

# For Every Nigerian Child: Solutions

Scaling effective interventions to improve access and learning

An investment opportunity for the public and private sectors

## The opportunity

Nigeria has made great strides to improve access to education and learning opportunities for children. The country has built school infrastructure, prioritized on-time enrolment and increased the use of data for education planning. The results have been tangible. Primary school attendance has risen from 61 per cent in 2016 to 68 per cent in 2021.<sup>1</sup> Gender parity in secondary school attendance has increased from 0.68 in 2016 to 1.03 in 2021 for the poorest children.<sup>1</sup>

This progress is underpinned by more than a decade of close partnership among the government, UNICEF, communities and donors. Through our tireless collaboration, we have identified solutions that work to get children into school and improve their learning outcomes.

Now, redoubled investments are needed to take these solutions to scale to fulfil the promise of a bright future for every child in Nigeria.

By 2050, 1 in 13 births will occur in Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> This rapid population growth both demands investment in children and creates a unique opportunity to harness educational improvements to drive sustainable development. By implementing interventions which have been tested and proven effective, we can leverage gains that have been achieved, close remaining gaps and deliver on the right to education that is owed to every child.

But we need your support to achieve this.

## The challenges

Despite knowing which solutions work, multiple barriers have prevented their implementation at the scale needed to drive sustainable transformation.

**Twin crises: Out-of-school children and learning poverty**  
10.2 million children of primary school age and 8.1 million of junior secondary school age are out-of-school<sup>3</sup>. 70 per cent of 10-year-olds cannot read a simple sentence.<sup>1</sup> Poor quality of education fuels school dropout.

**Lack of data and capacity for targeted interventions**  
A problem-driven approach, with a deep understanding of root causes, is needed for scaling<sup>4</sup>. But monitoring, data systems and the capacity among decision-makers to design evidence-based programmes remain insufficient.

**Planning is not yet aligned with needs**  
The government has developed plans to sustain effective programmes, but these are not integrated with federal and state sector plans and budgets.

**Severe resource gaps impede sustainability**  
Education financing remains inadequate to address key challenges. Funding is chronically low at just 1.2 per cent of GDP, and only 29 per cent of the budget is for pre-primary and primary education.

**Low uptake of education services**  
Poverty, social norms and continued insecurity dampen demand for and trust in education services. Only 15 per cent of the poorest girls attend junior secondary school<sup>1</sup>. Restoring trust and engaging local communities in decision-making is essential for scaling.

## UNICEF's sustainable response

The core of UNICEF's education work is partnering with the government. UNICEF's experts help to develop national education strategies and ensure they have sufficient budgets. We promote stronger laws to make schools safer. And we help improve children's learning outcomes with improved curricula and learning materials.

We have a strong focus on children who are not in school. We provide financial support so that the poorest families can prioritize schooling. We offer alternative learning opportunities, such as catch-up classes and radio-based learning programmes. And we help children return to formal schooling and complete their education.



### Over 2 million OOS children supported to access education

Through the *Girls Education Project Phase Three (GEP3)* (2012-2022), funded by FCDO and the *More Out-of-School Children in School in Nigeria* programme (2016-2022), funded by EAC, UNICEF and the government have enrolled over 2 million out-of-school (OOS) children, primarily girls, across Bauchi, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, and Zamfara states. These programmes have built a scalable package of interventions and proven results:

- Unconditional cash transfers and early learning significantly increase girls' enrolment, retention and completion.
- School grants to rehabilitate infrastructure at lower costs and better quality support local ownership and the mobilization of additional resources.
- Community partnerships and grassroots engagement are key in driving demand for education for girls and children with disabilities.

An independent evaluation showed GEP3 to be highly effective in increasing girls' enrollment and retention, raising English and Hausa literacy levels, and shifting mindsets in support of girls' education<sup>5</sup>.

Our education work covers all of Nigeria, but we have a key focus on the north, where conflict and humanitarian crisis are threatening education.

*UNICEF's work in Northern Nigeria has developed and refined a package of evidence-based interventions which demonstrate results in increasing access and improving learning outcomes and are sustainable and cost effective. In other words, we know what works to get children into school and learning.*

## UNICEF's priorities moving forward

UNICEF's work so far has proven effective in driving access and learning. We have also strengthened education system governance by supporting sector planning, the rollout of education management information systems and the conduct of the National Assessment of Learning Achievement in Basic Education (NALABE).

We ask you to **join us in our continued efforts** to address remaining gaps and take these effective interventions to scale by:

- Advocating and strengthening capacity for **government-owned, data-driven programming**
- Providing technical support for **government-led scale-up strategies** and logistical planning
- Ensuring the costed scale-up activities are embedded in **federal and state budgets** and equitably funded
- Providing **field-based training and stakeholder convening** to ensure alignment among implementation, local evidence and international best practices
- Strengthening education authorities' capacity to **collect, analyze and use data** for monitoring programme effectiveness
- Supporting government partners to improve **evidence generation, knowledge management and exchange** for learning and programme adaptation
- Enhancing **accountability** for results, toward beneficiaries and among local stakeholders, as well as **community-driven feedback** and **participatory decision-making**.

## How you can invest

Private and public partners can invest in UNICEF's education programme in Nigeria in three sustainable ways:

**Core Resources for Results** is funding without restrictions to be used flexibly wherever the need is greatest. These vital funds can trial and scale up effective programmes, respond rapidly to crises and implement innovative solutions.

**Thematic funds for UNICEF's education programme** enable you to precisely target your investments to UNICEF's education work in Nigeria while still providing the flexibility needed to deliver a strong return on investment.

**Specific programmes** enable donors to target funding toward specific results based on strategic priorities or philanthropic and corporate goals.

*UNICEF is well positioned to build on these gains to expand access and improve learning for every child in Nigeria. We will leverage our close partnership with the government to create an enabling environment for scaling and sustaining evidence-based interventions. **But we need your support to make it possible.***

## Why partner with UNICEF in Nigeria?

UNICEF is the partner of choice for private and public donors looking to achieve the greatest impact for children at the greatest scale, ensuring that no child is left behind. Our position within the United Nations gives us a unique convening power with the government of Nigeria, along with non-governmental, civil society and private sector partners, to influence change at the highest levels.

UNICEF plays a central role in national education planning through our work with the Government of Nigeria. But we also complement this with a strong field presence, reaching children, families and communities directly. We work in areas affected by humanitarian crisis, and we work for children of all ages – ensuring no one is left behind. In addition, our expertise beyond education – in health, child protection, nutrition and much more – enables us to take an integrated approach. This means we combine our strategies across different sectors, ensuring we don't just support children's learning, but all their basic needs.


## What your investment could do for children in Nigeria

 **US\$830,000**


can engage over 3,000 decision-makers in advocacy and awareness-raising efforts to build a national coalition of education champions with a shared vision for scaling effective solutions.

 **US\$2.8 million**

can deliver a series of workshops, training sessions and hand-holding exercises to strengthen system capacity to identify and effectively design evidence-based education interventions.

 **US\$150,000**

can support education authorities at the federal level and across three states to develop actionable strategies to take evidence-based solutions to scale.

 **US\$1.9 million**

can improve data collection, analysis and use by enhancing and digitalizing data systems and strengthening government capacity to ensure that education services reach the children most in-need.

 **US\$5.5 million**

can engender government and social accountability through improved reporting, communication and community engagement.



## Endnotes

- 1 National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and UNICEF. (2022). *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2021, Statistical Snapshot Report*. Abuja: National Bureau of Statistics and United Nations Children's Fund, at <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/6126/file/2021%20MICS%20Statistical%20Snapshots%20Report.pdf>
- 2 Calculation based on total out-of-school population globally according to UNESCO Institute for Statistics.
- 3 According to the Universal Basic Education Commission Education Digest.
- 4 Robinson, J. P., Curtiss, M. & Hannahan, P. (2020). *Millions learning real-time scaling labs: Emerging findings and key insights*. Center for Universal Education at Brookings.
- 5 Overseas Advising Group (OAG). 2022. *Final Evaluation of Girls' Education Project Phase 3 (GEP3) 2012–2022 in Northern Nigeria*.



**Thank you.**

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