

## Nigeria

### *Country Context*

Nigeria is the tenth largest country in the world and the most populous country in Africa with a population estimated at 128 million. The annual population growth rate is estimated at 2.8%. The country has recently emerged from 20 years of military dictatorship with multi-party elections in 1999 and 2003. The years of military adventurism in politics literally led to the collapse of all national social services including education. Nigeria operates a federal system of government modelled on the American model. The federal government is generally responsible for giving overall policy direction in key sectors. They are expected to do this with the active participation of the states. Nigeria has 36 semi-autonomous states and a federal capital territory in Abuja. The political arena is further complicated in that the Nigeria constitution recognizes 778 local government units. All these structures (the federal, state and local government areas) are expected to work seamlessly in the development and delivery of coherent public services (education inclusive). The severe decline of the oil market in the early 1980s combined with other factors such as the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and mismanagement brought about the gradual disintegration of the economy and is responsible for the steady decline in most sectors and decreased government spending on education. The result of this has been a steady decrease in literacy levels and school enrolment. By 1991, the overall literacy rate had declined to 64.1%, today there are 7.3 million school age children out of primary school and 9 million school age children out of basic education - (6 years in primary education and the other 3 years in junior secondary education).

The education system in Nigeria is guided by the broad National objectives, which are articulated in the National Policy on Education, first written in 1977 and revised in 1981, 1995, 1998 and recently in 2004. The structure of the formal education consists of six years primary education, three years of junior secondary, three years of senior secondary education and four years at the tertiary school (the 6-3-3-4 system). The National Policy on Education was also guided by the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme launched in 1976, which assured nine years of free and compulsory basic education for all Nigerian children. The scheme failed for inadequate planning and lack of resources, but nevertheless resulted in doubling primary education enrolment in a decade. The new democratic Government responded to the crisis in the education sector with the launch of Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 1999, but it was not passed into law until 2003. Not unlike the defunct UPE, emerging statistics show evidence of an increase in enrolment. Some tiers of government capitalize on the aspect of the UBE law that gives a grace period of five years before the full implementation of the bill, to charge fees. Also interestingly, since Nigeria operates a federal system of government, the state government owned schools are not bound by the UBE and Child Rights Act, passed in the federal legislative house. As a signatory to the 2000 World Education

Conference, and the 6 Dakar Goals towards achieving Education for All (EFA), Government has also established a National EFA Coordination unit under the Federal Ministry of Education mandated to prepare a National Action Plan for the delivery of EFA in Nigeria. Perhaps the greatest challenge facing government is the inadequate spending on education. While there has been an increase in overall government expenditure from N1.06 Trillion in 2002 to N1.6 Trillion (52% increase), this has not translated to a corresponding percentage increase allocation to the educational sector, which was 7% in 2002 and still 7% in 2005, while the UBE budget is about 2%. Debt servicing obligation further compounds matters. Bringing about good coordination within the governance structure of education delivery in Nigeria as well as addressing the funding challenge is some of the issues both government and other stakeholders need to address.

### ***Key Achievements***

- ❑ CEF support has strengthened capacity of partners by offering some workshops, feedback on projects and a pre-MOU assessment. This has strengthened some organisations to source funds from other donors (CASSAD, ECS).
- ❑ The National coalition - CSACEFA has increased information & learning around EFA among its members & wider CS. Stronger linkages have been made at local, national and international levels.
- ❑ Support to partner's budget work advocacy has resulted in increased funds allocations (Osun state), increased provision of material & infrastructure and better accessibility of budgets
- ❑ Supported research contributing to ensuring ECCD (Early Childcare & Development) was in the UBE (Universal Basic Education) policy.

### ***Breakdown by Criteria***

#### **CRITERION 1**

Support has been given to several organisations for capacity building around EFA and media and advocacy work. In addition, training on Technology of Participation and leadership was delivered at grass roots level. Global Action Week was supported and sensitisation work has been undertaken among private sector organisations. Several research projects have been supported as well as participation in work undertaken by ANCEFA. As a result of these things the MTR reports: an increase in the volume of information available and disseminated on EFA goals; evidence of improved organisational skills and capacity of communities through coalition members; evidence of improved community involvement in decision making in schools; increased representation and engagement with the government; and growing acceptance of civil society perspectives by the government. The MTR also reports the need to improve communication with coalition members, to address under-budgeting leading to inadequate resources, to reduce administrative bottlenecks and to work on gender mainstreaming.

## CRITERION 2

The MTR reports that; training in budget analysis is yet to take place, some policy makers have been uncooperative and some community members and media representatives have the wrong perception of CEF. However, information is more available including education budgets, budget allocation has increased, teaching materials have been provided and primary schools have been rehabilitated, albeit in certain areas only. A budget monitoring group has been formed by the Nigerian Union of Journalists and a partner in Nassarawa State makes regular radio appearances. The MTR reports that some community partners are now sourcing their own funds to execute education projects, although existing conflict is reported between community's needs and rights.

## CRITERION 3

The criterion three work in Nigeria is focused around research including; distribution of educational institutions, reading ability of primary aged children, attitudes towards education of girls and disabled children, issues that prevent enrolment, retention and completion of children. Outcomes have been recommendations and contributions to policymaking, formation of advocacy committees, and the adoption of schools for rehabilitation by PTAs and community organisations. Challenges that the programme has faced include bureaucracy and a frequent change of personnel in government, difficulty in accessing some communities due to poor transport links, the socio-economic status of the target communities, and lack of access to women due to socio-cultural practice.

### *Case Study: Small steps towards significant change in rural communities*

Patigi Warri is a community in Lavun Local Government Area of Niger State. The closest primary school to the village is located in another village called Ggaragbazhu, which is about 5 km away. As a result of this, girls do not attend school because parents do not allow them to travel the distance. In addition a traditional and religious practice of child marriage is quite common and girls are married off as early as 8 - 9 years of age.

Health Development Agency (HDA), a CEF partner established an early childcare centre in the community in September 2003, which also serves as a 'primary school'. Parents requested that girls stay in the centre and receive education only up to 8 years of age, after which parents would be at liberty to withdraw them for marriage. HDA reluctantly agreed this in order to encourage enrolment and then hopefully influence such practices.

The centre services three other neighbouring villages, and three members from each of the benefiting communities have been constituted into a management committee meeting monthly to oversee the affairs of the centre. The child-to-child approach is used to instruct children to read in English, but also to relate in the local language.

According to Malam Yaba, spokesperson of the school management committee, "before the centre was established here, our girl children have never been to any school and we did not, and still do not have any school apart from the centre".

So far, none of the girls have been withdrawn for child marriage. Three of the girls at the centre are over 8 years of age, and the parents have allowed them to stay. In addition, the population of pupils in the centre increased from about 40 in 2003 to over 93 (48 girls, 43 boys) in 2004. The HDA facilitator thinks that the perceived benefits of the centre would persuade parents not to withdraw the children.

The local women's group who also benefit from literacy activities at the centre noted that the children have benefited immensely from the programme. Children demonstrated improved hygiene by washing their hands before every meal, taking baths regularly and cutting their nails. More importantly, the children are able to sing in English with a full understanding of the meaning of the song in addition to the general improvement in their skills. "At least our girls can now do some of the things that others in the town can do", said one of the local women.

The work continued beyond the development of the centre. Through several meetings, HDA managed to get local government buy in to the centre ensuring that government will step in should CEF funding stop or HDA pull out of the project. The number of students at the centre has been used to advocate for the establishment of a regular primary school in the area.