

Financing Early Childhood Development in Crisis Settings in Nigeria



Factsheet for Advocates and Journalists

This factsheet highlights how insufficient and inconsistent funding for early childhood development in crisis settings is affecting young children in Nigeria, drawing on new analysis by Moving Minds Alliance and Whole Child Advisors report released in April 2026 **informed by 2020 - 2025 data.**

1. The Context

Nigeria's youngest children are growing up in one of the world's most complex humanitarian environments.

216+M

Nigeria has **216+million people in 2022 (National Bureau of Statistics); 41% are children under 14, one of the world's youngest populations (World Bank).**

4.9M

4.9 million children require life-saving humanitarian support (UNICEF).

3.6+M

3.6+million people were forcibly displaced in Nigeria in 2025 (UNHCR), including massive internal displacement in Borno, Benue and the North-West.

0-8

Despite nominal budgets, children aged 0-8 in crisis remain "fiscally invisible" - not tracked in any dedicated budget line (Moving Minds Alliance).

Millions of young children in Nigeria are invisible in the national budget, and the cost can be severe and life-altering.

2. Nigeria's Children Are Growing Up in Crisis

Human Development Warning Signs

1. Nigeria's Human Capital Index:

0.36

meaning children may reach only **36% of their future productivity** (World Bank).

2. Under 5 mortality:

105/1000

approximately 105 deaths per 1000 live births (World Bank).

3. Maternal mortality:

993/100,000

In 2023, Nigeria's maternal mortality ratio was approximately 993 deaths per 100,000 live births (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank).

4. Stunting:

33.8-40%

33.8%–40% of children under five are stunted (UNICEF, WHO, World Bank; NDHS 2023–24)

5. Severe Acute Malnutrition:

1.8M Children

surged to 1.8 million cases (2024 - 2025), a 69% increase from previous estimates (UNICEF).

Going by these statistics, a child born in Nigeria today will barely reach a third of their potential, and decades of research points to where that loss begins and can still be stopped: **the first eight years of life.**

3. Where the Money Goes (and Doesn't Go)

Nigeria's social spending is far below global standards

Sector	Allocation	% of Federal Budget	% of GDP	Benchmark Gap
Education	₦3.52 trillion (2025)	7.07%	0.5–0.7%	Below UNESCO 4–6% of GDP
Health	₦1.2 trillion (2025)	5.2%	0.5–0.6%	Below 15% Abuja target
Social Protection	₦500bn–₦1.2tn (2024–25)	2.3–3%	0.14–0.7%	Limited coverage of the poor
Nutrition	US\$10–50m annually	<1%	<0.05%	NMPFAN cost: US\$1.98bn
Humanitarian Affairs	US\$910m required (2025)	2.5–3.5%	<0.5%	Chronic funding gap

4. Budget Execution: The Hidden Crisis

- In 2024, the federal government executed only **38.56%** of the approved capital allocation.
- Only **17.7%** of capital funds were released by **Q3 2025**.
- Many states achieved **<15%** execution for health & basic education early in the year, when children need services the most.

- Nigeria is not only underfunding services for young children, it is also failing to fully spend the resources already allocated.

5. What Young Children Actually Receive

Across all sectors, **ECD in Crisis** gets a tiny share:

- **Education:**

70-80%

spent on salaries; <5% benefits early childhood or emergency learning.

- **Health:**

70%

recurrent; <1.5% for early-childhood focused services.

- **Humanitarian:**
<1%

of humanitarian aid funds early learning or developmental support.

- **Nutrition:**
70%

recurrent; <1.5% for early-childhood-focused services.

Even in emergencies, funding for early learning, stimulation, or caregiver support remains limited. Survival (health + nutrition) is prioritised. Thriving Factors (early learning + responsive caregiving + safety and security) is not.

6. Who Gets Left Behind?

Massive Inequities

- Humanitarian funding >**85%** concentrated in Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe.
- Rural LGAs, host communities, and the North-West receive **far less** despite high vulnerability.
- Social protection: **Only 44%** of benefits reach the poor.
- Out-of-pocket health spending: **70–80%**, excluding the poorest families.

Children outside the Northeast conflict belt are almost invisible to donors and governments.

7. Why Early Childhood Development in Crisis Is Failing

Five Systemic Barriers

1. **No dedicated/tagged budget line** for children aged 0–8 in crisis.
2. **Weak execution** -funding arrives too late or not at all.
3. **Fragmented financing flows** -too many intermediaries.
4. **Recurrent heavy budgets** leave little room for essential services.
5. **Inequitable distribution** -money flows to accessible, urban areas first.

The system is built to fund structures, not children.

8. Who is responsible and What Policies Exist?

- The National ECD Policy (NPIECD 2015, updated 2024) exists, but it does not address emergencies or define what young children should receive during conflict, displacement, or disasters.
- The National ECD Committee serves as the federal platform for ECD policy alignment, but it has no operational crisis mandate.
- Sector policies in education, health, nutrition, and social protection exist, but they operate in silos and do not form a crisis-ready ECD system.
- Key government bodies, including the Federal Ministry of Education/UBEC, Humanitarian Affairs, Health/NPHCDA are mandated to fund and deliver early childhood services, while state governors and SUBEBs control frontline budget releases.

9. What Is Working

- **Basic Health Care Provision Fund (BHCPF):** direct facility-level funding improving reliability.
- **Nigeria Humanitarian Fund (NHF):** 70–80% goes to Nigerian NGOs, improving reach.
- **Digital ID systems (NIN/BVN):** reduces leakage in cash transfers.

When financing flows directly to frontline providers, outcomes improve.

10. What Success Looks Like

Success indicators are not limited to:

- **Transparency:** ECDiC has a budget tag and ring-fenced sub programmes in federal and state budgets.
- **Accountability:** ≥70% of ECDiC tagged funds are released annually and data of quarterly execution is public.
- **Child outcomes:** % of children in crisis receiving the full nurturing care package: good health, adequate nutrition, early learning, responsive caregiving, safety and security, and showing stronger overall development.

Attribution & Verification

- **Source:** [Nigeria Financing Analysis on Early Childhood Development in Crisis \(ECDiC\) report](#), published in April 2026 by the Moving Minds Alliance, with analysis conducted by Whole Child Advisors.
- For more insights, explore the [policy brief](#): Financing Early Childhood Development in Crisis (ECDiC) in Nigeria: From Fiscal Invisibility to Child Level Results.
- [Moving Minds Alliance](#) (MMA) is a multi-stakeholder alliance of 40+ international organisations advocating for early childhood development in every crisis response, leveraging the strengths of diverse actors from the local to the global. In Nigeria, the Alliance is funding and supporting a locally led multi-stakeholder coalition to advocate for ECD in crisis.
- To schedule interviews with MMA spokespeople, coalition members, or for more information, contact MMA Strategic Communications Lead, Lola Ayanda at lola.ayanda@movingmindsalliance.org.