an equal 3.8% believed it made little difference. Additionally, 3.8% were unsure of the impact, and another 3.8% stated that it made no difference.

As part of a study conducted in early 2025, participants were asked whether they had received information from humanitarian organizations in a language they fully understood, whether they could communicate with these organizations in their preferred language, and whether they had noticed any changes over the past few years. Data was collected across three NGOs and eight communities in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states, including Bama, Damaturu, Gujba, Jere, Madagali, Mafa, Potiskum, and Yola.³ Any changes observed are indicative considering that CLEAR Global was the first organization bringing attention to language access issues in Nigeria.

The findings indicate a positive shift toward more inclusive communication practices in humanitarian response. The vast majority of participants reported that they receive humanitarian information in a language they speak or understand well. While some noted that this had always been the case, most observed a notable improvement in recent years. One participant explained: *"There has been a noticeable change over time. Previously, communication was limited to English and Hausa, but now it fully embraces local languages for greater clarity."* Another person added: *"We have noticed that humanitarian organizations have made great efforts to communicate in a way that everyone understands. Unlike before, they now ensure that information is delivered in multiple languages, making it accessible to different groups of people"*.

The improvement in language accessibility has occurred in two key ways: increased use of interpreters and greater employment of local staff. The latter was preferred by communities. One respondent noted that relying on third-party interpreters made them less confident in communication, but after the shift to local staff, they felt fully confident to engage. Another participant highlighted the benefits of employing local staff, stating: *"The employment of local staff has greatly enhanced understanding. These individuals are familiar with the cultural context and nuances of the local languages, making it easier for them to convey messages effectively. This change has led to better engagement with the community, ensuring that important information is not lost in translation."*

However, not all respondents observed this improvement. In Yobe, two participants stated that they do not receive information in their language and have not noticed any changes in recent years. In Adamawa, some participants acknowledged that while they personally can communicate with humanitarian staff, certain groups remain excluded. One participant highlighted the challenge in Madagali, where diverse tribes, clans, and cultural backgrounds affect communication: *"There are a lot of different tribes, clans and cultural backgrounds in Madagali. Some of these people live in the bushes and don't communicate well with the humanitarian actors."*

³ A total of 344 individuals participated across 14 KIIs and 33 focus-group discussions.

Box 2: Site visit to Bama

A site visit to an internally displaced persons' camp in Bama revealed findings that differed from those gathered in the broader study mentioned above. While the sample size was much smaller, the visit highlighted the need for diverse types of evidence to better understand where and how changes occur and are sustained. This underscores the importance of triangulating data sources and methodologies to capture a more comprehensive picture of communication access and language inclusion in the humanitarian response in northeast Nigeria.

Language accessibility on posters

Most posters displayed in the camp were in English, with some also featuring Kanuri. However, even on materials that included Kanuri, the most critical messages were often presented only in English.

Complaint and feedback mechanisms

Three focus group discussions were conducted with women, men, and community leaders in the camp. While participants reported that they had been asked about their needs and knew how to submit feedback, they also expressed frustration that multiple concerns had remained unaddressed for years. These included:

- Lack of medical assistance at night
- Perceived preferential treatment of host communities
- Limited access to services for people with disabilities

Language access for women and marginalized groups

Kanuri was the primary language spoken in the camp, and staff mainly communicated in Kanuri. While this was relevant for most people, it created barriers for those who did not speak the language. In one focus group, at least two women could not speak Kanuri and had to rely on others to translate for them. This informal translation system meant that they had limited access to information. Additionally, women without husbands were particularly disadvantaged, as they had less access to information overall.

Existing language technology projects could prove the concept but have had limited sustainability

Short-term funding cycles have limited the long-term impact and sustainability of CLEAR Global's language technologies. The organization's key achievements in this domain appear to be demonstrating feasibility rather than achieving widespread adoption. As one KI noted: *"I think the model of what we've done with technology in Nigeria, as elsewhere, has been to show that something is possible."* Internal KIs said that the development of conversational AI chatbots in Hausa, Kanuri, and Shuwa Arabic was particularly groundbreaking at the time, as this had not been tried by any other organization. Internal KIs further suggested that CLEAR Global's demonstrations inspired other organizations to experiment with such language technology themselves, accelerating adoption and innovation across the sector. External KIs involved in this study were not focused on technology in their work and therefore could not corroborate these claims.

"We were the first people to do this. There was nothing else like it at that point. Since then, more organizations are creating multilingual content, chatbots in multiple languages, and similar AI solutions. I'd say we showed it's possible and paved the way for others." - Internal KI

"I believe that without examples like ours demonstrating how this can be done, the attention to low-resource languages as achievable targets for voice technology wouldn't exist." - Internal KI

"A small piece of evidence supporting this is that organizations like the Gates Foundation and GIZ are now coming to us—not just us, but including us—asking how to tackle these challenges. I think we've helped move an important conversation forward" - Internal KI

Chatbot development was widely regarded by internal KIs as unsustainable for CLEAR Global. A key challenge was that CLEAR Global does not create or manage the content, making it difficult to maintain relevant and up-to-date information. Further, at the time the two chatbots were created, effective chatbot development required specialized expertise in conversational design which was hard to find. While advances in AI are beginning to address some of these challenges, all internal KIs believed that CLEAR Global should not pursue chatbot development any further.

"It's not sustainable for CLEAR Global to develop chatbots since they're not the ones managing the content. It's unlikely that you'll build chatbots that someone else will fully take ownership of, especially if the information constantly needs updating." - Internal KI

A significant barrier to sustainability for CLEAR Global's language technology work lies in the complexity of working across multiple languages and contexts. As one KI explained: *"Our problem is languages because we want to be everywhere, and changing the language changes everything. Changing the context changes everything."* With language technology, linguistic and contextual shifts require starting from scratch. Each new language brings unique cultural nuances, communication styles, and user needs. A solution designed for one language or region often cannot be replicated without substantial adaptation. CLEAR Global's current approach, which spans multiple contexts, has not allowed for a level of sustained, localized focus: *"One of the reasons why we are not sustainable is that we keep going into new places, new languages, doing new things. We are not building on top of something."*

Therefore, many internal KIs suggested that CLEAR Global's future lies in developing foundational tools and technologies, showing others what is possible to do on their own or allowing them to build on these solutions: *"Our role is to show that it's feasible so others can take it forward. We need to provide the foundation—playbooks, frameworks, and evidence—so partners can replicate and scale the solutions themselves."* According to internal KIs, CLEAR Global's role should focus on empowering partners by providing the data, models, and frameworks necessary for multilingual or voice-enabled applications with a focus on low resource languages. Internal KIs suggested that CLEAR Global could position itself as a leader in this space by providing governments with valuable linguistic data while promoting ethical data collection practices to build trustworthy language models.

"We need to identify who is interested in using and developing language technology. Our role should be to connect these stakeholders and ensure that the technology developed is good enough for real-world use." - Internal KI

A significant challenge to the sustainability of such language technology projects might be the need to hand over these tools to partners. Internal KIs emphasized that many partners lack the necessary infrastructure, expertise, or resources to manage these technologies independently. At the same time, larger actors with sufficient capacity are increasingly developing their own solutions, reducing the demand for external tools provided by organizations like CLEAR Global. This evolving landscape leaves the future of CLEAR Global's role in language technology uncertain—particularly in light of substantial investments by leading technology companies in similar innovations. As larger players continue to dominate the space with

their resources and technical capabilities, CLEAR Global faces the challenge of carving out a niche where its work can remain relevant and impactful.

“Some organizations we work with might prefer to develop their own language models from our data sets. Others might want us to build the language model and then integrate it into their systems. And others wouldn’t know how to go about the integration at all. So, it really depends.” – Internal KI

“Most humanitarian organizations don’t have the capacity to integrate this technology into their CFMs [community feedback mechanisms], but larger players do—and they’re building their own teams. So, while developing data and models is important, the organizations that need it most might not be the ones who end up using it.” – Internal KI

Box 3: Shehu chatbot

In 2022, with funding from Mercy Corps, CLEAR Global reintroduced the Shehu chatbot. Originally created in 2020 with support from the Humanitarian Grand Challenge, the multilingual chatbot was designed to provide accurate COVID-19 vaccination information in English, Hausa, and Kanuri. The chatbot was set up to work on popular messaging platforms, including Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp, making it easily accessible to diverse communities. Unlike the menu-based chatbots commonly deployed during the pandemic, Shehu allowed users to put questions in their own words.

Key outcomes

- **User engagement:** Shehu facilitated over 86,000 conversations with more than 6,000 individuals, achieving a 93.3% trust rating from users.
- **Gender-sensitive design:** The chatbot was particularly effective among women, who felt more comfortable asking questions through the chatbot than in direct conversations with male counterparts.
- **Innovation:** According to internal KIs, Shehu was the first chatbot to operate in languages like Hausa and Kanuri, proving that AI-powered solutions can effectively serve marginalized language communities: *“With Shehu, we showed it was possible to have a conversational AI chatbot in languages like Hausa and Kanuri, which hadn’t been done before.”*
- **Increased COVID-19 vaccination numbers:** While there is no direct evidence attributing increased vaccination rates solely to Shehu, external KIs suggested that the chatbot, alongside other interventions, contributed to raising awareness and influencing behavior around COVID-19 vaccination.
- **Organizational impact and unintended effects:** The Shehu project had broader impacts on Mercy Corps beyond its original scope. According to an external KI, the program led to the mass utilization of dashboards within Mercy Corps. Questions raised due to the project prompted the development of data dashboard templates that would include additional questions or would use different software to enable gathering additional information, which had not been used previously and are used to date. The project also contributed to technological innovation within Mercy Corps and helped secure additional funding for future projects. Finally, an external KI also said how working with CLEAR Global taught them about the value of iteration and revision.

Challenges to sustainability

Despite its success, the initiative struggled to secure ongoing funding, preventing further development: *“We’ve shown the way rather than maintained and developed from there because we haven’t managed to secure sustained funding to keep the service running.”*

The project also highlighted the limitations of short-term funding cycles. Mercy Corps' budget of \$70,000 constrained the chatbot's scope, limiting it to a maximum of 20 frequently asked questions—a decision made to align with the funding available.

Operational challenges

- **Limited reach:** Engagement was highest among literate, tech-savvy individuals with stable internet access, such as civil servants, students, and healthcare workers. The most marginalized groups, particularly those with limited digital literacy or poor internet access, were less likely to benefit from the chatbot. External KIs suggested that future iterations of such a chatbot should explore integrating USSD codes to accommodate users without internet access:
 - *"The feedback from the community was just a dialable code,#, that once you dial, whether it's an internet-enabled device or not, you could still get a list of frequently asked questions."*
- **Disconnect between tech development and program objectives:** External KIs noted a disconnect between CLEAR Global's focus on technology and the need to align chatbot data with programmatic indicators and objectives: *"CLEAR Global was more focused on the user interface and clicks, while we needed to link the chatbot's data directly to program indicators, like how many users actually got vaccinated after interacting with the chatbot."*
- **Data protection restrictions:** Privacy policies limit the collection of specific user information, making it difficult to assess the chatbot's direct impact on behavior change or vaccination uptake.

Language services remain highly relevant but lack funding

KIs consistently stressed the critical role of translation support in humanitarian efforts and programming. All external KIs emphasized the continued need for translation support, training, and related services previously provided by CLEAR Global. They highlighted the organization's unique expertise, noting that few others offer the same level of specialization. Similarly, the online survey results showed that CLEAR Global's work was perceived as highly relevant to the respondent organizations' goals and priorities, with 57.7% strongly agreeing and 30.8% agreeing.

"So, we have been receiving requests for language and translation services, recording of videos and audio messages, but we don't have organizations that have the technical capacity to do that type of work. And so, there's a huge gap. And it's our hope that maybe CLEAR Global can get the resources to be able to continue providing that service." - External KI

Convincing organizations to prioritize language and accessible communication amidst competing funding needs remains difficult. While many indicated a desire to collaborate with CLEAR Global again, they cited a lack of available funding and frequently mentioned the high costs associated with CLEAR Global's language services. While some external KIs acknowledged that greater awareness of these costs could allow for better integration into future budgets, it remains unlikely that sufficient funding will be available without the dedicated financial support of donors. As one internal KI said: *"With so many urgent priorities, it was hard to get [donors and potential partners organizations] to focus on accessible communication and language, both in terms of funding and attention."*

"For partners receiving NHF [Nigeria Humanitarian Fund] funding, it was easier to advocate because the translations were already funded [by NHF]. But outside that

context, it's still a challenge to convince them to allocate budgets for multilingual communication. Language is often the first thing cut when funding is tight.” – Internal KII

While most KIIs believed that funding for language and translation services would not be a donor priority, one external KII highlighted: “As we build momentum on localizing the response, the need for translation and language services increases because communities must be communicated with in their language. That’s the reality.” According to them, despite commitments to localization, effective communication remains overlooked and advocacy was needed to position CLEAR Global as a key player in bridging this gap. The KII recommended bringing the discussion to sector-level coordination and the Humanitarian Country Team, where donors are present. Another KII noted that while there is no dedicated budget for translation support, funding exists for producing communication materials. They suggested that CLEAR Global could consider offering a “full package” that would include other services – such as for example communication or AAP services and then included translation costs within those broader communication budgets.

“So, having a project that only focuses on translation—it wouldn’t carry as much weight. We are shifting towards innovation, bringing in new ideas to incorporate into projects. Even if translation is included, it should be integrated with other innovative ideas so that the program itself has a stronger impact. We need projects that are multi-sectoral, touching different areas. This is to ensure effectiveness in the use of funds—so that with a reasonable amount of funding, we can have an impact across multiple sectors. That’s our major focus now.” – External KII

Conclusion

CLEAR Global has played a critical role in improving communication access for marginalized language communities in northeast Nigeria. Its high-quality translation services, training programs, and advocacy for linguistic inclusion have significantly influenced humanitarian actors, expanding the use of local languages in crisis response. While direct service provision has decreased, CLEAR Global’s awareness-raising efforts, resources, and advocacy have contributed to lasting shifts in sector-wide practices.

The shift towards AAP has positioned CLEAR Global within a new niche, particularly as opportunities for language service work have declined. However, the Nigeria program’s strong focus on AAP presents both an opportunity and a challenge. While AAP can reinforce CLEAR Global’s core mission of language inclusion, this alignment has not yet been effectively leveraged.

Finally, this evaluation raises the question about the long-term viability of maintaining a country program in Nigeria. CLEAR Global’s remote-first model makes the organization appear less engaged, especially in a context where constant physical presence is the norm. At the same time, its local presence has strengthened credibility, legitimacy, and direct engagement with affected communities. While the added value of its presence in the past was evident, the question on whether a presence in Nigeria in the



extremely constrained funding environment still serves a critical purpose for CLEAR Global must be answered.

Annex A

Evaluation criteria and questions

The objectives of the evaluation are centered around assessing the effectiveness, relevance, sustainability, and impact of CLEAR Global's projects in northeast Nigeria. Specifically, the evaluation will focus on the following criteria:

Relevance

- To what extent does the Nigeria program align with CLEAR Global's Direction of Travel 2022-2025 strategy?
- How do partners and donors perceive the relevance of CLEAR Global's work in relation to their own strategies and priorities?
- How relevant is CLEAR Global's work to the future priorities and funding opportunities of donors?
- To what extent is CLEAR Global's approach in Nigeria transferable to other regions within the country?

Effectiveness

- How well did the Nigeria program meet the short-term goals of its projects?
- What were the key drivers behind the success or failure of these short-term outcomes?
- How satisfied are CLEAR Global's donors and partners with the organization's work and collaboration?
- How well do the short-term outcomes link to CLEAR Global's longer-term objectives?

Efficiency

- What key features contributed to the successful achievement of project goals?
- How effectively were the projects executed according to the work plan?
- Were resources used efficiently, and are there opportunities to further optimize operations?
- How have the projects been monitored and evaluated for progress?

Impact

- What longer-term changes have resulted from the projects?
- To what extent has the Nigeria program influenced systemic changes within the broader humanitarian and development sector (e.g., donor strategies)?
- To what extent has the Nigeria program impacted the behavior and capabilities of other organizations?
- To what extent has the Nigeria program affected people's well-being?
- Have there been any unintended long-term consequences (positive or negative) from CLEAR Global's Nigeria program?
- How well do the longer-term outcomes link to CLEAR Global's strategic objectives?

Sustainability

- What steps have been taken to ensure the sustainability of benefits after project completion?
- How sustainable are the outcomes years after the projects' completion?

Annex B

List of interviewed organizations

Organization	Number of interviewees
Impact	1
Street Child	1
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA)	1
Mercy Corps	1
International organization for Migration (IOM)	2
Mercy Sarah Foundation	1
CATAI	1
Nigeria Humanitarian Fund (NHF)	2
Catholic Relief Services	1
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	2
United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)	1
International Rescue Committee (IRC)	1
Fact Foundation	1
Plan International	1
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	1

Annex C

Online survey

Thank you for taking part in this survey! Your feedback is vital for our evaluation of CLEAR Global's (formerly known as Translators without Borders, TWB) activities in Nigeria since 2017. In May 2021, TWB became CLEAR Global, a name more representative of its broader mission that extends beyond translation to include a wider range of language and communication solutions.

This evaluation aims to assess how well our program aligns with our global strategy, evaluate its short- and long-term impacts, and to gather lessons learned to improve future programming. By sharing your experiences with our activities and your insights, you will help us better serve our partners and the people affected by crises we support.

The survey will take about 10–15 minutes to complete. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used anonymously to help us with this evaluation. Thank you for your time and valuable input!

Section 1: Tell us about yourself				
No	Question	Response Options	Type	Logic
0	Do you agree to take part in the survey?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. No b. Yes 	Single response	If "a" - end survey
1	What's the name of the organization you're working for?		Open	
2	What is your role in your organization?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Project/Programme Management b. Project/Programme Delivery c. Monitoring and Evaluation d. Communication e. Fundraising/Advocacy f. Technical Advisor/Specialist g. Other <i>(please describe)</i> 	Single response	
3	How have you engaged with CLEAR Global/TWB? <i>(Choose all that apply.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Contracted/Funded CLEAR Global/TWB to implement a project b. Worked with CLEAR Global/TWB as part of a consortium c. Were contracted by CLEAR Global/TWB to implement/support a project d. Interacted with CLEAR Global/TWB as part of a working group or other response coordination activity e. Used CLEAR Global/TWB's reports, translations, tools, or other resources produced f. Participated in a CLEAR Global/TWB training or workshop g. Other <i>(please describe)</i> 	Multiple response	If "f" - continue to next
4	What areas was the work related to?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. WASH b. Shelter and housing c. Protection d. Child protection e. Nutrition f. Logistics g. Health h. Food and Security i. Emergency Telecommunications j. Education k. Early recovery l. Camp coordination and camp management m. Community engagement / Accountability to Affected People n. Climate action 	Multiple response	

		o. Disaster preparedness p. Forced displacement and migration q. Psychosocial support r. PSEA s. Other <i>(please specify)</i>		
Section 2: Overall Satisfaction				
	Please rate how much you agree with the following statements			
5	I am satisfied with CLEAR Global/TWB's work	a. I strongly agree b. I agree c. I am neutral d. I disagree e. I strongly disagree f. I don't know	Single response	
6	CLEAR Global/TWB addressed the needs of my organization		Single response	
7	CLEAR Global/TWB's work is relevant for my organization's goals and priorities		Single response	
8	How would you rate the quality of CLEAR Global/TWB's work?	a. Excellent b. Good c. Fair d. Poor e. Very poor f. I don't know	Single response	
9	<i>Optional:</i> How can CLEAR Global/TWB improve?		Open answer <i>(optional)</i>	
Section 3: Impact				
10	To what extent has CLEAR Global/TWB helped you better serve the needs of your project participants?	a. Significantly improved b. Noticeably improved c. Somewhat improved d. Made little difference e. Made no difference f. Not sure	Single response	
11	What changes have you observed in your organization's capacity as a result of CLEAR Global/TWB's work? <i>(Choose all that apply.)</i>	a. Increased capacity to implement complaint-feedback mechanisms b. Increased capacity to communicate with affected people c. Increased awareness of communication preferences of affected people d. Increased awareness of how technology can improve communication with affected people	Multiple response	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. Improved capacity to use technology in communication and service delivery f. No changes occurred g. I have not observed any changes, but they may have occurred h. Other <i>(please specify)</i> 		
12	<p>What changes have you observed in how your organization communicates with affected people as a result of CLEAR Global/TWB's work?</p> <p><i>(Choose all that apply.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Communicated with affected people in additional languages b. Provided information materials in additional languages c. Used a wider variety of communication formats (e.g., audio, visuals) d. Employed a wider range of communication channels a. Enhanced cultural sensitivity in communication through improved translation and interpretation b. Improved monitoring of how language barriers increase vulnerabilities c. Enhanced service design based on insights into language and communication needs d. Increased accessibility and inclusivity of digital services e. No changes occurred f. I have not observed any changes, but they may have occurred g. Other <i>(please specify)</i> 	Multiple response	
13	<p>What changes have you observed among affected people as a result of CLEAR Global/TWB's work?</p> <p><i>(Choose all that apply.)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Affected people could communicate their needs more effectively b. Affected people demonstrated greater trust in services and/or my organization c. Affected people contributed to service design and/or decision-making processes d. Affected people had improved access to information e. Affected people could understand information better f. I did not observe any direct impact on affected people g. No changes occurred h. I have not observed any changes, but they may have occurred i. Other <i>(please specify)</i> 	Multiple response	

14	Have any of the changes had a lasting impact on your work even after your work/engagement with CLEAR Global/TWB ended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes, most or all changes have been sustained and applied to future work b. Yes, some changes have been sustained. c. No, none of the changes have been sustained d. Not sure 	Single response	
15	What data or evidence do you have that demonstrates changes for affected people linked to CLEAR Global/TWB's work? (Choose all that apply)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. My own observations a. Feedback from affected people (e.g., surveys, interviews, focus groups) b. Quantitative data (e.g., metrics on service usage, participation rates, or access improvements) c. Reports or evaluations produced externally d. Case studies or documented success stories e. Independent research or academic studies f. Not sure g. Other (please specify) 	Multiple response	
16	Would you be willing to share more of this evidence with us, either by providing the data directly or through an interview?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No 	Single response	If "a" - continue to Q15, otherwise skip to Q16
17	Please provide your contact details <i>(Your contact details will not be shared and will only be used for this information)</i>		Open (optional)	
18	To what extent are you still using or benefiting from the work that CLEAR Global/TWB has done today?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. All the time b. Frequently c. Occasionally d. Rarely e. Not at all f. I don't know 	Single response	
19	Have you ever used CLEAR Global/TWB's research to inform your work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. No b. Yes 	Single response	If "b", skip to Q21

20	How has CLEAR Global/TWB's research informed your work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Better evidence for program design and planning b. Improved understanding of language and cultural barriers c. Clearer insights on how language intersects with gender, conflict, and accountability d. Better understanding of how to build trust e. Evidence to support hiring for community engagement and inclusion f. Increased potential for digital communication with affected people g. Other <i>(please specify)</i> 	Multiple response	
21	What do you consider the most significant contribution CLEAR Global/TWB has made to your organization's work?		Open <i>(optional)</i>	
Section 4: Technology				
22	Did your engagement with CLEAR Global/TWB involve talking about or working on technology?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No c. I don't know 	Single response	If "a" - continue to Q23, else skip to Q25
23	To what extent has this experience helped you improve your use of technology in your work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Very much b. Quite a bit c. Somewhat d. Very little e. Not at all f. Not sure 	Single response	
24	To what extent has CLEAR Global/TWB helped you better understand how to use technology to communicate with affected people?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Very much b. Quite a bit c. Somewhat d. Very little e. Not at all f. Not sure 	Single response	
Section 6: Closing Questions				
25	How often do you or your colleagues assess which languages people speak during project design or implementation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Always b. Often c. Sometimes d. Rarely e. Never f. Don't know 		

26	Have you ever used CLEAR Global's language use data platform?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No 		
27	Which languages does your organization use regularly to communicate with people in northeast Nigeria?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Hausa b. Kanuri c. Shuwa d. Fulfulde e. Bura Pabir f. Marghi g. Mandara h. Kibaku i. Waha j. Not sure k. Other <i>(please specify)</i> 	Multiple response	
28	Do you have any other feedback? <i>(Please also indicate if you would like a verbal interview.)</i>			Open <i>(optional)</i>