



School Feeding Programme and Access to Quality Education in Nigeria

Beyond education for manpower development, education is increasingly seen as a rights issue worldwide. In the prevailing conflict situation all over the world, many children who should be in school are entering the category as well as the nomenclature of 'lost generation'. They are a lost generation because the supporting social as well as political structures have collapsed as a result of war. In Nigeria, there are two types of 'wars' being waged in the society that disadvantage boys and girls. The visible wars in different parts of Nigeria are the insurgency, led by Boko Haram especially in the north-east of the country. The tributary of this is now quasi-economy as exemplified by banditry around cattle rustling and kidnapping. This has affected livelihood opportunities and local informal economics (farming, trading, etc.) In the south-east and south-south, militancy and kidnapping are the brands of war that have made communities vulnerable. There is a third category of 'war' that target young boys and girls and prevent them from accessing education. This is the cultural and religious war of patriarchy and Western education as haram (taboo). There is a connection of this third category to the name of the insurgent war in the north – boko haram (western education is taboo!).

Whichever of these wars is responsible for the lack of education in any part of Nigeria, there is a clear implication for the long term in the lives of the children and the nation. The implications of a large number of children out of school include strain on the country's resources in the spheres of health, security and social services. Literature on Boko Haram insurgency in the north and militancy in the south-south reveals that the young boys and girls who serve as fighters, suicide bombers and militants are very often recruited from such ranks. According to a United Nations' report on children and armed conflict, "Boko Haram reportedly benefited from a fertile recruitment ground for youth recruits early on in the conflict owing to perceived social injustice as well as high levels of poverty, illiteracy and unemployment in the north-east." It is arguable that as long as these categories of young persons remain uninformed, they will constitute security risks to the nation. One of the possible routes to eliminate the risk is education. There is also documentary

evidence that the teeming youth who are out of school in many parts of Nigeria engage in substance abuse of non-prescription drugs such as cough syrup, valium, tramadol, etc. The UN report on drug use in Nigeria states that: 'In Nigeria, one in seven persons aged 15-64 years had used a drug (other than tobacco and alcohol) in the past year (2018)... corresponding to 14.3 million people aged 15-64 years who had used a psychoactive substance in the past year for non-medical purposes. Among every 4 drug users in Nigeria 1 is a woman.'

The statistics above implies that children in primary school, who are late attenders, fall into this category. The burden of health care of such drug users is a resource drain on government. The economic and social cost on families range from loss of man hours, cash, trauma to shame.

The Nigerian home-grown school feeding programme is designed to offer several benefits as opportunities for children of school-going age to be admitted to primary school; increase enrolment of pupils in primary 1-3 especially; improve the income of cooks in the communities where schools are located; improve the income of local farmers who supply farm produce. In other words, beyond increasing enrolment, the school feeding programme has other values along the benefit chain from school to community.



The main objectives of the HGSP programme are as follows:

1. School Enrolment and Completion: The programme aims to improve the enrolment of primary school children in Nigeria and reduce the current dropout rates from primary school which is estimated at 30%.
2. Child Nutrition and Health: The programme aims to address the poor nutrition and health status of many children and thereby also improve learning outcomes.
3. Local Agricultural Production: Linking the programme to local agricultural production has direct economic benefits and can potentially benefit the entire community as well as the children. The programme aims to stimulate local agricultural production and boost the income of farmers by creating a viable and ready market via the school feeding programme.
4. Creating Jobs and Improving Family and State Economy: The programme aims to create jobs along the value chain and provides a multiplier effect for economic growth and development.

Key Facts

- ❖ In Nigeria, about 10.5 million children are not in school even though primary education is officially free and compulsory."
- ❖ Primary school completion is lowest in the North-West geo-political zone and is below 60 per cent in Bauchi, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Ogun and Yobe States.
(www.unicef.org/Nigeria/education) accessed 27 February 2019
- ❖ "The education deprivation in northern Nigeria is driven by various factors, including economic barriers and socio-cultural norms and practices that discourage attendance in formal education, especially for girls."
(www.unicef.org/Nigeria/education) accessed 27 February 2019
- ❖ African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), 1999 ACWRC sets out the rights and defines principles for the status of children... The right to education is included in Article 11(1) of the Charter, while the right to food or nutrition can be derived from Article 14(1), which provides for the right to from Article 14(1), which provides for the right to health.

Civil Society Role in the Implementation Process

Whereas the objectives and the strategic principles are straight forward, a programme of this nature with a nationwide scope requires the participation of other actors in addition to the initiator, i.e., the Federal Government. It is also important that a critical area of transparency and accountability be surfaced in order to guarantee the success of the initiative. Such non-state actor participation in the HGSFP has been mobilized through the support of

the MacArthur Foundation. In Kaduna and Ogun States a total of eight non-governmental organisations are currently monitoring the feeding programme in schools.

The Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance (NPTA) is one of the five NGOs monitoring the programme in Kaduna State. The Organisation was founded on 18 March 1989; and registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) in 1994. Since its establishment, NPTA has undertaken

projects in different parts of the country on a variety of issues, ranging from community development, adolescent and reproductive health issues, HIV-AIDS, conflict and policy research. NPTA is an Organisation recognized for its use of participatory methods such as PLA, Theatre for Development. Development communication and action research are its core areas of strength (www.ftdc-ng.org).

NPTA's participation in the home-grown school feeding is guided by the following principles:

- Accountability in the use of public funds matters;
- Transparency leads to confidence and builds towards sustainability of programmes that benefit ordinary citizens;
- Working with and building the capacity of local actors (CBOs) ensures project/programme life beyond animateurs' implementation time line.
- Our theory of change therefore is that the participation of civil society and community based organisations in the monitoring process guarantees acceptance by communities and ensures success and sustainability – through the local knowledge that they bring to bear on the implementation at ground level.

Our Approach and Activities

The Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance, like its other counterpart NGOs in the cohort, has been undertaking routine monitoring of the implementation of the school feeding programme in Giwa, Kudan and Sabon-Gari Local Government Areas, Kaduna State. NPTA is monitoring activities in 60 primary schools, whose categories cover model, regular and nomadic ones. There is a total of 28 monitors covering the three LGAs. Each LGA has a Coordinator charged with oversight functions and ensures quality of work. S/he vets data gathered from the field and writes summary reports that highlights key findings, emerging issues and notes action points. However, to strengthen this routine activity, the Organisation's approach/strategy has included the following:

Training – To ensure that the monitors work with a common purpose and agenda, NPTA trained the monitors on the use of the monitoring template – what do the questions suggest for us to look for and gather from the field; cultural sensitivity and approach in information gathering; civility in engagement with the hierarchy of custodians of information (Education Secretaries, head teachers, cooks and pupils). The training also offered guidance on 'reading' body language and the story it tells. It is important that other critical factors that impact on the success of the feeding programme should be understood by monitors. These include, but not limited to availability of drinking water, toilet facilities, the number of teachers in the school, teaching aides and the state of the classrooms, etc.

Debrief Meetings – There is a debrief meeting after every round of field work. The Coordinators meet with the Project Management team and office staff to share findings and, especially to discuss new developments (improvements in the delivery, issues of cook defaults, food quantity, etc.)

The briefings have resulted in better insight into the problems, such as knowing what is recurring,

what has improved as well as the monitoring style, quality as well as depth of information gathered.

The meetings allow the Manager to advice the field coordinators and monitors on what further to look for. The meetings have revealed that in addition to the surface information that respondents offer, monitors need to get behind the surface of the story so that they can get the 'back story'. We say: Probe! Probe! Probe!

The problem that we guard against by having these meetings include routinizing the monitoring, taking things for granted, which may lead to omission of new devices to hide facts, circumvent transparency by either cooks or school teachers.

The observations and issues discussed at the debrief meetings have occasioned two meetings with the monitors. At the meeting with all the monitors, the Organisation applauded what was done right, pointed out the information that is missing in their monitoring and areas of work that needed to be improved. The power of observation and the ability to listen and hear further than the words – because sometimes what is heard and the facts on ground do not add up!

Community Meetings – The meetings that NPTA has held have been with School-Based Management Board (SBMC), Parents-Teachers' Association (PTA) and Cooks.

i. Although the routine monitoring template used by NPTA and the other cohort members did not factor in this target group, the exercise in the field showed that their understanding and views on the programme would be useful to the overall aim of promoting transparency and accountability.

ii. Another issue not included in our remit, is the value chain, which talks about the economic gain for community members.

iii. So far, one meeting has taken place with this target group. The discussions yielded useful outcomes in

a) Enlightening the group on the objects of the school feeding programme;

b) Hearing their appreciation of the programme;

c) Discussing the marginal involvement of SBMC, PTA, community members in playing any role in the programme;

d) Cooks shared information on their challenges such as not receiving alert from the bank, which keeps them in the dark as to when payment has been effected. Many of them were not sure of exactly how much they are meant to be paid as the figures vary between months and sometimes between cooks. Generally, they are confused about the contracting process. The over-population in schools, as well as the moral dilemma of not giving food to classes 4-6 leave them strained and resource depleted.

We found this channel of communication useful and will make it an additional feature of our communication strategy.

Local Policy/Stakeholder Meetings (Head Teachers, LGA Education Secretaries) - Beyond talking to head teachers during the routine monitoring in the designated schools, we hold quarterly stakeholder meetings to discuss the findings and their possible roles in addressing the problems – ensuring that cooks fulfil their obligations; that the schools safeguard the children's health by not compromising their oversight functions on quality and quantity of food.

The Education Secretaries serve as the first level clearinghouse on issues that arise from our monitoring. One such recurring issue has been the short supply of eggs. The meetings with them is an advocacy strategy to ensure their buy-into the activities of the Organisation.

The meetings have helped in strengthening the relationship between the monitors, head teachers and the schools. They have eased access and cooperation of the schools with monitors and NPTA.

Cohort Meetings – NPTA is a member of the School feeding cohort in Kaduna State made up of ActionAid, Girl-Child Concern, Connecting Gender and Federation of Muslim Women's Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN) and the Nigerian Popular Theatre Alliance (NPTA). The cohort meeting is a monthly event which allow members to share findings, discuss approaches, learn from each other and to map out action plan to take forward with the State HGSFP committee. The usefulness of the cohort meeting includes networking among the NGOs. It is a stimulation meeting that spurs

action on the part of the Organisations that may be slow in their implementation process. The agreement on what to discuss with the State Desk Officer and the Committee strengthens the civil society voice in demanding for accountability and transparency in the HGSFP.

Communication/Dissemination – The various meetings as outlined here also provide platform for sharing information and disseminating the findings from our work. The meetings with Establishment Secretaries, the HGSFP State desk officer and

the State committee are not only for briefing. They also serve as advocacy events at which either the individual organization or cohort discuss issues and make compelling arguments with policy in the hope for action.

Online Sharing – Putting out information on our own website (www.tfdc.org.ng). NPTA will soon start its blog page, Twitter account to increase both its own visibility and make information about its activities more widely available to the general public (www.tfdc.org.ng).

Drama – Watch this *Tatsuniyyan Abinci* drama:

- ❖ Narrator: In a faraway place... What is the name o? (Scratching his head). Okay, now I remember! It is called land of no name! Something happened. Don't let me tell you the story. Just watch it as if you were there!
- ❖ *Hajjiya Amina is busy waking her son up so he can go to school. Umar, the boy does not want to go to school. Mother scolds him and complains that she always has to push him to go to school. She tells boy that nobody will be in the house to give him food after school today because father will be on the farm and she is travelling to Likoro to see a sick sister. If he wants food, he should go to school since there is food and she hears they will give egg for every child in school! Boy stops crying. Wipes his tears from his face. "What did you say, mother?" "I said there will be eggs in school." "Who said I will not go to school?" (Boy dresses up quickly and the mother walks him half-way to school)*
- ❖ *It is meal time. There is a long queue of pupils waiting to be served food and eggs. There is jostling, shunting and shouting. A school teacher and a monitor help in controlling the pupils to be orderly). The cook is busy dishing out the rice and egg. One! Two spoons! "Take your egg!" Next! Three pupils before Umar's turn, the cook declares that the eggs are finished! Umar lets out a big scream, "It cannot finish!" The head teacher shouts at him to be quiet and to stay in line for his rice! Umar takes the share grudgingly; but has no interest in the food any longer.*

What We Are Seeing and Hearing

The initial skepticism and perhaps resistance on the part of the head teachers has been replaced with cooperation. The context in which this project started its life was a context of retrenchment of teachers in Kaduna State. Every teacher's concern therefore, was to protect his/her job.

The monitoring exercise has put cooks on the alert because they are afraid of being reported that they are not meeting their obligations. The supply has improved, although some cooks still miss supplying as when due. Very often they attribute their failure to non-payment. However,

our overall assessment is that the news of monitoring has spread and they are more serious in delivering to schools at regular intervals. The tricks we see include bringing small quantity of food in a big container to give the impression that the food is adequate. In reality the rations may be less than stipulated. The standard measure remains problematic. Different cooks use different size spoons to measure rations for pupils.

The cooks are treated shabbily in the bank when they go to complain about not receiving alert. When they demand to know if money is in their account, they are ignored.

- ❖ *The bell rings for end of the school day and Umar is sitting by his classroom with his share of food as if waiting for someone. His friends are leaving but he refuses to walk with them. Suddenly, he hears his father calling him. He walks to him and the father notices that he is not happy.*
Father: What happened to you in school today?
Umar: Everybody was given egg today. But when it was my turn they said it had finished (Burst of crying!)
Father: Why is it Umar that will not have egg all the time? Just tell me you ate it! Better be ready with the lies you will tell Hadiza, because she is waiting for you to have a bite of the egg!
Umar: I did not get any, father. Truly! (Father storms out and tells Umar to walk home with his friends). As he walks home... All of a sudden
"Woof! Woof! Woof!"
Umar: (Faces the direction the dog is barking from) What is your own? Everybody is looking for my trouble today! No egg in school; my father is shouting at me. Hadiza with her sharp mouth is waiting at home. And you, woof, woof! Did you send me to school? Today it is me and you! (Looks for a stick to do battle with the dog...)

In our communication and dissemination strategy, drama offers a creative voice to the pupils to tell stories of their experiences of the feeding programme. It is also a process of sharing information with all the stakeholders in the supply chain, as well as those charged with oversight functions. In our strategy there are two levels of drama: one from pupils and the other from monitors.

Commitment of monitors – The monitors now have a hang of the job at hand. They are now familiar with the monitoring instrument due to constant use.

Some of the monitors now have commitment to HGSFP beyond monitoring. The concern for the welfare of the pupils, the interest in the health of children in school and the diligence of head teachers in exercising oversight functions are all issues that drive the monitors in their monitoring work. They have become accountability warriors! Look at this encounter:

It is Friday. This is the day of juice and biscuit in schools. The Sabon-Gari team has scheduled a meeting with the cooks of the twenty schools in the LGA. The meeting is taking place in Amina Primary School, Samaru. The team shares findings with them: some are not supplying the required quantity for the pupils in their schools; some are missing days and the team wants to know what is responsible for the omissions. The case of one cook is special: she has specialized in supplying less than the required quantity. The shares for pupils in her school always fall short! She is a repeated offender. The team appeals to her conscience, they waken her motherhood. But she is full of excuses of not getting payment on time! While this is a cop out excuse on the part of this woman, the issue of non-payment is prevalent. "We don't get alert." "We don't know how much enters into our accounts". "When we go to bank, they tell us our accounts are not entitled for alert."

All these are earful. So the Project Manager and Shade Maccido, one of the monitors, shepherd the cooks to the FCMB, Zaria to verify the cooks' claims. The bank staff are uncooperative; they hedge and refuse to give information. The cooks' stories are validated.

Shade is frustrated. She is angry. She boards a bus to go home. In the bus there is a school teacher with a bag of juice and biscuits with the HGSFP label. Shade explodes: "Where did you get the juice and biscuits from? Are they not meant for pupils in the school?" I am asking you! The teacher fights back: "Who are you and what is your business?" Shade keeps the pressure on "It is my business because they are meant for children not you!" "You must tell me where you got these items from today!"

There is commotion in the bus and the driver pulls his vehicle to a stop to avoid accident. The other passengers intervene and the teacher manages to escape!

Involvement of community people as monitors – We are also seeing the benefit of training and making use of local knowledge from the three locations.

Challenges

There are still grey areas in knowing who the authenticated cooks are as opposed to the contracted ones – is there a mafia group of super cooks who subcontract and dictate operations? Who is pulling the strings?

Eggs – This is the weakest link in the supply chain! The shortage of eggs has been a recurring issue. Our own understanding of the hiccups in the flow of eggs to schools is the supply chain: how it is mobilized, how and where it is stored and distributed. In the process, overall quantity mobilized, quantity supplied to each LGA, access by cooks, many eggs fall through the cracks and never reach the pupils!

Enrolment of Pupils – The schools have a rolling enrolment system, which allows new pupils to be enrolled all year round, irrespective of the school time table. This makes it difficult for cooks to keep to allocated number to feed. The cooks therefore feed more pupils than they are meant to. To add to their headache is the difficulty of excluding pupils in classes 4–6, who hang on the windows to watch others eat! The cooks say some of the upper class pupils infiltrate; and, children from communities who also visit at food times. And in the words of one cook, *“As a mother, I find it very difficult to refuse these other children food when they come and join the line.”* The moral dilemma for cooks here, and in meeting their maternal instincts means that the food is spread thin.

Enabling Environment – The acceptance of pupils into school all year round has swelled the population in schools. Therefore, it is an indication of success on the one hand. On the other hand, however, it has thrown up several challenges, all of which may come under enabling environment. Quality of education is what this brings into sharp relief.

- In many of the schools the number of teachers is far below requirement. Since the massive retrenchment of teachers in Kaduna State in 2018, not enough new ones have been recruited.
- Classrooms are not enough for the number enrolled. In addition, the roofs of many classrooms are blown off and waiting for repairs. Some are holding classes under trees!
- Sanitation – Water for drinking and for washing hands is problematic in most of the 60 schools we are monitoring! The health implication of this is obvious.
- Toilet facilities – In more than three-quarters of the schools that we monitor, proper toilet facilities are absent. In situations that pupils have to do 'bush attack' (open defecation) around the school, many collect food and run home because a full stomach asks other questions! The lack of toilet facilities affects girls more than boys as they cannot so easily have the freedom of using the bushes as the boys.
- Refining Tools – The field work is our teacher and critic in regard to whether we are asking the relevant questions. The experience shows us the gap areas and what we may need to reconsider.

Critical Gap Issues

- Head teachers are limited in their capacity to enforce compliance on the part of cooks. Is it that such a role may not have been expressly stated as part of their responsibilities in the implementation process. Second, many of them are careful, because some of the cooks are known to have strong political mentor/backers. And, given the environment of job insecurity in the State, teachers are afraid of calling some of the cooks to order for fear of losing their jobs.
- Super cooks – There seems to be a cohort of invisible cooks who function as puppeteers. These are the super cooks who subcontract, control and determine the food supply chain in schools. Who may these power cooks be, and how did they originate?
- Do cooks have a right to know how much they should receive per child? And is the HGSFP banking structure such that cooks are not entitled to alerts?
- The value chain in the HGSFP practice seems weak in comparison to the original conception in which the benefits included sourcing food items locally, thus giving food production a fillip in the local communities and improving income of farmers. So far, evidence of this is lacking.
- Must eggs be an unavoidable/indispensable part of protein in the menu given that it poses the greatest challenge and remains the weakest link in the supply chain?
- If eggs must remain, can local suppliers take over from State aggregators? Or can fish replace eggs in the menu altogether?
- The HGSFP has resulted in large numbers of pupils in schools and surfaced the need for attention on other related matters of personnel and infrastructural development (classrooms, sanitation, furniture, etc.) Does the State have plans for dealing with these contingencies or related matters?

¹ Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Nigeria, United Nations Security Council, April 2017 <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/nigeria-un-report-details-grave-violations-against-children-by-boko-haram/> (accessed 25 April 2019)

² 'Drug Use in Nigeria', United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) <https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/nigeria--eu-and-unodc-release-first-ever-national-drug-use-survey.html> (accessed 25 April 2019)

³ Nigerian Home-Grown School Feeding Programme Document, Ministry of Education,...