

STORIES OF CHANGE

# Improving Basic Education Delivery and Learning Outcomes in Northern Nigeria

March 2024





# FOREWORD

This collection of stories of change from the PLANE Window One programme showcases some of the progress we made in our first year of implementation, supporting the delivery of education services at the federal level and in three northern states, Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa. We remain proud to say that PLANE alone did not make these changes happen. It took collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, government, development partners, civil society, the Nigerian Union of Teachers, private sector, schools, communities, parents, volunteers, learners and everyone who works with them. As the name of the programme implies, we believe in building strong partnerships to accelerate progress for every Nigerian child, enabling access to a safe, inclusive and effective education system, irrespective of how remotely located their community is, what barriers exist or what background they come from.

In this series you will read about our efforts to use technology to improve school monitoring through the introduction of an education dashboard. With this technical assistance to the government in the three states, the number of school support visits tripled over a period of three months and has continued to increase. We also share information about the transformation ongoing in schools through our capacity-building initiatives for educators; the provision of Hausa foundational learning materials to pupils and teachers; as well as the prioritisation and domestication of effective safeguarding and inclusion policies. Our work with non-state education providers is also making a meaningful difference.



We have facilitated financial inclusion opportunities, opened a space for collaboration with government through the public-private partnership forums and have built the capacity of the government to improve quality assurance of non-state schools through the conduct of Graded Assessments to gather data for school improvement.

Through grassroots efforts and dedication, access to education is becoming a reality for more and more children. We supported the establishment of 200 community learning hubs to foster a culture of learning in communities. These hubs have enjoyed community ownership, while also providing a platform for in-school and out-of-school children to interact and learn together.

Challenges remain, but our stories affirm that progress is possible if all stakeholders stay committed. They inspire us to continue working till every child has an education that can enable them to thrive in the 21st Century world of work. We are excited about what lies ahead, as the programme continues into its second year of implementation.

Happy reading!  
**Dr Nguyan Shaku Feese**  
**National Team Lead, PLANE**

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## ABOUT PLANE

The Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria (PLANE) is a seven-year programme funded by the UK Government to enable a more inclusive, safe and effective education system in Nigeria. It realises the Government of Nigeria and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)'s shared commitment to deliver sustainable improvements in learning outcomes for Nigeria's children. The PLANE programme works with federal and state leaders, legislators, education providers, civil society, children and parents federally and in Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Borno, Yobe, the south-east and the south-west.

PLANE works on basic education across state and non-state education systems with a focus on marginalised groups, especially girls. It contributes towards real, transformational change, driving progress in the learning environment and supporting improvements in how education is managed and delivered. It will lead to more children going to school, staying in school and learning more. This will be done through improvements in teaching and learning with a focus on foundational skills; unlocking governance bottlenecks for better education service delivery; improvements in the regulation of the non-state sector; embedding the use of data and evidence within the education system; helping children affected by conflict; and improving the inclusion and learning of marginalised children as a whole.





A School Support Officer updating the education dashboard on her mobile phone from class observations

## Adoption of Education Dashboard Triples School Support Visits in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa

### SYNOPSIS

With technical assistance from the Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria (PLANE) programme state governments in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa have introduced the use of technology in tracking and reporting school support visits and results in real-time. The technology, an Education Dashboard connected to a data collection app (Open Data Kit), has significantly increased support visits in schools, while also providing relevant data to education authorities for improved decision making.

### INTRODUCTION

School Support Officers (SSOs) conduct school support visits on behalf of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). The inperson school support visits are critical to improving classroom practices and strengthening school leadership. They also present an opportunity to collate relevant information about schools, for decision-making and planning purposes.

However, over the years, there have been numerous challenges with the effectiveness and efficiency of school support visits, particularly in rural areas. This is because data from these visits to schools are recorded and transmitted manually by SSOs, affecting timeliness, reliability and validity. In some cases, these reports could also be generated without actual visits to schools, thereby falsely reporting the number of actual support visits that schools receive. With support from the Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria (PLANE) programme, the state governments in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa have now introduced the use of an Education Dashboard technology to help them in tracking and reporting school support visits and results in real-time.

The Dashboard consists of a comprehensive data management and visualisation system. It is used primarily for providing real time data-driven insights for informed decision making, assessing school performance, teacher observations, and resource allocation. The system involves Power BI for data visualisation and Open Data Kit (ODK) for data collection. The ODK is mainly used by SSOs who visit schools to conduct various assessments. Integrating the Education Dashboard improved monitoring and evaluation mechanisms has allowed swift identification of challenges in schools and responsive actions. With this intervention, in 2023, school support visits PLANE-supported schools in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa states increased within three months from 413 (21%) to 1522 (77%).



*'I find my work easier, unlike before when we used paper and pen. It also saves the time we use in writing from one page to another. With the app, everything has been designed and planned just for you to keep on pressing and scrolling and just do the writing'*

- Jamila Shehu, SSO

*'It's a fantastic initiative and improvement in comparison to when the manual system of paper and pen was used.*

*UBEC has committed to sustain the Education Dashboard initiative introduced by PLANE "It's one of the things that the Commission will carry on because it has a wider platform working in all the states of the Federation, including FCT'*

- Mayowa Aleshin, UBEC



## INTERVENTION CONTEXT: CHALLENGES WITH SCHOOL MONITORING PROCESS

Before the adoption of the education dashboard, support visits to schools by SSOs in Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa faced various challenges. These include:

- Inability to access accurate and comprehensive data due to the absence of a standardised data collection system, leading to discrepancies and gaps in the information available for analysis during support visits.
- Data collection processes relying heavily on manual methods, which is time-consuming, prone to errors, and challenging to consolidate across different schools or regions.
- Difficulty in analysing the data collected during school support visits comprehensively. Thus, insights are limited, making it more difficult to identify trends or patterns that could inform targeted interventions.
- Lack of real-time Information about education metrics, such as enrolment rates, attendance, and academic performance, might not be readily available. This hinders timely decision-making and intervention strategies. Challenges with resource allocation due to a lack of clear insights into education needs during support visits. Therefore, identifying priority areas for improvement might be less data-driven and more reliant on qualitative assessments.
- Inefficiencies and conflicts in coordinating support visits across various schools without a centralised system for data management and communication.
- Difficulty in monitoring the impact of support visits and interventions.

## THE INTERVENTION: ADOPTION OF EDUCATION DASHBOARD

Dashboard page showing school list

**Purpose of the Dashboard:** The primary goal of the dashboard is to provide stakeholders (states, PLANE and other educational authorities) with data-driven insights for informed decision-making. It helps identify schools needing support, plan teacher training sessions based on identified challenges, and effectively manage the distribution of **educational materials**.

**Data Collection:** ODK is utilised for data collection by SSOs during school visits. The data collected includes information from lesson observations, teacher interviews, head teacher interviews, attendance records, material availability and more. There is a process of data cleaning to ensure that only quality data meeting certain criteria is included in the dashboard.

**Dashboard Structure:** The dashboard contains multiple pages for different purposes and areas of assessment. It includes a school list, visit progress tracking, monitoring of SSO-teacher assignment issues, GPS tracking of school visits, and data collection progress by state, local government areas (LGAs) and individual SSOs.

### Specific Pages/Functionalities:

1. **Lesson Observation Data:** Monitors what is happening in classrooms, teaching practices observed, attendance rates, and perceived strengths/challenges of lessons.
2. **Coaching Sessions:** Summarises coaching discussions between SSOs and teachers, highlighting areas that require support.
3. **Material in the Classroom:** Tracks the availability and usage of educational materials by teachers and students.
4. **Head Teacher Interviews:** Captures various topics related to school management, enrollment, teacher data, safeguarding, etc. and the percentage of schools where these interviews have been conducted.

### Visualisation and Reporting:

The dashboard uses Power BI to visualize data, allowing for filtering by various parameters like state, SSO, or specific topics covered during interviews. It provides an overview of school performance, completion rates, and coverage percentages, enabling targeted support where needed.

## SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOLLOWING USE OF EDUCATION DASHBOARD

PLANE built the capacity of actors at the state, local government and school levels to develop a monitoring framework, deploy technology and competently conduct monitoring activities including school support visits. The introduction of the education dashboard into the basic education sector through the support of PLANE has helped to improve the monitoring of School Support Officers' activities, facilitating real-time reporting and intervention strategies. The system streamlines data collection, analysis, and dissemination, enabling more informed decision-making and targeted support during visits to schools.

Integrating the education dashboard improved monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, allowing swift identification of challenges in schools and responsive actions. With this intervention, school support visits increased in PLANE-supported schools in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa states within three months from 413 (21%) to 1522 (77%). Data from the dashboard also informed joint spot visits to schools by officials from PLANE, Ministry of Education and SUBEB in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa states.

With the introduction of the dashboard, SUBEB or LGEAs can now use data to monitor how many times a school has received visits in a particular month. This helps ensure that SSOs do not concentrate efforts on visiting some schools while abandoning others. It might also be useful in providing transport allowances to SSOs where stipends are provided based on the number of visits rather than the number of schools.

Beyond school visits, the dashboard also makes it easy to identify new schools as well as schools without Education Management Information System (EMIS) codes or those using wrong EMIS codes, thereby facilitating their onward inclusion in the Annual School Census. Since the dashboard simplifies the process of generating reports, it also becomes easier for authorities to develop actionable plans for schools and implement them immediately.

Another major advantage of the education dashboard is in its tracking system. The dashboard has a school location page which shows geographical points of schools and the actual location where the data was collected with latitude and longitudes coordinates on the map; thereby providing insight on whether the data was collected at the right place or not. With this, the Quality Assurance units in SUBEBs can detect when SSOs are in the wrong location or not in schools. Furthermore, the education dashboard has a page used to monitor ongoing enrolment at schools. SSOs collect enrolment data using a Basic Profile topic area in the Head Teacher interview form. Enrolment data is grouped by class and gender as shown in the figure below.



Dashboard page showing enrollment in schools



Jamila Shehu, School Support Officer, Kaduna State

With information on enrolment, government can now plan on how to provide continuous support to LGAs and schools. Lastly, the use of the dashboard has also improved lesson observation. The dashboard has a page to record best practices observed under topics such as inclusive lesson delivery, lesson activity, class management, materials used, pedagogy and timing. Therefore, areas of perceived strength and weaknesses for teachers are properly documented to further guide the kind of support or intervention needed, for example during teacher training exercises.

### Replication and Adoption:

The success and usefulness of this dashboard have garnered interest from educational authorities like the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), which aims to replicate and adapt it for use in other states. Overall, this data management system helps in efficient monitoring, assessment, and targeted support for schools and teachers, enhancing the quality of education delivery and decision-making processes.

*“Immediately you finish observing the teachers, there and then you forward everything that has been updated and it goes straight to the Education Dashboard and everyone can see the report and act accordingly.”*

Jamila Shehu became a School Support Officer (SSO) in Kaduna State in 2019 after previously working as Assistant Head Teacher and Class Teacher.

“With the innovation of this ODK app (data collection tool connected to the Education Dashboard), I find my work easier. Unlike before when we used paper and pen. And it also saves the time we use in writing from one page to another. With the app everything has been designed and planned just for you to keep on pressing and scrolling, scrolling, and just do the writing.

“Actually, before PLANE came on board, as an SSO, we were trained on how to give support in schools but sent our report in paper format. We observe teachers and record everything. When we are done, we forward everything to the head teachers. Using the summary sheet, the Headteachers compile the reports and send to Local Government Education Authority where they are reviewed and sent to the Senior School Support Officers for submission to SUBEB. But PLANE introduced us to an app called Open Data Kits (ODK) and taught us how to use it on our Android devices.

“We use the ODK when we go to school for support visits. It is not only the teachers that we observe when we enter schools, the way that the app is designed, there are other activities that are related to them like materials, Headteacher interview, lesson mobilisation among others. Everything is on the app. With the ODK, immediately you finish observing the teachers, there and then you forward everything that has been updated and it goes straight to the Education Dashboard and everyone can see the report and act accordingly”.



Mustapha Aminu, Director, Planning, Research and Statistics Kano SUBEB

Mustapha Aminu, Director, Planning, Research and Statistics Kano State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) commended the impact of the Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria Education (PLANE) project, particularly the introduction of an education dashboard, on their state's education system.

"The education dashboard has transformed the monitoring and evaluation framework of SUBEB and enhanced decision-making processes at both operational and strategic levels. It has revolutionised the state's education management system, enabling data-driven decision-making, improving resource allocation, enhancing quality assurance in schools, and significantly reducing the number of out-of-school children. The real-time information provided by the dashboard has strengthened the education sector's monitoring, evaluation, and management processes, contributing to positive changes in the state's education landscape.

"The Dashboard is showing us that the SSOs are really in the schools, so we can trace them. This supports and brings change to our monitoring and evaluation officers. We are using the information to make improved planning and informed decision making. We developed medium-term sector strategy plans with it; to where really areas need support.

"We now really begin to know that, there are some schools with only one teacher and their enrollments, because we are receiving it directly from Dashboard."



Mayowa Aleshin, the Director Teacher Development, UBEC

Speaking on the technology, Mayowa Aleshin, the Director Teacher Development at Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) said, "The Education Dashboard is a fantastic introduction into the system, because it helps the support mechanism for school. Before now, the School Support Officers had challenges carrying out their responsibilities. They could not meet the targets, but with the introduction of the dashboard, education managers know the numbers of SSOs in a particular state, how many schools were visited, the areas of challenges observed and areas that require interventions based on the reports generated from the dashboard.

"So, it's a fantastic initiative and improvement in comparison to when the manual system of paper and pen was used. Managers were not able to track the support officers or even track the challenges. Even the collation of reports at times, takes a longer time, but with the introduction of the dashboard, you can see the reports from the dashboard, and you are able to see the areas of intervention, and those that are not doing their work, you can also quickly pinpoint them and then find out what are their challenges, what are their problems and then quickly propose a solution.

**“ UBEC has committed to sustain the Education Dashboard initiative introduced by PLANE “It's one of the things that the Commission will carry on because it has a wider platform working in all the states of the Federation, including FCT ”**





A teacher in Jigawa State, Wasilat Abubakar poses with learners, Abdulahi and Aishat, holding the PLANE foundational learning materials.

# Evidence-Based Foundational Interventions Transforming Teaching and Learning Experiences in Over 2500 Schools

## SYNOPSIS

In 2023, the PLANE Programme worked closely with government partners to strengthen education delivery by improving foundational learning skills in 2,544 basic education schools, across three states (Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa) in Nigeria. Through this engagement, 8,202 headteachers were trained on school leadership and management, and 10,845 teachers were trained on 21st-century pedagogy, subject content knowledge as well as attitude and behaviour. Over 550,000 learners were provided Hausa literacy and mathematics learning materials to improve their capacity to participate in classroom activities and learn by doing. Results from PLANE's Year One learning assessment on primary one, four and six learners in PLANE-supported schools, showed that compared to the baseline results, 36.4% of learners increased a level in Hausa literacy, while 47.1% of learners increased a level in mathematics.



*"Before the textbooks were given to us, I could only read a word, but now I can read sentences. The good thing about the books are the pictures in it. They help you to see what you are supposed to do and how to do them. Even when you have to calculate, it shows you what to add and how to do it"*  
-Aisha, primary school learner.

*"The books that PLANE gave us are very good. I like going to school now because I now understand the importance of education. The book they gave me helped me with reading. When I get home, I usually review what they taught us from the book."*  
-Shansudeen, primary school learner.



## INTRODUCTION

**Challenges facing learners and teachers:** In Nigeria, particularly in rural communities and in the northern region, children encounter a lot of challenges that affect their ability to learn in school. While these challenges are multidimensional, they have led to very poor learning outcomes, with most children being unable to read and solve simple maths problems by the age of 10.

Among other factors, the lack of evidence-based teaching and learning approaches and materials has contributed to the poor outcomes. Marginalised children and those from the lowest economic backgrounds are particularly hard hit. While learners may manage to get within the walls of a classroom, they are often faced with another hurdle - a disconnection between schooling and learning. This disconnection is often caused by factors including the quality of teachers in classrooms, and the student's inability to understand the language of instruction and feel a sense of inclusion in class.

**Use of mother tongue:** With language being a very important part of every culture, the use of mother tongue as the language of instruction in early primary years has been recognised by the Nigerian government as one important way to advance inclusion in education and ensure that no child is left behind. A National Language Policy was adopted in 2022, which makes the mother tongue a compulsory medium of instruction from primary one to six. However, the implementation of the policy has been challenged by a shortage of teaching and learning materials in the mother tongue as well as other systemic issues. Many children face challenges in accessing education due to a mismatch between the language spoken at home and the language of school instruction. This language barrier often hinders comprehension and academic performance.

## PLANE'S FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING INTERVENTION

Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria (PLANE) is working with the Federal Government and state governments in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa to address some of the challenges affecting the quality of teaching and learning taking place in schools. The PLANE intervention focuses on global best practices for improving foundation learning skills, prioritising the use of a child's first language in education while also focusing on the professional development of teachers through a cascade model.

### Provision of foundational learning materials in mother tongue:

Working closely with relevant government ministries, departments, agencies and other contributors, PLANE successfully developed and distributed literacy and mathematics materials for learners in primary one to primary three, along with read-aloud anthologies for learners in primary one and two. PLANE also provided posters with literacy and mathematics-themed songs with cultural relevance. The pupil's textbooks, which follow the Nigerian National Curriculum, are written entirely in the language of the environment, Hausa. To simplify the experiences of teachers in the classroom and improve their delivery of the subject contents, PLANE also provided corresponding teacher's guides consisting of simple 1- page lightly scripted lesson plans also written in Hausa. All provided materials were accessible in the learner's native language and thoughtfully designed to be inclusive of different genders and disabilities.

### In-service teacher development accredited by government:

With close coordination with Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and the State Universal Basic Education Board, PLANE has provided technical assistance to government through the training of teachers in foundational learning focusing on literacy and mathematics and other integrated topics such as inclusion, pedagogy, safeguarding and classroom management. The training structure follows a cascade model. Expert trainers (PLANE staff and consultants) identify and train National Master Trainers who train state-based master trainers, while the state- based trainers directly train teachers, headteachers and school support officers (SSOs). To ensure effectiveness, refresher trainings are often scheduled after the initial training, and these refreshers build on feedback received from schools on gaps identified in the delivery of teachers. Beyond this, it has also ensured continuous development for teachers.

In a major milestone, the Federal Ministry of Education and the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria accredited the training on the Teaching and Learning Materials (TLM) produced by PLANE, making it count towards teachers' professional development. The Ministry has also gone one step ahead where all such TLM materials have been uploaded on their online portal on education.gov.ng, a move which will encourage adoption and scale-up of the intervention in other part of the country.

## POSITIVE TRANSFORMATION IN LEARNING AND TEACHING

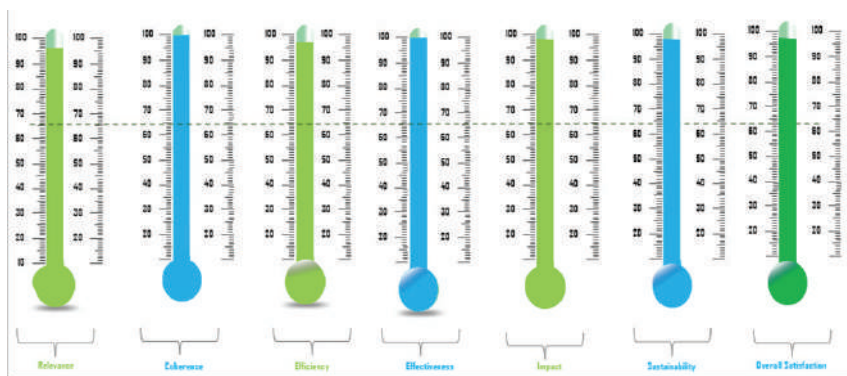
**Teachers and learners reached:** In its first year of implementation, PLANE successfully reached 554,648 learners across Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa States with foundational learning materials and 9,385 teachers with both teachers' guides and training programmes. This intervention is beginning to yield positive results with schools reporting major positive differences in the ability of learners to read, write and comprehend. Teachers are also demonstrating improved confidence in delivering subject content, with keen attention to inclusion during lessons. Results from PLANE's Year One learning assessment showed that compared to the baseline results, 36.4% of learners in primary two, four and six in PLANE-supported schools increased a level in Hausa literacy, while 47.1% of learners in primary two, four and six in PLANE-supported schools increased a level in Mathematics. Currently PLANE has a direct footprint in 2,548 schools, almost one in five of which are located in remote locations, emphasising the programme's focus on serving the poor and hard-to-reach girls and boys.

PLANE's learning materials provide content and a roadmap for teachers. The one-page lesson plans for 180 lessons offer clear, concise daily guidance, making it exceptionally easy for teachers to deliver high-quality lessons. This approach significantly improves learning outcomes by providing educators with a structured and efficient teaching framework. As reported by teachers, it also saves the time which would have been used in developing lesson notes and plans.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING BENEFICIARY ASSESSMENT FEEDBACK

More than 96% of teachers and state officials reported that the T&L material developed by PLANE were relevant and coherent with the Nigeria basic education curriculum. Over 97% of respondents were satisfied with the methodological rigour used in the development of the material. Nearly 98% shared overall satisfaction with PLANE's support and technical assistance in developing the T&L material. In a major shift in attitudes towards utilisation of the teaching and learning (T&L) material, 76% of men and women respondents stated that they always applied the acquired knowledge and skills while an additional 8% claimed to often use the materials in their work.



## TESTIMONIALS



Abdullahi Ciroma, Deputy Director Quality Assurance, SUBEB Jigawa

Abdullahi Ciroma, Deputy Director Quality Assurance, SUBEB Jigawa is a Master Trainer and Chairman of the Technical Working Group on Material Development. Ciroma, who is a member of the State School Improvement Team, attested to the contribution of the Functional Learning Materials to Teaching and Learning Outcomes:

“There are huge successes recorded with the PLANE interventions in the seven selected local government areas (LGAs) in Jigawa State. Because right from the beginning there was an initiative which established the master trainers team, who are responsible for the training of teachers, head teachers and school support officers. These master trainers, before they were recruited, did examinations and they were verified. After their selections, they underwent some series of trainings on literacy and numeracy for them to be able to cascade the training to teachers and to the head teachers. PLANE was able to train them foundational learning for primary one, two and three respectively. After they receive the trainings, they go down to the various LGAs, the seven LGAs selected, and they train the teachers there, the head teachers and the assistants.

“Apart from this, pupil's books and teacher's guides were also distributed. Not only distribution, but we ensured that SSOs are there to checkmate the usage and utilisation of such materials to ensure that teachers are using teacher's guides to deliver the lessons, as well as learners are working in the book. They are writing in the books, they are doing activities in the book, and they are handling their books in such a way that it will not be damaged.

“In the past they used to skip and omit some topics while teaching, but now they realise that a learner cannot understand topic B unless he has clear understanding of topic number 1, so they follow its sequentially, because the examples, the content, the language has been simplified to the lowest level in such a way that teachers can make use of the content, the language to deliver the lessons. And we capitalized on the Nigerian language policy, where the teachers are to teach with the language of immediate environment. Here is Hausa, and the design of the content is in Hausa, so teachers find it very easy to locate the content and to use the material to deliver the lessons. Unlike in the past, where they don't have these skills”.

“It is very simple and easy for a teacher to deliver. Likewise, they use people's books, because in the past, we teach on the blackboard without allowing the learners to make use of their materials to work. But with PLANE, children are given the pupils book, where after the lessons, even during the lessons, there are some portions where the learners can work with the pupil's book as a class work with the support of the teacher.”

“ We capitalised on the Nigerian language policy, where the teachers are to teach with the language of immediate environment. Here it is Hausa, and the design of the content is in Hausa, so teachers find it very easy to locate the content and to use the material to deliver the lessons. Unlike in the past, where they don't have these skills ”



A'ishatu Iliyasu, Zakirai Yamma Primary School, Kano State

As a teacher, A'ishatu Iliyasu from Zakirai Yamma Primary School in Kano State is very excited about the Teacher's Guide and the engaging classroom activities which sometimes involve making children come around in circles.

"We received training for P1, P2, and P3. The training focused on effective teaching methods for mathematics, English, and the Hausa language. The training equipped me with valuable materials and teaching aids. I plan lessons using the provided materials, check student books, and add engaging elements like songs. This has improved students' understanding, as shown in their performance.

"Initially, there was no circle in the classroom, making it challenging to teach. After the training, a rule was implemented, ensuring students stayed within the circle, resolving the issue. Students now understand topics better and their test results have improved.

"The teacher's guide provides detailed lesson plans, making teaching easier by guiding me on what to cover from the beginning to the end of each lesson. Students have shown improvement in tests, making progress if they initially struggle. Their ability to answer questions correctly has also increased. I'm most impressed by the teacher's guide, as it provides thorough explanations of activities and daily plans, making my job easier. nrollments, because we are receiving it directly from Dashboard."

*"We used to say that this child is dull, this child is slow, but with the support and advice on teaching from PLANE and using mother tongue, all of our children are being carried along. There's no dull child.*

*"Before PLANE was introduced, we were teaching our children in pure English. These children, when you are teaching them in pure English, they will just be looking at you. They don't know what you are saying. When you ask them questions, when you evaluate them, they cannot remember what you have told them. But now that PLANE has introduced the indigenous language books and support, when I teach these children, when I ask them questions, in fact, they understand and respond".*

– Justina Omole, Teacher, Kaduna.



Aisha Alhazuberu, headteacher at Dr. Nuhu Special Primary School, Dutse, Jigawa State.

Aisha Alhazuberu is the headteacher at Dr. Nuhu Special Primary School, Dutse Local Government, Jigawa State. She confirmed that the learning materials have improved the ability of learners to read, write and comprehend.

"Dr. Nuhu Special Primary School is part of the beneficiaries of the PLANE programme. We got textbooks for primary 1, 2 and 3, and our teachers attended the training for the classes. Also, the materials we received are in good quality and are available.

"This PLANE programme makes it easy for our pupils to understand what they are taught using mother tongue. Even the mathematics is in their mother tongue. This has upgraded the performance of the students and has also improved their thinking. Before, there are students that do not have access to textbooks, but with the coming of the PLANE programme, all our pupils have access to textbooks. Using this textbooks help our pupils to read and write, even at home. Also, it helped the teachers to give them classwork or homework to be done inside their pupils book. Using this, the reading and writing skills of our students have improved.

**“** *In basic education in general, what we expect from our pupils is the ability to read, write and comprehend. Before we had the support of the PLANE programme, reading and writing were difficult for our pupils, but with the support of the programme, our pupils can now read, write and comprehend* **”**





A Community learning hub facilitator, Hafsat Mohammed teaches children at a learning hub in Unguwa Wakili Gagarawa community, Jigawa State

# Community Learning Hubs Attract In-School and Out-of-School Children in Informal Settings

### SYNOPSIS

PLANE supported the establishment of 200 community learning hubs in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa states to extend education beyond classrooms and attract out-of-school children. The hubs, manned by passionate volunteer facilitators, allow in-school and out-of-school children to interact and enhance their literacy and numeracy skills. They also help out-of-school children catch-up and get mainstreamed into conventional schools with community support. As of February 2024, the hubs have attracted over 12,000 learners, with community members supporting the enrollment of some of the learners.

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant challenges faced by the education sector in Nigeria is getting children into school and ensuring that they remain in school. Despite the government's provision for a free and compulsory basic education, a lot of Nigerian children are unable to attend and remain in school for several reasons. The lack of education not only limits the potential of the affected children, it also negatively impacts the nation's human capital, threatens peace and development and stalls the government's efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on education by 2030. This goal aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

The Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria (PLANE) programme has been working closely with the governments of Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa and key stakeholders to address challenges with out-of-school children in the states through the establishment of Community Learning Hubs. The initiative seeks to address the critical need for improved basic education by establishing volunteer-run hubs where children both in-school and out-of-school can learn in community-provided spaces. Unlike conventional schools, these hubs offer a unique platform for in-school and out-of-school children to interact and enhance their foundational literacy and numeracy skills. They also serve as a platform to expose children not attending schools to foundational skills, helping them catch-up and get mainstreamed into conventional schools with community support.

### CHALLENGES WITH SCHOOL ENROLMENT AND ATTENDANCE

Nigeria has a large population of out-of-school children and this continues to be a persistent challenge for government, international development partners, non-governmental organisations and relevant stakeholders. While there is debate surrounding the actual figures and classifications, it is believed, as reported by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in its 2018 National Personnel Audit, that about 10.2 million children aged six to eleven are not attending formal schools. Regional disparities persist, with the northern part of the country playing host to most of the children considered out of school.



*"The Community Learning Hub initiative instilled a sense of communal responsibility as local leaders mobilised resources independently.*  
Alhaji Garba Galadima, Reading Ambassador and Traditional Leader.

*The reason why I give my time to help my brothers and sisters through the learning hub is to reduce their struggles and also reduce begging in the community. After establishing this hub, we have more children that are going to school now.*



Hafsat Mohammed, Learning Hubfacilitator, Jigawa State.

Though basic education is free and compulsory in Nigeria, a lot of children are not in school and those in school struggle with attendance which affects their ability to learn and remain in school. Many factors are responsible for this situation, including but not limited to rising insecurity, cultural norms, religious beliefs, high population growth and poverty on the demand side. The supply side of education is also not without its challenges. Teacher shortages, inadequate infrastructure in schools, including a lack of classrooms, furniture, and other necessary facilities, hinder the provision of education in Nigeria. The quality of learning is poor in many schools, further discouraging enrolment and attendance.

The problem with out-of-school children is not limited to Nigeria alone, and its impact is felt globally. According to a 2018 report by UNICEF, almost one in every five children around the world who is not attending school, is from Nigeria. This makes Nigeria the epicentre of a global crisis that requires immediate attention and comprehensive interventions to address the root causes of the problem and enable more children to receive an education.

## PLANE'S INTERVENTION: SAFE SPACES FOR LEARNING IN COMMUNITIES

In its first year of implementation, PLANE worked in collaboration with community leaders and Local Government Education Authorities to establish 200 Community Learning Hubs (CLHubs). These hubs are strategically distributed across Kano, Jigawa, and Kaduna states and serve as a forum for improving basic education at the community level.

The basis of the hubs is to have a safe and central location where children including girls and children with disabilities can easily access support for learning, a safe place within the community where information and learning of relevant topics that benefits children and the community in general takes place. Unlike formal schools, CLHubs are coordinated by volunteer community facilitators and may be held in various locations, such as schools or open-air safe spaces. They are intended to provide learning opportunities beyond regular school hours, catering to both in- school and out-of-school children, with a particular focus on improving basic literacy and numeracy skills. CLHubs involve community members in educational leadership roles, creating a low-cost and sustainable model for supplemental education.

The CLHubs are operated weekly and they rely on a well-coordinated and tightly managed network of volunteers to ensure quality, equity, safety, and accountability. While hub structure varies by community, PLANE provides guidance for selection of facilitators and trains the facilitators. Others involved in ensuring the hub remains functional include a parental volunteer, school- based management committee (SBMC) members, reading ambassadors and PLANE officers.

The selection and appointment of reading ambassadors by community members for the learning hubs is a key sustainability and influencing strategy. They are nominated and openly inducted by the community leaders following recommendations and according to established safe recruitment guidance provided by the technical working groups and PLANE staff. The reading ambassadors are esteemed and educated individuals within the communities, who promote and support the learning activities in the community learning hubs. Their role gives community members a sense of ownership and helps to ensure the hubs are effectively managed.

Strategically aligning the CLHubs with the unique needs of each state, facilitators were allocated to specific hubs. In Kano, 99 facilitators (32 females, 67 males) were deployed to oversee 50 hubs. Jigawa has 75 facilitators (29 females, 46 males) for 75 hubs, and Kaduna also has 75 facilitators (25 females, 50 males) for 75 hubs.

To improve attendance during the CLhub sessions, awareness-raising activities are often carried out in communities by the facilitators, with the support of Mothers Associations. The communities also regularly organise reading festivals to celebrate learners who are making progress in acquiring reading skills, while inspiring others.

## PROMOTING LEARNING BEYOND CLASSROOM WALLS



A facilitator interacting with a learner during a mathematics class at community learning hub in Kano

To ensure community learning hubs achieve their objectives, PLANE conducted an intensive training program for 249 facilitators, consisting of 86 females and 163 males. The training covered various aspects of facilitation techniques and promotional strategies with a strong emphasis on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) and safeguarding. This training has equipped the facilitators with the necessary tools and skills needed for community-driven education. It has also empowered the facilitators to contribute more meaningfully to the advancement of education within their communities.

**INTERVENTION SUCCESSES:** Through the Community Learning hub initiative, facilitators and community leaders have recorded numerous successes, such as children who were previously out- of-school now being supported to enrol into conventional schools while children who are also in school are benefitting from the supplementary literacy and mathematics lessons organised weekly.

The 200 CLHubs in the KKK states have attracted 12,715 learners as of February 2024. The learners include 5,470 boys and 7,245 girls, with 85 of them being persons with disability. Though the learning hubs are attended in large numbers by in-school children who see it as an opportunity for extra lessons, the learning hubs were also attended by 469 children who were previously out of school have now been supported back into conventional schools through the learning hub and community support.

In Jigawa State, Unguwar Wakili, Gagarawa, community members mobilised to provide exercise books, readers, whiteboards, pencils, chalk, wall charts, attendance registers, markers, water containers and mats amounting to the sum of N50,000. This action demonstrated a sense of ownership and will greatly improve the sustainability of the initiative.



Faiza Abdulmumin, Social Mobilisation Officer and Learning Hub Facilitator

**“***This hub commenced operation on 19 May 2023. I am always excited when teaching here because the children are responding to what I am teaching, and at the same time, the programme has put the interest of learning in the children.***”**

Faiza Abdulmumin is a Social Mobilisation Officer in Sabon Gari Local Government, Kaduna State. She also volunteers as a Community Learning Hub facilitator for Hauwa Cluster. She spoke excitedly about her experience as a facilitator:

“The learning hub programme brings the children, that is, the out-of-school children, and even the drop-out children back to school. We made the parents of these children understand the importance of education and encouraged their children to go to school. In this learning hub, we have 200 children, 120 girls and 80 boys.

“We have about 142 children back to school through the learning hub programme. We have also reached out to the well-to-do individuals in the community to assist in providing these children with school uniforms and writing materials. Among the donors, we have the Vice-Chairman of Sabon Gari local government, who enrolled five children into school, and also provided them with school uniform and writing materials. Also, we have the District Head of Sabon Gari, who provided 50 children with school uniforms.

“Through the community learning hub, we are able to bridge the gaps between gender in the community. Like girls’ child education; most of the girls are getting enrolled into school.”



Hafsat Mohammed, the CLhub facilitator in Unguwar Wakili, Gagarawa, Jigawa State believes the learning hub initiative will bring about progress in her community.

Hafsat mobilised and sensitised stakeholders in the community and parents to send their children to the community learning hub. “I have a passion for teaching in my community. It is part of giving back to my community”, she says, “The PLANE training ignited my passion and interest and gave me an opportunity to serve my community.

**“***The reason why I give my time to help my brothers and sisters through the learning hub is to reduce their struggles and also reduce begging in the community. After establishing this hub, we have more children that are going to school now.***”**

“We started this community learning hub in 2022, with 30 pupils - 10 boys and 20 girls. With the help of our local government and also PLANE, our pupils are now 100. We really appreciate the kind of progress that we have made.

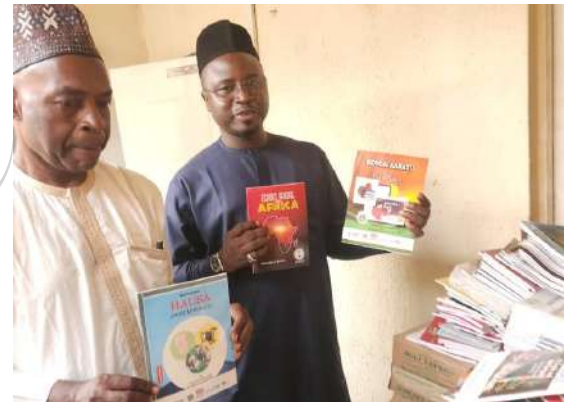
“The hub supported some children, about 30, to start attending school. These children were not attending school before. We are trying our best to see that they learn more with the help of the local government secretary who provided more materials to see that the children improve more.



Learning items donated to Unguwar Wakili Community Learning Hub Centre Gagarawa LGA, Jigawa State.



Learning items donated to Kano Community Learning Hubs by Kano State Government.



Alhaji Garba Galadima, Reading Ambassador, SBMC Chairperson and Traditional Leader

Alhaji Garba Galadima is a Reading Ambassador, Traditional Leader and School- Based Management Committee Chair in Sabon Gari, Zaria, Kaduna State. He expressed his support for the CLHubs:

“The Community Learning Hub initiative instilled a sense of communal responsibility as local leaders mobilised resources independently. The provision of uniforms, sandals, and educational materials, achieved without relying on external government support, underscored a powerful narrative of community- driven initiatives and self-sustainability

“When parents return from their farms or from whatever menial jobs they go to do, by the time that learning hub is in progress, they will sit around watching the children. And one other good practice we have learned is that the learning hub, because it's an informal setting, it gives the children the ability to actually showcase their talents, their intellect and their ability to express themselves. They are not inhibited, they have the freedom to express themselves, and it's really helping them. Children who normally would take, probably a year or more to learn the alphabets and basic figures and all that, are doing what a primary three, or basic three or basic four, pupil would do.”

He added that, “The engagement with stakeholders, particularly at the grassroots level, revealed unspoken expectations, sentiments towards the government, and a profound realisation that external interventions like PLANE could indeed catalyse positive change.

“A profound moment of joy unfolded as physically challenged individuals showcased newfound abilities in reading, writing, and artistic expression within the Learning Hub. This not only became a source of immense joy but also shattered the shackles of isolation and societal neglect, providing a platform for inclusivity and empowerment.

“The SBMC has learnt beautifully from the PLANE programme and we have benefited. but the greatest impact the PLANE programme has had on the SBMC is the ability to advocate and mobilise local resources. Now we are no longer thinking of the governor or the commissioner or somebody high up there has to come down and do something for us. We mobilise local resources here for minor challenges, we don't have to wait for anybody and that is the best. Because there are too many competing demands for minimal resources with government.”

“ *The learning hub, because it's an informal setting, it gives the children the ability to actually showcase their talents, their intellect and their ability to express themselves. They are not inhibited, they have the freedom to express themselves, and it's really helping them* ”



## PLANE-Supported Financial Inclusion Drive Empowers Over 500 Non-State Schools

### SYNOPSIS

To improve the quality of services being provided by non-state schools, PLANE, through its advocacy efforts is engaging with commercial banks and the Central Bank of Nigeria to unlock financial inclusion opportunities for private and faith-based school associations in Nigeria. This effort has yielded positive results, with over 500 non-state schools now already accessing loans to the tune of 3,000,000,000 Naira or £3.18 million under one such arrangement. PLANE is also supporting school associations with financial literacy training to strengthen their financial management capacity.



*"The impact of the financial interventions will be enormous because, you know, these are private schools run by either individuals or groups of people and in most cases, they are not able to provide everything that they want to provide for their schools".*

- Ramatu Ndanusa Abubakar

*"One of the biggest challenges for the private sector, particularly in the education sector, is that they were financially excluded in the scheme of things. Most other sectors, you see government making funds and they are going to finance them, but in education there is no such thing".*

- Jafar Yusuf



### INTRODUCTION

Non-state schools, often operated by private individuals, organisations or religious groups, play a crucial role in shaping the education landscape. The schools offer diverse options and cater to the unique needs of pupils across various communities, which are often not met by public or state-owned schools. Due to a shortage of public schools in Nigeria the role of non-state education providers has become more important over the past few decades. Not only are the schools able to absorb an overflow from the already stressed public school systems, other factors such as alignments with specific belief systems, accessibility and values have made them a preferred choice for some parents.

In northern Nigeria privately owned schools and faith-based schools such as the Integrated Qur'anic and Tsangaya Education Schools are very common. Despite being non-state, the low-cost options are easily accessible to learners from low-income families and marginalised populations. A socio-demographic survey of the non-state education sector in Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa (KKJ) states, conducted by the Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria (PLANE) programme in 2022, revealed that the three states had at least 20,162 non-state schools in the basic education sector.

Non-state providers extend education access to underserved groups and no doubt have a vital role to play in increasing the rate of progress toward universal levels of enrolment in primary schools, irrespective of school type or funding source. However, despite the complementary and substitutive roles of non-state schools in the education sector, they face a myriad of challenges that hinder their growth and overall effectiveness. One major hurdle has been the lack of access to funding opportunities.

## THE CHALLENGE: LACK OF ACCESS TO FUNDS

Non-state schools rely heavily on tuition fees as their primary or sole source of revenue. As a result, affordable non-state schools have to operate with limited financial resources, which makes it challenging for them to expand their infrastructure by adding more classrooms and increasing the number of available seats for students. Other quality improvements such as running water installations, gender-separated bathrooms and hiring of more qualified teachers are also challenging.

Due to perceived financial risk, banks and other formal lending institutions remain reluctant to engage with low-cost non-state schools. Proprietors must often either rely on their savings or resort to borrowing from loan shark institutions at onerous rates to make infrastructure investments.

Findings from PLANE's socio-demographic survey also showed that the lack of funds has prevented some non-state schools from getting duly registered with the state. Of the 20,162 schools surveyed in the KKJ states, about 7,500 were unregistered and risk being shut down by the government because they fail to meet the minimum standard that the government has put in place. This standard covers infrastructure, conduciveness of the learning environment, and recruitment of qualified teachers among others.

Many schools, when faced with challenges related to staff welfare and remuneration, tend to hire incompetent teachers, offering them limited opportunities for professional development and training. This lack of proper training has a negative impact on the quality of teaching, delivery of the curriculum, and the overall educational experience of the learners.

## INTERVENTION: FINANCIAL INCLUSION THROUGH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT LOANS

Since the full implementation of the PLANE programme commenced in 2022, the non-state school space in Nigeria is beginning to witness some systemic changes. Through strategic interventions PLANE is facilitating collaboration between the state and non-state actors, and empowering schools to enhance their financial stability through access to School Improvement Loans.

In August 2022 PLANE conducted a mapping of financial institutions and an assessment of non-state schools to determine their capacity to manage funds. Both exercises provided guidance on the kind of financial services schools needed and the most appropriate financial institutions in a position to offer School Improvement Loans. PLANE also engaged the Central Bank of Nigeria to make a case for non-state schools to be considered as part of the small and medium enterprise (SME) plans that are available through the banker's committee.

To enhance schools' financial management capacity PLANE organised training programmes for non-state school associations. These programs focused on how to maintain financial records, create business plans, handle loans and ensure cost-effectiveness/ value for money. The objective of this intervention was to enhance the feasibility of investing in schools and address some of the challenges that had previously made private school associations unappealing to commercial banks.

PLANE facilitated the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2023 between First City Monument Bank (FCMB) and The National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS), which is the highest body of private school owners in Nigeria. This was replicated between Sterling Bank and The Association for Formidable Educational Development (AFED), which is the foremost association of low-fee paying private schools, in Nigeria.

These MoUs serve as formal agreements that delineate the terms of collaboration and financial support mechanisms. They provide a structured framework for the partnership, helped to facilitate understanding of the procedures of banking institutions on accessing loans, and generating relevant information about supply and demand for financial services available. Schools are now required to assess these loans through an umbrella association instead of doing it individually. This arrangement helps to manage the loans better and ensures that schools accessing the loans are traceable and registered with the government.

## SIGNIFICANT CHANGE: INCREASED ACCESS TO FUNDS

Under the first MoU arrangement, over 500 non-state schools under NAPPS have already accessed 3,000,000,000 Naira or £3.18 million from FCMB as at the end of December 2023. Banks are showing a growing interest in supporting non-state schools, with more banks engaging schools beyond MoUs as part of their corporate social responsibility. Schools can access loans and receive additional support, including capacity development, internet connections and scholarships. After the first two successful MoU arrangements another non-state school association, Redeemer Christian Schools, signed a new MoU with QC microfinance bank.



*The growing support is helping schools to meet their infrastructural requirements, which facilitates an improved quality of education in a more conducive learning environment. Additionally, with more funds available, school proprietors can recruit more teachers as classes expand.*



Engagement with the Central Bank of Nigeria has led to a significant change. It enabled the Association of Modern Islamic Schools (AMIS) to register as a microfinance bank and secure cheap finance from CBN's Enterprise Development Fund. The establishment of a dedicated microfinance bank will cater to the unique financial needs of non-state schools and help reduce the interest paid to commercial banks.

The PLANE program acknowledges that providing access to finance alone will not be enough to address the challenges that schools face. Therefore, to ensure the sustainability of this intervention, schools in Kaduna, Kano, and Jigawa States are undergoing training on improved business planning and financial management. This training, combined with a strong school development plan, will enhance the opportunity for schools to obtain formal finance for development and continued expansion.

## TESTIMONIALS

Ramatu Ndanusa Abubakar is the Proprietress Alniima Academy, Dutse, Jigawa. The private school establishment was inspired by her observation that pupils in public could not read. The school has 853 pupils and students covering early years, primary, and secondary classes. It looks forward to being able to access available loans

"My school was established in September 2010. I had the inspiration to start my school because I discovered while teaching in public schools that most of the pupils could not read.

"PLANE has done a great job of uniting us as school owners. It has brought us together on the same table, thereby creating that synergy and better networking among our schools. It has helped us in improving our school administration and governance strategies through capacity building.

"We now have a relationship with the state government on policy formulations, and we have before now never been involved in that. We are now seen as partners; we are now seen as stakeholders when it comes to policy formulations.

"Apart from the improved relationship with the government, through PLANE our teachers were trained specifically on issues that have to do with a safe school and issues that also had to do with learning, better learning, and teaching relationship between the teachers and the pupils in the schools.

"As you know, each bank has a different package in terms of education. So, we had a face-to-face meeting with them, and each bank was able to tell us, this is what our package looks like. They told us the criteria, they told us what we stood to gain and what were the shortfalls and then from there each school owner will be able to know which one suits him or her best for the kind of his or her school. We had non-interest banks also there so for those that wouldn't want



Ramatu Ndanusa Abubakar, Private School Association Leader, Jigawa.

interest loans they had options too so everybody there was something for everybody in that meeting. There was something that everybody could actually benefit from.

"The impact of the financial interventions will be very, very significant because you know these are private schools run by either individuals or groups of people and in most cases are not able to provide everything that they want to provide for their schools. So, if these financial interventions are there, I think our schools will be able to get some of those things in terms of school structure in most cases as well as even school governance too.



*Personally, I'm happy with this intervention, with what PLANE has brought. Now we are able to actually see that as a school, you are not alone, you are not an island. From government, I would want to see more collaboration. We want the government to also help us. They have been doing great too, but we want to see better collaboration.*



Jafar Yusuf is the Director, Rising Stars International School and currently Chairman, National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS) Kaduna State. He is also the Acting National Vice President, NAPPS, Nigeria. He spoke on private schools' improved relationship with government through PLANE's interventions:

"Well, from the perspective of the private schools, we used to feel that the relationship between private schools and the government is that of taxation, taxation, and taxation. But things are changing. We are beginning to see ourselves as collaborators, and they are now viewing us as a private sector that has come to assist the government in executing its mandate, its responsibility of actually educating the citizens of the state.

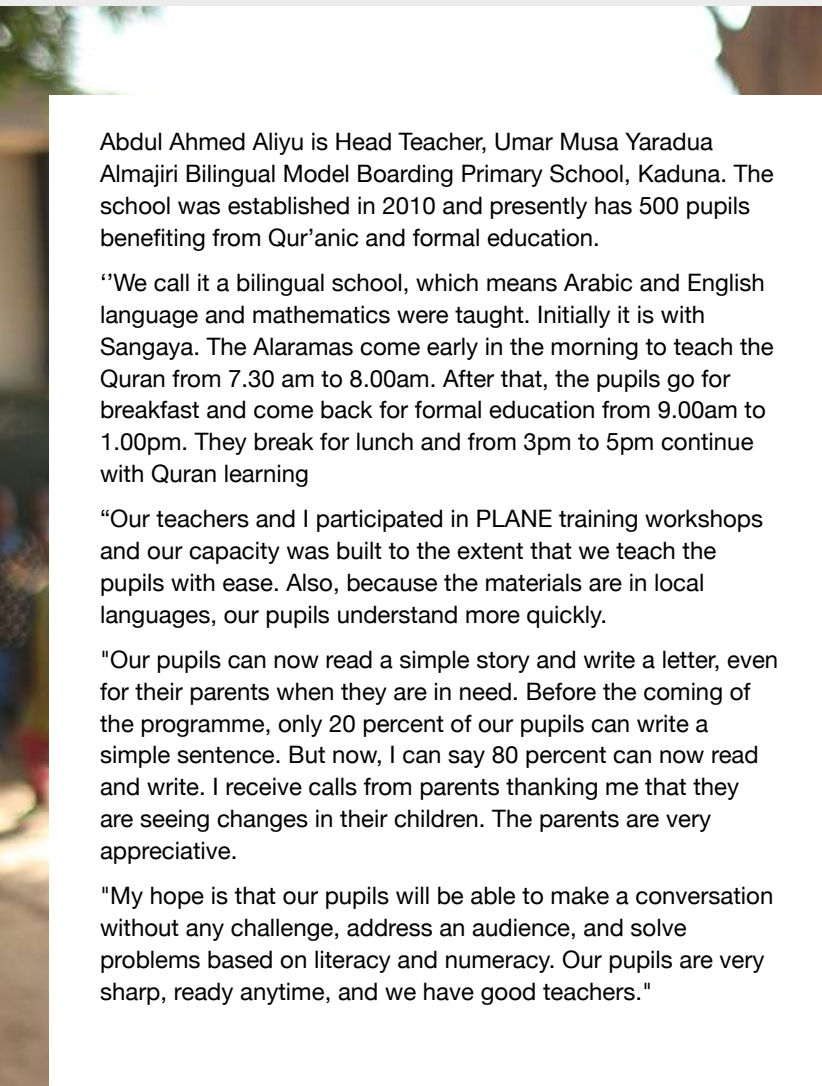
"One of the biggest challenges for the private sector, particularly in the education sector, and I'm talking in respect of private schools, is that they were financially excluded in the scheme of things. Most other sectors, you see...government makes funds available and they are going to finance them, but in education there is no such thing, and when you go to financial institutions such as banks and you check their portfolio, you don't see education on their portfolio. No business can grow if it doesn't have the necessary funding.



Jafar Yusuf, Chairman, National Association of Proprietors of Private Schools (NAPPS) Kaduna State

“Talking about funding in private schools, you see, in private schools, every child that is enrolled in private school is an additional success on the part of the sector because it means that that child could have been registered in the public school where the government will pay its teachers' salary, will build its classroom, and continue to provide materials for its learning. So, the growth of private schools is something that the state government should as a matter of urgency encourage them to do, so as to further enhance education in the state, because, just like the private hospitals, if you take away private hospitals now, the number of patients that will be attending public health centers would be so enormous that it would be chaos.

“There was a time we went around with one of the PLANE staff to some of the banks here and I think out of the efforts that are being made, some banks are beginning to have products tailored towards education and I think those products were collated and were being looked into so as to enable interested schools to be able to tap into it. There is Sterling Bank, there is Union Bank, I think there is a First bank Edu Finance, these are just a few but quite a number of banks are beginning to look into the education sector, which before now they have neglected”.



Abdul Ahmed Aliyu, Head Teacher, Umar Musa Yaradua Almajiri Bilingual Model Boarding Primary School, Kaduna.

Abdul Ahmed Aliyu is Head Teacher, Umar Musa Yaradua Almajiri Bilingual Model Boarding Primary School, Kaduna. The school was established in 2010 and presently has 500 pupils benefiting from Qur'anic and formal education.

“We call it a bilingual school, which means Arabic and English language and mathematics were taught. Initially it is with Sangaya. The Alamas come early in the morning to teach the Quran from 7.30 am to 8.00am. After that, the pupils go for breakfast and come back for formal education from 9.00am to 1.00pm. They break for lunch and from 3pm to 5pm continue with Quran learning

“Our teachers and I participated in PLANE training workshops and our capacity was built to the extent that we teach the pupils with ease. Also, because the materials are in local languages, our pupils understand more quickly.

“Our pupils can now read a simple story and write a letter, even for their parents when they are in need. Before the coming of the programme, only 20 percent of our pupils can write a simple sentence. But now, I can say 80 percent can now read and write. I receive calls from parents thanking me that they are seeing changes in their children. The parents are very appreciative.

“My hope is that our pupils will be able to make a conversation without any challenge, address an audience, and solve problems based on literacy and numeracy. Our pupils are very sharp, ready anytime, and we have good teachers.”



A teacher and learners singing a school rhyme at a Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) primary school in Kaduna State.

## Building Effective Learning Environments Through Safeguarding and Inclusion Strategies

### SYNOPSIS

PLANE is supporting schools to create a safe and more inclusive learning environment for children. The programme advocates for zero tolerance of violence and abuse in schools and has been building the capacity of state actors and school managers to implement the National Policy on Safety, Security, and Violence-Free Schools (NPSSVSFS). So far, 2,487 schools have been supported to create safeguarding plans and referral pathways. This intervention has increased awareness and is encouraging learners to report safeguarding concerns. The programme is also engaging closely with gender desk officers and associations of persons with disabilities to promote inclusion in schools.



*PLANE has given the association of persons with disability a platform to interact with the various stakeholders in the field of education, which include the government officials, the School-Based Management Committees and other relevant partners. This has brought a kind of improvement in the area of inclusion, because as it started from PLANE at the state level, it now goes down to the local education authorities where the major work is. We now have the opportunity to share with other relevant stakeholders, our needs, our wants, and interests, or other things that have to do with persons with disabilities.*

*Adamu Shuaibu, Chairman, Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities, Jigawa State.*

### INTRODUCTION

For transformative education to take place, students must learn in an environment that is safe and conducive and encourages an equal opportunity to thrive, irrespective of background. Boys and girls must feel welcome in school with no fear of harm or discrimination, so that they can focus on their studies and personal development. It is the legal and moral responsibility of schools to ensure that students, staff and visitors are safe by implementing robust safeguarding policies and procedures. However, while a national policy exists to address issues around safe schools, the implementation of the policy in Nigeria is still low at the point where they are needed most - the schools themselves.

Governments, schools, teachers and students all have a role in creating schools that are free from violence and discrimination while providing inclusive, high-quality education. Safeguarding and inclusion, if done right, protects children, particularly girls and children with disabilities, from abuse, stigmatisation, isolation, bullying and harassment. Both also improve children's wellbeing and emotional health, leading to increased engagement with school activities and improved learning outcomes.

Through technical support from the Partnership for Learning For All in Nigeria (PLANE) programme, funded by the UK Government's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), state governments in PLANE's target states of Kano, Kaduna and are now taking major steps in consciously creating inclusive and safe school environments. The programme is committed to prioritising and embedding Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) as well as safeguarding in its many interventions in schools. This will ensure that the learning experience is sensitive to the needs of all children, regardless of their gender, ethnicity or ability.

PLANE's GESI strategy places gender equality and social inclusion at the heart of education policy objectives. It ensures that all activities support the meaningful engagement of girls, boys, children with disabilities and other marginalised groups, and advance transformative changes in gender equality, disability inclusion and power relations between influential and excluded groups in the education sector. This promotes better access, quality and safer schools for all.

## INTERVENTION CONTEXT: LIMITED KNOWLEDGE OF GESI AND SAFEGUARDING MEASURES

In early 2023, PLANE's GESI and Safeguarding team held a focus group discussion with children in 24 schools across Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa states to gain a better understanding of their experiences, identify existing gaps in safeguarding measures, inform the development of programming interventions and lastly, to empower children and promote participation.

Findings from the study revealed that there is a significant proportion of children who are subject to violence at school. In all the states, the children showed a keen understanding of concepts like bullying; many reported having experienced it. Children with disabilities, particularly girls, were at the receiving end of such bullying, teasing, and maltreatment. Some of the children also said, "mentally impaired children are often verbally abused and bullied by other children in school and at home."

When asked about sexual assault cases in school, a few children also had experiences to share, and in most instances, they were girls. When asked if they reported the incident to anyone, some said 'no' because no one would believe them. A girl in Kaduna said, "the first teacher I told didn't do anything because she didn't believe us, I stopped reporting anything since then, even though he [the male teacher in question] eventually left our school." A child with a disability said, "Everyone, including my uncle, always tells me to shut up because they think I am sick, but I can read ABC." However, some said they might share with elder siblings or friends, while a smaller number would tell their parents. In all three states, respondents agreed they would report incidences to a dedicated teacher/adult if they trusted them, and were certain of a response and that corrective action would be taken.

Through this assessment, PLANE learnt that schools would greatly benefit from safeguarding and inclusion interventions, so that students can feel safer within the environment and focus on learning. Secondly, safeguarding in schools is an evolving concept, and most of the headteachers who were part of the assessment admitted to having limited knowledge. In addition, children are unsure of the right channels for reporting incidents, therefore, a lot go unreported due to a lack of an effective reporting mechanism within schools that can respond to pupils' worries.

In the area of inclusion, girls and children with disabilities are often disadvantaged. Several cultural, environmental and societal factors exist which hold them back from being able to attend and learn in schools. While some overcome socio-cultural barriers to attend school, most school environments are not designed with their particular needs in mind, making it difficult to remain in school.

## INTERVENTION: MAINSTREAMING GESI AND SAFEGUARDING

Inclusion and safeguarding remain central to how PLANE works, and since its inception, PLANE has been providing technical assistance to government partners, especially at the school level in the following ways:

**Domestication and implementation of National Policy on Safety Security and Violence-Free Schools:** As part of the strategy to make schools more inclusive and safer, PLANE is supporting state governments in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa to domesticate and implement the National Policy on Safety Security and Violence Free Schools (NPSSVFS) published by the Federal Ministry of Education in August 2021. The NPSSVFS is a national policy that shows Nigeria's dedication to the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD), which was made in Oslo, Norway in May 2015. This policy provides a set of guiding principles and procedures for safeguarding children from violence and exploitation while they pursue their education. It also set a standard for implementing a comprehensive school safety plan with clear reporting pathways. In alignment with the requirements of the policy, PLANE has worked with the relevant state Ministries, Departments and Agencies across Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa to develop Safeguarding Action Plans and Guidelines across schools.

**Promoting inclusive education through policy reforms:** PLANE is working with state governments to improve gender equality, safeguarding and disability inclusion in education via policy reviews. During the inception period, PLANE enabled a policy gap analysis and presented its findings to stakeholders in the states being supported. Stakeholders agreed with the findings, which indicated the need to revise two existing policies (the Girls' Education Policy and Teacher Policy) in Kano State, and the state-level domestication of the NPSSVFS in all three states. The two existing policies in Kano State are now awaiting endorsement by the government, while the domestication of the NPSSVFS in Jigawa is at an advanced stage.

Of note, the Kano Girls Education Policy addresses the challenge of poor gender parity in education, high numbers of out-of-school children, inadequate inclusion in education, hostile school environments and poor learning outcomes. The NPSSVFS, being domesticated with the support of UNICEF, Save The Children and AGILE will ensure secure and safe school environments, and increased enrolment, retention, transition and completion, particularly for girls.

**Capacity building on safeguarding and inclusion:** Headteachers, crucial figures in school leadership, undergo specific training on inclusive leadership and safeguarding measures. The training encompasses the requirements laid out in the NPSSVFS and the SSD. This targeted approach ensures that school leaders are well-equipped to create safe and secure learning environments. In addition to the headteachers trained on safeguarding, PLANE also has safeguarding and inclusion embedded in its training of school support officers and teachers, as well as training for volunteer community learning hub facilitators.

The programme extends its training efforts to stakeholders and relevant state Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) across the KJ (Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa) states, particularly focusing on Gender Desk Officers. This collaborative approach involves training sessions that contribute to the collective efforts aimed at achieving significant milestones in safeguarding practices.

**Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Scans:** PLANE conducts GESI scans in collaboration with states, assessing the gender and social inclusion landscape. The results of these scans are transformed into action plans, providing a roadmap for implementing GESI principles. The scans are not just a one-time effort; they are conducted periodically to ensure ongoing adherence to GESI goals. Through the GESI scans, PLANE assesses government agencies' understanding of GESI and their ability to implement associated policies. Furthermore, it aimed to develop strategies to address gaps in GESI and safeguarding highlighted from the scan. States were able to develop action plans covering three critical areas: technical capacity, organisational culture and accountability.

**Materials and Resources:** The programme is taking active steps to create inclusive materials. For example, the teaching and learning materials developed for teachers and learners reflect gender and social inclusion, with the use of graphics and text to highlight gender equality and disability inclusion in a user-friendly manner for learners.

PLANE has supported the development of tools and resources for strengthening GESI and safeguarding in the states. These include the Minimum Standards for GEDSI & Safeguarding with indicators, State Referral Pathways, a Safeguarding Checklist for Incident Tracking and Management, and Inclusive Leadership Training Manuals for Headteachers/Schools.

## SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

PLANE-supported school safety interventions and training on inclusion are increasing the awareness of teachers, learners and management on the importance of creating a more conducive environment for children. For instance, schools with safeguarding referral pathways in place have noticed an improvement in the confidence of students to report safeguarding concerns.

At the end of the first year of implementation, the programme recorded a significant milestone, with a total of 2,487 schools across Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa states now equipped with comprehensive action plans, referral pathways and guidelines for safeguarding. All the headteachers of the schools were trained by PLANE and have shown improvement in knowledge of the concept. In Kaduna State, where PLANE supported the training of 694 head teachers, the trained headteachers have appointed safeguarding leads across their various schools. They also reported an increase in incident reporting.

Through the cascade model, 10,845 teachers have been trained on basic components of gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) to enable a more effective use of primary one to three materials for learners. School Support Officers (SSOs) in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa were also trained to coach and mentor headteachers/schools on issues relating to safeguarding and inclusion, and they have begun to record observations relating to these when they embark on their routine school support visits.

The programme has enhanced the skills and knowledge of seven gender desk officers in Jigawa state to effectively monitor, track, and document safeguarding incidents, and to support the improvement of GEDSI in schools. Additionally, in Kano State, the program has trained 100 Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) desk officers appointed by the government. This aligns with the program's system-strengthening approach to drive activities aimed at removing gender and disability-based barriers to teaching and learning in the state.

In Jigawa State, PLANE supported the training of 135 male and 60 female newly recruited teachers in Dutse Local Government Area. The recruitment of new teachers was in response to recurrent advocacy on the need for more teachers, particularly female teachers, in the state.

Similarly, PLANE is working with the Organisation of Persons with Disabilities, SUBEB, gender desk officers, and Senior SSOs to advocate and develop strategies for increasing enrollment of children with disabilities, girls and marginalised children while strengthening community engagement around gender equality and social inclusion.

## TESTIMONIALS

Amina Mohammed is the Head Teacher Government Basic Education School, Kugoro, Kaduna. Amina has been the school's head teacher for three years. Before becoming the head teacher she served as a School Support Officer (SSO) and was transferred to the school due to her expertise. The school, formerly known as LGEA Primary School, is now a Government Basic Education School. She acknowledged changes in issues relating to GESI and Safeguarding through PLANE's intervention:

"PLANE played a very pivotal role in this aspect of safeguarding. Before we were just hearing about safeguarding, but we did not know particularly what it means. How did we get to know? It is through PLANE's awareness and sensitisation, because PLANE sensitised the head teachers, the School-based Management Committee (SBMC) and the teachers.

We now know the referral pathway, that any unwanted occurrence that happens, maybe through molesting, sexual harassment to the learners or bullying, we know how to tackle the issue through the intervention and through the awareness that PLANE gave us through the sensitisation. We know how and the process that we are supposed to follow to reach to the end of any case.

"Our teachers are also trying in the aspect of inclusion. Because there was a day I was going around for my normal lesson observation for that day. I went to a class and sat at the back of the class to observe the lesson on what the teacher was doing, and I could see that there was a very tall boy in the front seat. After I observed the lesson and finished, I called the attention of the teacher outside and asked her why this taller one was in the front of the class. She's now telling me that he has a problem of seeing. He cannot see at the back of the class. I understand that the teacher has included everyone in that particular class, and I can say that we have so many children that have special needs and they are today in our classes and they are improving, learning every day."



“We have two teachers that are our designated officers in charge of safeguarding in the school because we normally hold assembly, general assembly, just to sensitise the learners on this safeguarding issue. How they can protect themselves from any maltreatment, from harassment, and also how they are going to keep themselves neat. We did that. The officers in charge are trying. I have the head and the assistant, and they are really trying. And the learners are free with the particular teachers that are assigned for that because they go to them and ask them some questions, and the officers give them advice.

“There is no serious safeguarding concern that happened since the training, but the very young learners because of the awareness that they have been given, will be disturbing. Even when I’m in my office, some learners can come in and say, “Mummy, this one pinched me, this one touched me”. They will be complaining like that because of the awareness that they were given. They will be going to the designated officers and reporting all these minor cases to them.”

Amina Mohammed, Head Teacher, Government Basic Education School, Kagoro, Kaduna.

Ummi Jibril Abba is Deputy Director, Gender and Social Inclusion at the Jigawa State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). She gave an overview of the changes brought about by the PLANE GESI and Safeguarding intervention in Jigawa State.

“The PLANE intervention supported the stakeholders on the issue of girl child education policy, which we did together; the safety policy and the private schools policy. So, concerning our schools, PLANE trained headteachers, teachers, school support officers, and they trained gender officers on the issue of safety and security in our schools.

“The training has a lot of impact because they focus on the students. They are aware of all the issues of how to safeguard themselves and their schools. Also, the head teachers know about the issue of environmental factors affecting our school as well as our children. The issue of inclusion is well-treated. They have given us training on the issue of inclusion, and how to carry everybody along, especially children with disabilities in our schools.

“We have to protect all the children from the danger happening in our schools, like the issue of gender-based violence and child maltreatment, the issue of the problem of classes, the issue of environmental factors, the issue of separate toilets for boys and girls in our schools, and how the children will protect themselves in our schools. We have noticed so many changes because the children are now aware”.



Ummi Jibril Abba, Deputy Director, Gender and Social Inclusion, Jigawa State Universal Basic Education Board.



Jigawa State's Department of Private Schools during a visit to Lagos to understudy its PPP Model

# Jigawa State's Public-Private Partnership Forum Enhances Standards and Regulations for Basic Education

## SYNOPSIS

The Jigawa State Ministry of Education and its allied departments and agencies launched a public-private partnership forum (PPP) in February 2023. with the support of the PLANE programme. The PPP seeks to improve the collaboration between government and non-state education stakeholders in relation to improving the standard of education, strengthening accountability and attracting more financing, particularly through private investors. PLANE provided capacity-building support for the PPP forum members focused on enhancing effective advocacy skills. The programme also supported the development of a strategic plan from 2023 to 2028 for the forum. A readiness survey for the PPP model is also at an advanced stage in Kaduna and Kano states.



*"Before now Private School owners were not carried along in the development of education policy and other critical activities that will improve standards in schools. But with the intervention of PLANE the government have started involving us in discussions and listening to our challenges. There is a sense of inclusiveness in the private sector in the state now, which we are enjoying."*

-Otunba Ojo Olaolu Felix, State Chairman, Association of Private School Owners.

## INTRODUCTION

Public-private partnerships (PPP) play a crucial role in education in countries like Nigeria where the government alone is unable to cater to the education needs of all its citizens. PPPs enable stakeholders in the non-state sector as well as those in the state education sector to collaborate and advance education for all, especially the marginalised. They are extremely valuable in addressing concerns around enrolment of out-of-school children, and other challenges faced in low-resource communities where quality education is typically underserved.

The Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria (PLANE) programme has an objective to improve the collaboration between government and non-state education systems as it relates to service delivery, accountability and financing. One of the ways it is supporting this is through the establishment of a PPP forum nationally and in states, a platform that enables the public and private sectors to combine their expertise and resources to achieve shared goals in education. A PPP forum was successfully set up in Jigawa State in 2023, with PPP readiness surveys currently being finalised in Kano and Kaduna states.

PPPs in education facilitate collaborations between businesses and government to finance or provide education services. These partnerships may be composed of multiple stakeholders, including private corporations, nonprofit organisations, civil society, donor organisations or philanthropic groups. They also help to promote the use of evidence, and support new approaches to enable the non-state sector to achieve minimum standards in addressing the needs of marginalised children. PPPs can help to lift the quality of education delivered by incorporating the knowledge, skills and

innovations available in the non-state sector, whether pedagogical or technical. PPPs, by increasing choice in education and linking educational subsidies to demand, can also lead to increased accountability. PPPs also help to increase the efficiency of education delivery. This can occur in a variety of ways, for example, use of non-state education providers may lead to the introduction of innovations in areas such as school and teacher management.

In addition, partnerships allow governments to transfer responsibility for certain functions such as delivery to the private sector, while the government focuses on areas of comparative advantage such as policy, planning and quality assurance. By establishing a PPP forum, PLANE is modelling promising practices for the delivery of core schooling services at all levels.

## INTERVENTION CONTEXT: COORDINATION AND REGULATORY BARRIERS

Jigawa State, like most northern states in Nigeria, contends with a high number of children deprived of schooling and opportunity to learn. While private entities have long been involved in the provision of education, moving the state closer to achieving Sustainable Development Goal on equitable education for all by 2030 would require a more deliberate, well-structured and concerted effort by both public and private stakeholders.

Many difficulties have hampered the effective provision of high-quality education in Jigawa State, and these difficulties define the current setting for the new PPP Forum's work. They include financial constraints, limited resources, shoddy infrastructure, poor learning outcomes, as well as issues with teacher recruitment, deployment, welfare and development. In addition to the difficulties already highlighted, Jigawa State is characterised by a rapidly growing population of school-aged children, putting strain on the education system and leading to overcrowded classrooms and resource shortages.

Another major area of concern that the PPP seeks to address in Jigawa State is quality assurance, that is, being able to improve the standard of education obtainable. Many schools require support to equip students with the knowledge and abilities they need to prosper in the twenty-first century, by incorporating new technologies and creative pedagogical strategies in addition to conventional teaching techniques. Given the minimal resources often available from the government, this can only be achieved speedily through the attraction of private investors.

Challenges with regulatory frameworks discourage the private sector's involvement in education. While the government is primarily in charge of the provision of free, compulsory, and universal basic education in Nigeria, private contributors have to navigate complex regulations and bureaucratic procedures which deter investment. They are also often sidelined in broader educational initiatives and policies. This lack of representation and engagement in policy development results in an education system that inadequately considers private sector interests

Without supportive policies, enabling environments and incentives, private sector players will be wary of growing their contribution towards education. However, when provided with a platform where a stronger collaboration can be fostered with the government, the strengths of each sector can enhance resource mobilisation, promote innovation and improve educational outcomes.

## INTERVENTION: THE JIGAWA PPP FORUM

The Jigawa State Ministry of Education and its allied departments and agencies launched the PPP Forum in February 2023. The forum functions within the state's legal framework, and diverse industries are represented among its membership. Its establishment was prompted by a study conducted by PLANE in Jigawa State, which revealed that most owners of unregistered non-state schools do not benefit from state or non-state support.

Jigawa's PPP Forum is housed by the Jigawa State Ministry of Education, where it seeks to champion a collaborative effort that supports the effective delivery of quality education in the state. The PPP will secure essential funding and backing for the education sector and will work to ensure that every child in the state gains access to quality education, thereby enhancing their prospects for success and fostering socio-economic advancement within the area. Additionally, the Jigawa PPP forum seeks to advance the creation and application of enduring, evidence-based policies that support the provision of high-quality education in the state.

PLANE provided the following:

**Building the evidence-base:** State -level situational analyses are critical first steps to understanding the scale and nature of private sector providers as well as the legal, political and regulatory frameworks that impact their ability to reach the disadvantaged. Piloting of successful PPP models, particularly those based on lessons available from Lagos State and the Socio-Demographic Survey on KJ States, provided evidence of effective, sustainable measures to design and implement PPPs.

**Policy advocacy:** The evidence base from the assessments done in KJ States provided a great resource for policy advocacy. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and SDG commitments provide a legal and political basis to hold governments accountable for their actions.

**Capacity building of governments and private sector providers:** PLANE has engaged in capacity development of governments as well as private and community actors; on PPP modelling, resource mobilisation and advocacy, PLANE has helped to fill gaps in capability as governments have relatively limited experience working with the private sector, and the human resource capacity to develop and manage PPPs is often weak.

## SIGNIFICANT CHANGES: COLLABORATING FOR EDUCATION ADVANCEMENT

The Jigawa PPP forum established by PLANE is collaborating closely with the state government, private investors and other stakeholders to build a comprehensive education plan that places a high priority on collaboration, innovation and sustainability. To ensure its effectiveness post-establishment, PLANE provided capacity-building support for the PPP forum members focused on enhancing effective advocacy skills. The programme also supported the development of a strategic plan from 2023 to 2028 for the forum. The plan outlines the strategic direction of the forum and aims to guide decision-making on program direction, fundraising priorities, resource allocation, and long-term action plans. It also focuses on creating awareness, improving educational service delivery, generating resources, enhancing service delivery and strengthening stakeholders' understanding of PPP in Jigawa State.

The PPP Forum is focusing on six areas: promoting quality education, addressing equity issues, advocating for strong public systems and governance, securing financing for public education, and emphasizing transparency and accountability. Sub-committees have been established to handle advocacy, capacity building, resource mobilisation, monitoring and evaluation, and technical support. A SWOT analysis conducted by the PPP Forum revealed that it has a high level of commitment from both public and private sector stakeholders to work together to improve the quality of education in the state. This commitment is beginning to yield positive results in the state.

The PPP Forum has participated in and supported the development of the Jigawa State Non-State Schools Policy, and played an important role in the formulation of the Jigawa State Safe and Violence-Free School Policy. This policy underscores the commitment to creating a secure and conducive learning environment for all students in both public and private schools. The forum and education partners also diligently oversaw and supervised the training of teachers in literacy and numeracy foundational skills.

In the area of resource mobilisation, the forum has conducted a thorough analysis and mapping of companies, individuals and philanthropists supporting education within the state. This process has helped to identify potential partners and opportunities for collaboration to enhance the progress of educational initiatives. In addition, the forum is also involved in research and baselines. The members have supported the conduct of Early Grade Reading and Early Grade Mathematics Assessments in the state, and participated in the validation of Non-State Schools Graded Assessment exercises.

Following the progress being recorded in Jigawa, PLANE is currently working with Kano and Kaduna state to establish a PPP forum, aligning with the broader goal of diversifying school provision, improving accountability and autonomy, and injecting additional finance into the education sector. In Kaduna State, PLANE has supported a PPP Readiness Assessment Survey, designed to inform the development of a PPP model specific to the state.

## TESTIMONIALS

Otunba Ojo Olaolu Felix is the Proprietor of the Salem Group of Schools, Dutse, Jigawa State. He also serves as the State Chairman of the Association of Private Schools Owners of Nigeria.

"There was a sponsored visit of some of the key stakeholders to Lagos in respect of the PPP to see the model of the PPP that is being used in Lagos, so that they can bring it to fore in Jigawa State and implement it to enhance the standard of education in Jigawa State. What I understand with PLANE is that they are majorly out to enhance the educational standard, both in the public and the private sector.

"The PPP model is public-private partnership which is to enhance both the public and the private school coming together. The government will be able to at least have a certain percentage in assisting even the private school. For example, like in Lagos, based on what we were told, there are some schools that even the state government will build.

"I may decide to charge maybe 20,000, others may decide to charge 50,000. But where there is the public-private partnership and the government is able to assist in one area or the other, either in infrastructure or maybe furniture, at least it will be down on me not to charge the way I was charging before, because the charges are as a result of some things I want to provide for the school. Public-private partnership enhances the standard of education, at the same time, it will make things a bit easy for the community.

"Every hand would be on the deck. Government would bring their own regulation and say, this is the standard we want and since we have assisted you in this area, you will be able to meet up with this. But if all those things are not there, it would not help.

"Before now private school owners were not carried along in the development of education policy and other critical activities that will improve standards in schools. But with the intervention of PLANE the government have started involving us in discussions and listening to our challenges. There is a sense of inclusiveness in the private sector in the state now, which we are enjoying."



Otunba Ojo Olaolu Felix. Jigawa State Chairman, the Association of Private Schools Owners of Nigeria.



Tasiu Abubakar, Co-Chair of the Jigawa Education Accountability Forum (JEAF).

Tasiu Abubakar is the co-chair of the Jigawa Education Accountability Forum (JEAF). JEAF is a State-Led Accountability Mechanism (SLAM), a co-creation of government, professional bodies, media bodies, CSOs, academia, and traditional institutions in the state to strengthen open governance and improve accountability in the education sector. The Forum supported PLANE in the establishment of the PPP Forum for Education in the state.

“JEAF participated in the development of policy for non-state actors and took some lead role in the private partnership forum that was created to ensure that all stakeholders are contributing to the development of education in the state. Not only that, we also participated in the quality assurance policy that is supported by PLANE and other partners in education within the state. So, we are working together with state, PLANE, and other partners to ensure that as quality service delivery, especially the foundational skills, which is the basic for the children to meet their aspirations.



*“PLANE's unwavering support, alongside the concerted efforts of diverse stakeholders, has been a catalyst for monumental shifts in Jigawa's educational paradigm. Our collaboration ensures that education reforms not only meet but exceed the needs and aspirations of the state, ushering in a new era of educational excellence with the involvement of various stakeholders.*

*-Tasiu Abubakar, JEAF.”*



“JEAF participated in the development of policy for non-state actors and took some lead role in the private partnership forum that was created to ensure that all stakeholders are contributing to the development of education in the state. Not only that, we also participated in the quality assurance policy that is supported by PLANE and other partners in education within the state. So, we are working together with state, PLANE, and other partners to ensure that as quality service delivery, especially the foundational skills, which is the basic for the children to meet their aspirations.

“With the support of PLANE, the Jigawa Education Accountability Forum has brought about transformative changes, effectively closing the teacher gap. This partnership, involving various stakeholders, actively contributing to the formulation of policies that resonate with the unique educational landscape of the state.

“PLANE's unwavering support, alongside the concerted efforts of diverse stakeholders, has been a catalyst for monumental shifts in Jigawa's educational paradigm. Our collaboration ensures that education reforms not only meet but exceed the needs and aspirations of the state, ushering in a new era of educational excellence with the involvement of various stakeholders.

“The success stories arising from our advocacy efforts, from the recruitment of additional teachers to comprehensive policy reviews, are emblematic of the synergy between the Jigawa Education Accountability Forum and other stakeholders. Together, we are forging a path towards sustainable advancements in education within the state.

“PLANE's innovative approach to evidence-based advocacy, supported by the collaboration of various stakeholders, has not just changed the game—it has redefined it. By leveraging government data and the input of diverse stakeholders, we've been able to hold authorities accountable, propelling us towards positive changes in the education sector.

“Beyond immediate challenges, PLANE's support, coupled with the engagement of diverse stakeholders, has laid the groundwork for enduring sustainability. The Jigawa Education Accountability Forum is now poised to continue its advocacy and monitoring efforts, fortified by the solid foundations laid down by PLANE and other stakeholders, ensuring a lasting legacy of educational improvement in the state.”



Cross-section of learners in a public primary school in Kaduna State.

## Introduction of Graded Assessments Tools Strengthen Quality Assurance Process in Schools

### SYNOPSIS

In collaboration with State Ministries of Education and the State Universal Basic Education Board, PLANE is focusing on improving quality assurance policies and practices to encourage a school-led culture of quality enhancement. PLANE is working with Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa states to review and adapt Graded Assessment tools for the monitoring of non-state schools. In Kaduna State, PLANE supported the roll out Graded Assessment in 198 schools, comprising public and private primary as well as public secondary schools. Following the efficiency of the process, the state government has now adopted the use of the tools across both state and non-state schools.

*"You can't compare the Graded Assessment to what was obtainable before. What was obtainable was time-consuming, money-consuming and needed a lot of manpower, but when it comes to Graded Assessment, what ten people can do, one person can do it in less than the time those ten people will do it. So, I think the Graded Assessment is a better tool".*

*- Gideon Sidi Pitoli, Acting Director, Quality Assurance Authority, Kaduna State Ministry of Education.*

### INTRODUCTION

Learners in both state and non-state schools have a right to good quality education, Therefore, irrespective of ownership category, the government must establish an effective and rigorous quality assurance process to monitor all schools. Such quality assurance tools, if deployed properly, can support school development by allowing school leaders to conduct a systematic appraisal of their institution across thematic areas such as leadership, quality of teaching, learner welfare, infrastructure, government standards, safeguarding, inclusion, teaching and the learning process.

While most state governments in Nigeria have an established quality assurance process in place for state schools, known as whole school evaluation, non-state schools are often not included in the process. Hence, the Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria (PLANE) programme, funded by the UK Government's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is supporting state governments in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa states, to strengthen the quality assurance process in non-state schools, using Graded Assessment tools.

The Graded Assessment tools, initially developed under FCDO's previous experimental programme, Developing Effective Private Education - Nigeria (DEEPEN), have proven to be useful for school owners in conducting self-assessment, and for the government in conducting validation exercises. The tools serve the purpose of helping the government to understand the ecosystem of non-state schools, especially low-cost private schools, to determine whether those schools are meeting policy requirements.

## INTERVENTION CONTEXT

**Limited Government Oversight:** At the basic education level, the Nigerian government is responsible for providing free education to all children in the country through state-owned schools. However, there has been a growing recognition of the role and contribution of private schools and faith-based schools, such as the Tsangaya, Quranic and Islamic schools, in helping deliver this right to free basic education. As the number of these non-state schools has grown the government faces increasing challenges in providing oversight and ensuring quality, leading to the risk that not all schools are providing education of a sufficient quality. The government primarily focuses its limited resources on monitoring state-owned schools through a process called whole-school evaluation. While Nigerian state authorities recognise the importance of non-state schools, they often lack sufficient information about the specific needs, conditions and quality of education in these schools, especially low-cost ones. This makes it difficult for the government to provide appropriate and customised support for non-state schools, which could ease their challenges with meeting policy requirements in areas such as registration, accreditation and taxation.

**Lack of Assessment Tools for Non-State Schools:** While tools are already in place to support state schools through the 'whole school evaluation process', which combines a self-assessment completed by school managers and subsequent validation conducted by government-employed quality assurance officers, most non-state school owners have no structured tool. Without this tool, it is difficult for non-state schools to track their effectiveness and create school development plans.

## INTERVENTION: GRADED ASSESSMENT FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS (GAPS)

In collaboration with State Ministries of Education and the State Universal Basic Education Board, PLANE is focusing on improving quality assurance policies and practices to encourage a school-led culture of quality enhancement. PLANE is working with Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa states to review and adapt the Graded Assessment tools used initially under the DEEPEN programme, especially for the monitoring of non-state schools.

The Graded Assessment is a replica of the whole school evaluation process at the federal and state levels, but it is targeted at non-state schools. It identifies the strengths and weaknesses of schools across various themes and based on scores, categorises each school as 'excelling', 'establishing', 'enhancing' or 'emerging'. A school that obtains a score above 80% is excelling, while a school with between 60-79% is considered 'establishing'. A school with a score between 40-59% is seen as an enhancing school, while any school below 39% is categorised as emerging. At the end of the first stage, which is the school self-assessment, each school manager can generate a school report, and use the report to create a development plan.

To demonstrate the use of the tool, a pilot Graded Assessment for Private Schools (GAPs) was conducted in 130 private and Integrated Qur'anic Tsangaya Schools (IQTS) in selected local government areas in the Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa. Before the assessment tools were deployed, PLANE sought the input of state partners to check for effectiveness, user-friendliness and compliance with gender, inclusion safeguarding requirements. PLANE also trained participants drawn from the Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa State Ministries of Education, National Association of

Private School Proprietors, Association of Private School Owners, Bureau of Inter Faith, Private State and Voluntary School Boards, as well as Islamiyah and Koranic School Boards, which are the responsible agencies for regulation of IQTE/Tsangaya and Islamic Schools in the states.

Following the success of the pilot, PLANE supported Kaduna State to roll out Graded Assessment in 198 schools in the state, comprising public and private primary as well as public secondary schools. The schools conducted self-assessments, and participated in an external evaluation that provided performance information and showed to what extent they meet national goals and the needs of the public and communities. A copy of the self-assessment tool was sent to the selected schools for self-grading. Thereafter, trained validators from the state's quality assurance department used an application, Open Data Kit (ODK) to validate the self-assessment scores by the schools. Here, each school provides documentary evidence to justify its scores and the validator prepares reports to justify the validated scores. These reports are especially useful when there is a gap between self-assessment and validated scores. They ensure that the validators provide an objective score that shows a true and fair view of the schools during the validation exercise.

At the completion of the process, school scorecards have been generated for non-state schools by the State Quality Assurance Authority. Kaduna State Government has also committed to roll out GAPS in 600 additional state and non-state schools in the state.

## SUCCESSES RECORDED: THE KADUNA STATE ASSESSMENT

The deployment of the GAP tools in the states to date has been successful in several ways. In Kaduna, the state expanded its adoption from non-state to state-owned schools. The assessment provided valuable insights into the education landscape of the state as a whole, allowing a level playing field for both public and private schools to be ranked using the same thematic areas. Some private institutions have better facilities than state schools, which often face resource constraints including inadequate classrooms and school fencing. The standardised assessments has provided a foundation for further discussion and action to enhance the quality of education in the state. It is a call to action for collaboration between government authorities, school administrators, teachers, parents, and the community at large to work together towards ensuring equitable access to quality education for all students in Kaduna State.

Findings from the assessment in Kaduna State have been eye-opening. For instance, the state was able to discover that the teacher-pupil ratio in private schools were at 1:12, compared to 1:54 in public primary schools. The learner's toilets ratio stood at 28:1 in private schools compared to 427:1 in public primary schools. Only 2.5% of all schools sampled were in the 'excelling' category, with none of Islamic integrated and non-Islamic schools making the list. The assessment generated recommendations which the state will be supported by PLANE to prioritise. Both state and non-state schools are struggling with infrastructure development and there is a need to focus more on building and renovating classrooms, providing necessary facilities and ensuring a conducive learning environment. The government needs to

develop and implement inclusive education policies to cater to students with special needs, ensuring that all schools are equipped to provide a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

There has been extensive engagement with key stakeholders, including the Kaduna State Directorate of Quality Assurance and school organisations to create a strong sense of ownership for the Graded Assessment activity. The Kaduna State Ministry of Education and the State Primary Education Board have recognised the GAPS tool as a crucial instrument for grading and assessing schools. Plans are in place to enlarge the number of schools to include out-of-state unregistered schools as well as to offer technical assistance to the state government for the dissemination of the report.

Apart from these, PLANE is also using the findings of the assessment to further strengthen non-state schools, looking at critical areas such as registration barriers, financial inclusion and teacher capacity building. As part of interventions in this regard, the programme is supporting the government to establish

innovation hubs and communities of practice for teachers. The innovation hubs serve as spaces for training, equipped with modern information and communication technology, providing teachers and headteachers in non-state schools with opportunities for continuous professional development. Recognising the resource challenges faced by many non-state schools, PLANE is also advocating for more public-private partnerships as well as collaborations with financial institutions to provide loans at reduced interest rates, promoting financial inclusion and infrastructure improvement.

Though initially developed for non-state schools, the efficiency of the Graded Assessment process has drawn the attention of stakeholders, including the Universal Basic Education Commission and the Federal Education Quality Assurance Service, and PLANE has been providing the necessary support to scale up the intervention. Achieving this will give the government more oversight on the quality of learning taking place in non-state schools and help to manage some of the risks that come with the involvement of non-state actors in the provision of basic education.

## TESTIMONIALS



Sherifat Abubakar is the head teacher at Yoruba Muslim Community School in Dutse, Jigawa State. Her school was part of the Pilot Graded Assessments conducted across Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa states. According to Sherifat, since the private school was established in 2009, there have been no assessment conducted by government until PLANE introduced GAPS.

“We were allowed to assess ourselves based on the facilities we have in the school, then a validator comes to assess us as well. In my school, they asked us about the security, I told the validator that the school is well secured because we have a very big fence. However, when the validator queried if we have a watchman and I said he only comes during regular class hours, it affected our score. Our school operates both Islamic and western education, so with that, we are not qualified to be graded an A, we did not meet up to the standard that is required.

“We graded ourselves based on what we were doing, but a lot of the things we were doing like the annual meetings and terminal meetings were not well documented. When something is not recorded, it is as if you did not do them. We don’t have record, and that made my school to have a very low grade. From this exercise now, I have learnt to keep records.

“On the issue of lesson note and lesson plan, we normally check it twice in a month, but at the end of the day, we realised that most of the lessons are not corresponding with what is in the curriculum. The teacher will give you a very well-planned lesson note and lesson plan, but when they enter the class, if we don’t monitor them, they do another thing entirely. Since the last time they came for the evaluation, I tried to work on that. I am now able to closely monitor the teachers, back to back. I don’t give them breathing space, I enter their class, collect the children’s notes to see if it corresponds with the lesson notes.

“In over 13 years, this is the first time my school will be assessed and I feel bad because had it been there was this constant training going on, a lot of schools would have improved. The standard of education here is poor, but with the introduction of this assessment, almost all the schools have seen where their problem is.

“They gave us a task called development plan, so with that development plan, each and every member that participate would know where the problem is and how to address it. Everybody is happy with this programme and they are ready to improve. Just give us a few months and you would see improvement. To be honest, Jigawa is going to become the best.”



Gideon Sidi Pitoli, Acting Director, Quality Assurance Department, Kaduna State's Ministry of Education.

Gideon Sidi Pitoli is the Deputy Director, Quality Assurance Authority and the Acting Director of the department in Kaduna State's Ministry of Education. He had the following to say about the impact of the Graded Assessment.

"The Graded Assessment is an innovation of PLANE in collaboration with our authority here. When PLANE came, they told us that they were not bringing anything new, that they wanted to build in on what we have; and collectively, the tools we use for our monitoring and other activities were given and we looked at those tools collectively and we were told to bring out the Graded Assessment because we felt it was better, it was simpler, it was not as time-consuming as the activities we are used to. That's why it was adopted.

"Well, when it came, naturally, in a process that is just beginning, you have to be trained, I was trained on the automated Graded Assessment, incidentally, I became a trainer too, I participated in the Graded Assessment as a validator and later participated as a supervisor.

"We started with 50 non-state schools, next we targeted 200 schools, but because of some little hitches here and there, we were able to cover just about 193. Report cards were given to schools based on their activity to show their areas of weaknesses and areas where they need to improve. One unique thing about the Graded Assessment is it does not condemn anybody. It allows you to grade yourself, which is going to be validated, and you are allowed to contribute to your gradings. Then at the end of the day, if you're not satisfied with the validation, you have time to sit down with the validator, talk to him, to understand yourselves.

"The last time we went for ministerial briefing, we presented the findings to the council, after we had agreed in the house here that the Graded Assessment is the best thing that ever happened to us. We presented it to the council, and the council really felt good about it, because we told them that after the Graded Assessment, we had report cards given to schools, schools gave us feedback, and some had even written to us to tell us that the areas where we found them wanting, they have amended it. We have had schools that even invited us that we should come and see the areas where we felt that they were weak, that they have fixed those areas.

"You can't compare the Graded Assessment to what was obtainable before. What was obtainable was time-consuming, money-consuming and needed a lot of manpower, but when it comes to Graded Assessment, what ten people can do, one person can do it in less than the time those ten people will do it. So, I think the Graded Assessment is a better tool.

*"What we are thinking of doing is to use the Graded Assessment to conduct the whole school evaluation. That would help us reduce the time for our work, increase the output and reduce the number of personnel needed for our whole school evaluation."*

"Based on our upgraded Assessment tool, we discovered that so many teachers were not registered with the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN). Now, we have decided that there is going to be a monitoring exercise whereby all teachers will go to TRCN to register and obtain a professional teaching certificate."

CLASS INDICATOR

13 - 11 - 2023

IL: B ONE B

ROLL: 42

Boys: 22

Girls:

PRESE

ABS

of T

AIDA

MU

Yau Laraba 6<sup>th</sup> - Dec - 2023

Darasi - Lissafi

Batu - kirge da layin lamba



## LESSONS LEARNED IN PLANE'S YEAR ONE IMPLEMENTATION

### **Political will in addressing learning poverty**

All states currently being supported by the PLANE programme have identified tackling learning poverty as a critical need and have demonstrated political will to address the issue. It is therefore important for PLANE and other development partners to harmonise their efforts in providing technical assistance to the states and implementing the foundational learning intervention at scale.

### **Critical role of pre-service education in addressing teacher shortage and quality**

Due to the low quantity and quality of teachers in the system, especially women, it is critical to focus on pre-service education to ensure that teacher training institutions produce teachers with capacity to facilitate foundational learning. PLANE will be providing technical assistance to National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and Colleges of Education in the support states to address these issues.

### **Centrality of headteachers in ensuring the effective and efficient delivery of good quality teaching and learning at the school level**

Headteachers need to be equipped with content knowledge, skills and attitude to support and mentor teachers, and ensure effective classroom management for enhanced teaching and learning. Through the Whole School Development Approach, PLANE will continue to provide technical assistance for schools to implement school improvement programmes.

# ACRONYMS

<b>CLhubs</b>	Community Learning Hubs
<b>DEEPEN</b>	Developing Effective Private Education - Nigeria
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information System
<b>FCDO</b>	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>FEQAS</b>	Federal Education Quality Assurance Service
<b>GAPS</b>	Graded Assessment for Private Schools
<b>GESI</b>	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
<b>GEDSI</b>	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
<b>IQTS</b>	Integrated Qur'anic Tsangaya Schools
<b>JEAF</b>	Jigawa Education Accountability Forum
<b>KKJ</b>	Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa
<b>LGEA</b>	Local Government Education Areas
<b>LGA</b>	Local Government Area
<b>NCCE</b>	National Commission for Colleges of Education
<b>NPSSVSFS</b>	National Policy on Safety, Security, and Violence-Free Schools
<b>ODK</b>	Open Data Kit
<b>OPWD</b>	Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
<b>PLANE</b>	Partnership for Learning for All in Nigeria
<b>SBMC</b>	School-Based Management Committee
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SLAM</b>	State-Led Accountability Mechanism
<b>SSD</b>	Safe School Declaration
<b>SSO</b>	School Support Officer
<b>SUBEB</b>	State Universal Basic Education Board
<b>TRCN</b>	Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria
<b>TLM</b>	Teaching and Learning Materials
<b>UBEC</b>	Universal Basic Education Commission
<b>PPP</b>	Public-private partnerships

Nine-year-old Hafsat attends a PLANE-supported school in Gagarawa LGA, Jigawa State and complements this with a weekly afternoon class at a community learning hub, a few steps away from home.

Hafsat, won a reading competition in her hub, after learning to read with the help of the books provided by PLANE. She loves basic science and wants to become a doctor when she grows up. "If you do not go to school, you would not have what it takes to become important in Nigeria", she says.

In its first year, PLANE reached 554,648 young learners like Hafsat in Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa states, with literacy and maths textbooks in their mother tongue.







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