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**BUILDING A
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

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This document was published within the Promoting Girls' Retention and Enrolment in Secondary School (PROGRESS) Project of ActionAid Nigeria with support from MacArthur Foundation.

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FOREWORD

Promoting Girls Retention and Enrolment in Secondary School (PROGRESS) has the mandate of ensuring that girls in Sokoto State have access to quality secondary education through the institutionalisation of the School Based Management Committee (SBMC).

The project deployed several human rights-based actions including advocacy, awareness, and capacity building on the rights of children particularly girls to education, empowerment and mentoring. All these efforts contributed to the positive changes in the lives of the girls, and the passage of a law on the Right to free and compulsory education; and by implication the institutionalisation of the SBMC in Sokoto State as contained in the law.

This publication is one of the products of the PROGRESS project and it is aimed at sharing its successes and impact on the lives of the target

groups and relevant institutions.

We acknowledge the invaluable contributions of staff, partners, and community members, Legislators and Government officials in Sokoto State in the development of this publication. We earnestly hope that this publication will encourage the scale up of the project strategies for addressing the problems facing the education of girls and facilitate the institutionalisation of the SBMCs across Nigeria.

Ene Obi

Country Director
ActionAid Nigeria



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the Board and Management of ActionAid Nigeria, I wish to appreciate the individuals, Government institutions and organisations who contributed to the successful implementation of the Promoting Girls Retention and Enrolment in Secondary School (PROGRESS) project. We are grateful to the Government and people of Sokoto State for their robust participation and commitment to the project.

I also appreciate members of the female professionals group in Sokoto, civil society organisations led by Hakima Community Mobilization initiative (HCOMDI) who worked hard to ensure that we successfully achieved the overall objective of this project.

The efforts of ActionAid's Communications Hub team led by Lola Ayanda who worked with the Writer – Fareeda Abdulkarim and the Photographer

– Olawale Elekolusi to collect and document the outcomes of the project in various inspiring formats is appreciated.

Kudos to Laban Onisimus, ActionAid Nigeria's Education Programme Advisor who supported the implementation of the entire project.

Finally, a big thank you to our esteemed donor– MacArthur Foundation for giving us the opportunity to make positive changes in the lives of those who ordinarily would not have been reached.

Tasallah Chibok

Director of Programmes
ActionAid Nigeria.

A photograph of four young girls wearing white hijabs and pink headbands, smiling and looking through a chain-link fence. The background shows a schoolyard with trees and a building. A red wavy graphic element is at the bottom of the page.

THE HEAD GIRL WHO LEADS IN AND OUTSIDE SCHOOL.

Mariam goes to governments' girl's secondary school, Gidan Madi. The school sign, aged and dusty still stands atop the sand as Mariam and her friends walk into the premises. The school, where she is head-girl has an interesting history, one that evolved with some crucial help from Action Aid Nigeria. Mariam is eighteen, and a widower's daughter, who plays the role of mother to her siblings. Her mannerisms when coordinating the other girls shows a clear sense of motherliness, one undoubtedly gotten from experience. She smiles but not fully, and she makes direct eye contact when speaking to people. She also is one of the most fluent speakers of the English Language.

The school was once a mixed gender establishment. Now due to a wall erected with the support of Action Aid Nigeria, under the SBMC program, the school now houses the boys and the girls, separated

by a fence which Action Aid Nigeria helped construct. Before the fence came up, there was some chaos and hesitation on the part of parents to send their child to school, especially the female children.

According to Mariam, many of the girls sought out alternatives like hawking goods, and helping their parents at home to run the house and siblings. However in addition to her mothering responsibilities at home, Amina has merged both worlds successfully, having attended school from JSS I. She also intends to go to the university to further her studies. She plans to be a dentist.

All of this could have easily been averted, had the wall not come up. The construction, made out like a net fence hovers about eight feet, and separates the classes. The boys are on one side, and the girls on the other. Nobody crosses the fence unless they are

going on break, or leaving school.

According to Amina, the girls are happy that the fence was erected. It champions the school's motto which is "Gender Sensitive." According to her, the boys often terrorized the girls among other things, many of which did not provide the full focus needed for school. After the local leaders, and the SBMC members of Gidan Madi met, in response to the number of girls being pulled out of school, the fence was finally erected as a unanimous barrier. Everyone respects it.

After the fence was erected, the enrolment rates for girl went up fast. The principal confirms this with pride. Girls' education is an important issue for many of the residents of Gidan Madi and those who can, and cannot afford it, are now willing to consider the option and take the risk. The legal presence of the SBMC also validates the decision to be long term, regardless of who is in power.

"There some boys that are attracting bad feelings, but when we are in school, we have good feelings." She said.

As for Mariam, she plans on becoming the go to Dentist in Sokoto and caring for people because she believes in the saying cleanliness is next to Godliness.



REPORTING LOCAL STORIES WITH GLOBAL EXPERTISE



Eighteen year old Hawawu Sani Muhammad, 18, is the first girl in her family to be educated. Her mother did not attend school, but her father and brothers went all the way to tertiary level. Now in SS3, she plans on going to polytechnic to study to become a journalist. Hawawu is part of the widening circle of Africans, determined to take control of their own stories, and reframe the often misleading narratives about the continent, and country that people tend to latch onto. According to her, journalism is a way for her to improve her society and country.

After secondary school, she wishes to attend Umari Ali Shinkafi Polytechnic, Sokoto. “I was born and raised here.” she says explaining that working and continuing her studies in Sokoto feels natural, and by being here, she can be the most effective. In addition she can become an excellent role model amongst others, of the SBMC program in the state.

“I want to show others that you can help your society by telling stories, and show that human beings are important, and we can stand with our legs and help our society and improve our goals.” Her career dreams lie with the National Television Authority (NTA) whose motto “you can't beat the reach” boasts the widest local coverage of any homemade and homegrown station. Hawawu's stories of hope and reform will possibly touch the widest number of homes.

ActionAid Nigeria in the school has provided immense help in securing water for the school, and contributing to its science laboratory. All over the school are girls, determined like Aisha to pursue a full education, whose ambition is backed by fellow students and a principal who is vocal about his support for girl's education, and has contributed to the SBMC program by continuing to improve the enrollment numbers of girls, by providing a safe and

nurturing environment in school for the girls to attend, of which ActionAid Nigeria plays no small part.

This ambition is also supported by her family. Hawawu says “I know, and I have the assurance that they have the interest, and they will help me so I can achieve what I want to be.” This kind of support speaks to the activities of the SBMC in Sokoto, who make it a priority to visit homes, and personally convince the heads of families to educate their children and send them to schools nearby. Often the hesitation comes from different factors, one of which is parents who have not been educated themselves. By having, highly educated family members, who understand and nurture a young girls' dream, in addition to a school environment that promotes the ambition, and a society that needs more people like her, the future looks bright for Hawawu Sani Muhammed.



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AN EXCEPTIONAL DEDICATION TO THE EDUCATION SECTOR



Mohammed Ahmad is the secretary of the local SBMC chapter in Sokoto. Since he took charge of Government Day Girl's Secondary School, Daicha, a year ago, the school has seen impressive enrollment figures. The school started with two girls enrolling, and now has over 120 female attendees. Mohammed has been working a trained education expert in Sokoto for twelve years.

He is very drawn to the SBMC program, because he identifies and believes in a lot of the values, particularly the tactic of going to houses to convince parents to send their children to school. This is not an easy task, apart from cultural barriers, the access to funding for school is a real problem many people face. Many of the students often walk kilometers to attend school, and end up being hungry when they arrive. Action Aid Nigeria has already offered some assistance by helping their water needs and

constructing a bore hole.

For the principal, the price of educating a girl stretches into the rest of her life. He believes "whatever position a woman holds, she holds it with a large sense of responsibility." He also says "women are very reliable people."

In addition, educating a girl helps beyond academia, because when managing the affairs of the home, the knowledge learnt helps immensely, because they are influencing the children, girl and boys positively. Also for the society he says "there is a progress and development in the society."

As principal, the schools uniforms has transitioned from all White into a mixture of White and Burgundy Mohammed hopes, in the long term that the school, given its land capacity can transition into a boarding facility to further work towards the desensitization of girls education in Sokoto. And he has ample

experience to prove. Educated up to the tertiary level, he has worked in Sokoto all his professional life. As a member of the SMMC, he is ready to

champion the cause of girls' education for as long as he can. For him, the ultimate goal is to see them, both girls and boys “become distinguished persons.



A man with a white beard and mustache, wearing a white cap and a light blue traditional garment, is seated at a desk. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The desk in front of him has several stacks of papers. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. A red wavy graphic element is at the bottom of the image.

**SOKOTO'S UNWAVERING
COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION**

Ahmed Mainasara - the permanent Secretary, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education Sokoto State has some amazing statistics to relay on the education bill also informally known as the SBMC in Sokoto state. Some context will be provided first.

Only two years ago, despite its commitment to implementing free education, Sokoto state has always had some of the largest numbers of out of school children. When the current governor, Aminu Tambuwal took his position, “he outlined a vision for the sector. 1.2 million school girls at least had to be educated, so he put a law in place, the right structure to compel parents to take their kids to school.” The permanent secretary said. To go with the law, there are sanctions and rewards. The goal according to him is “the government ensuring that everyone at least goes to school, at the basic level.”

And the statistics currently paint a favorable picture. In Sokoto, there are “2011 primary schools, and 350 secondary schools.” The government, through SBMC will be instituting the bill in all of them.” Some years ago in an initiative funded by the Action Aid Nigeria, officials visited all the communities concerned.

According to him, Action Aid Nigeria has consistently expressed its interest and investment in the Education Bill through positive actions and advocacy. They sponsored the methodology implemented in the bill to “ensure the content of the education bill as it affects the SBMC is implemented the right way.” Currently for every SBMC chapter, there are fifteen committee members. The members have come to represent the concerned groups fairly and equally. The students, the local leaders, the school management, and the women leaders.

Also when the bill was passed into law, ActionAid took charge of the logistical costs to fly the associated officials to Zaria "to ensure the whole staff implemented the law by the 2018 fiscal budget." In order for transparency and accountability.

This is a responsibility the government officials who have been along for the journey take seriously. The Permanent Secretary finishes off by saying "The communities drive the government, everything they put in place is for the people." Indeed.





Empowering Girls
By Empowering
Their Voices And Actions

For Prof. Aisha, the motivation is simple. Let the women be in charge of making the decisions regarding the education of girls in Sokoto State. For her, the SBMC program attracts and ensures that young girls in Sokoto have female role-models to look up to, of which she is one of them. She says of the efforts to increase enrollment that “once you have the approval of the mothers, you have done half the work.” The current women leaders in the SBMC groups do not outnumber the men yet. If more women become participants, especially homemakers, the women, according to her “will know how to sit with their husbands” and encourage the enrollment of all their girl children to school.

In addition, she believes, like a few other interviewees, in sensitizing not just the school-goers, but the entire community. She says “sensitize the public not just interested parties, the change in

enrollment and retention will show.” Let the SBMC members, when they meet every term, to be given “the mandate to, integrate more awareness.”

Many of the secondary school girls, when voicing their career dreams often tend to go with medical dreams. Many of them say that they want to be doctors and nurses because at the moment, many of the women in Sokoto are still being treated by male doctors. Having more female doctors and nurses will greatly ease the comfort level of the community woman. As a role model Dr. Aisha is already living the dream of many of the secondary school girls, who the SMBC program has helped fight for their education.

How We Can Make SBMC Better



Dr Aisha Abdullah is an educationist in Sokoto State. Educated to the tertiary level, she is a strong believer in the education bill, and has outlined ways for the program to be better. In her words “a landmark for other states.” For her, the SBMC program is a great opportunity to feature the women as decision makers regarding education. According to her emphasis should be made on incorporating, the women leaders into the decision making, especially the mothers at the SBMC chapters set. “Because one of the duties is to ensure inclusion. Let the SBMC activity put as its focus, the mothers and women leaders whenever an issue arrives.” She says.

Also she is optimistic about how confidentiality treatment can really highlight the SBMC, She says “the reports brought by the SBMC members have to be very confidential, As a result, “they will be

encouraged to be honest, and will go far and wide in reporting the details they observe.” If the monitoring details go largely unreported, for a number of reasons, chief the local SMBC members don't feel safe in their speaking out, the state committee members cannot make proper and honest decisions.

In addition to incentives, which can make the members feel more needed, and therefore go beyond their committee descriptions. Currently, there are existing incentives like scholarships and cash for enrollment packages available to the parents.

Since Sokoto state carried some primary education statistics, despite improvements, the efforts should go beyond school students. It is why desensitization of the community is a big part of the education bill process. She says “Since SBMC enrolls people,

there is need to sensitize people in the community not just school goers.”

For the Dr Aisha, capacity training is an important component, especially for the committee members. Since their roles are considered jobs, the experience and expertise is important for monitoring and implementation. She says “there is the need for capacity building workshops, so they (the members) know how to use the revenues, and to know the proper action, and be prepared for adequate training to monitor and institute the SBMC.” She said.



Oiling The Progress Wheel



Principal Musa Suleiman Madirah has been at Government Day Secondary School Bodinga for just one year. The SBMC program has been initiated longer than that. In his time, in the school he has witnessed the shifting mindset of the community to Girls education. For him the biggest change was in the student's attitude to school. Now, they just seem more interested in learning. In addition, the community lends an effective helping hand.

In Government Secondary School, the resource center is a haven to many. There, the students are taught useful life skills which according to the principal, will give them more independence. He says "they'll have something doing that can assist them without relying on government work." Already the girls at the resource centers are making and selling hair creams, and body creams that are scented with local northern perfumes. A perfumed

shea butter hair cream costs just NGN200. This is part of the skills acquisition program, led by ActionAid Nigeria.

For the principal, ActionAid Nigeria has been a useful partner in continuing to improve enrollment figures in the school. "They renovated all the chalkboards" he said. In addition to the resource center where many of the girls now flock to and learn the skills that can help them in and out of school.

While only a year at Bodinga, the principal a trained teacher, has worked in and out of Sokoto. A veteran of the education sector, where he has worked all his professional life, he remarks that the challenges to education outside Sokoto are similar to the ones in state.

He touches on poverty being a major hindrance to educating girls as many families do not earn enough to send all their children to school. However, he

A photograph of a middle-aged man with a grey beard and glasses, wearing a white cap and a white embroidered shirt. He is sitting in a black office chair at a desk. The desk has a telephone, a tissue box, and some papers. A semi-transparent grey box with white text is overlaid on the left side of the image. A red wavy graphic is at the bottom right.

says “people did not know the importance of education before, and now there is an improvement through enlightenment and campaigns, and now things are changing.” According to him, the state government has now introduced measures that will capture the community's attention. “And now parents realize the importance of education.”

The image shows two men in traditional Nigerian attire. The man on the left is seated at a table, wearing a light blue patterned traditional shirt and a matching cap. He is smiling broadly and holding a pen. A microphone is positioned in front of him. The man on the right is standing, leaning forward, wearing a white traditional shirt and a patterned cap. He is also smiling. In the background, another person in a white patterned shirt is partially visible. The scene appears to be a formal meeting or a public event. A red wavy graphic element is at the bottom of the page.

Educational Policies in Nigeria: The Antecedents.

Honorable Garba Bello Yabo remarks on the uniqueness of education. According to him, less than a week ago a report was submitted to Sokoto governor, Aminu Tambuwal who has given the assurance that the committees set will fully implement their roles. Already this year, he has dedicated twenty seven percent of the state budget on education, and twenty eight percent last year. He says in a matter of time, “the performances of Sokoto state in education across all indices will show”, but education, unlike other sectors like Agriculture can take decades to show fruition. Putting into account, all the years of primary, secondary, and tertiary education.

However historical precedent has been set. During former President Olusegun Obasanjo's time as military leader. The Universal Primary Program came into fruition. According to the honourable, “It brought a rapid expansion of old facilities in

education with regards to number of school and teachers.”

Also the major hindrance to education, while misconceived to be religious, is cultural. In addition to the poverty plaguing families, which is being solved by the provision of free breakfast to school students, there is also the attitude towards more vocational jobs which are seen as less than. In the past, vocational and technical training institutes were established, but people simply did not come. In addition, there continues to be the challenge of matching the trained professionals with the students. Securing foreign assistance while helpful, is not a great long term or cheap solution.

The honorable has plenty of experience with education and the evolution of Nigeria. Born in 1951, he started his education from class 1, before heading to Bida, Minna for his secondary school, the

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, and the University College Cardiff for his Bachelors and Master's Degree.

If more girls are educated, the statistics are a good evidence. He says "The house of an educated woman is better than a non-educated woman, and the records show that children of educated women perform better than children of uneducated women." If girls are educated "in conventional schools they miss nothing, they can rise to any status."

The Sokoto state government is committed to hanging its negative perceptions about its citizen's education. Following a trip around schools by governor Tambuwal he felt disappointed. Currently the 2018 state budget allocates twenty seven percent to education. Last year it was twenty eight. In the current report (less than a month old) sent to

the governor, it touts an improvement of facilities and enrollment especially of the girl child. For examples, the international girls secondary school. Gudu being built. "Parents have to take their child to school." He says.

He continues, "Just recently the state assembly passed the education bill, every child of every state of origin is entitled to free education at the basic education level, a parent can take legal action of the government if the child is not enrolled, and the government can take legal action if a child is not enrolled." To encourage retention, some schools provide free breakfast "so kids don't have to go home to eat." Educating the girl is important. The SDG's show that child and maternal mortality will improve if girls are educated

In a matter of time, the performances of Sokoto state in education across all indices, he declares.

How Water Can Change Everything



About a year ago, the students of the Government Day Secondary school had to survive without any source of water, near the school. Aside from buying sachet water, the closest promise lay in a lake that took twenty five minutes by foot. On getting there, it is apparent this construction is less of a lake, and more of a pool of water, the likes of which can be found all over Sokoto, amongst the fields that dot the landscape. The water is unpurified and possibly full of harmful bacteria. Yet, for years the students of the secondary school have made do with the lake as their source of water; for drinking, for performing ablutions, and for cleaning hands and feet. The water is murky and unlike the clear of water, that is taught in schools, this one is almost brown.

The path to fetch the water is its own other special challenge. Walking under the hot sun. Three girls carry buckets to fetch water. When they get to the area, they have to tread carefully through small rocks that make up the pavement. One wrong fall, and anyone could be seriously hurt. Particularly when factoring the increased danger of walking the path back with water

laden buckets. Yet the students for many years have endured this. Until the intervention of Action Aid Nigeria and their assistance with building a borehole.

Now the students remark on the easing of life. They have more time to stay in school and study. They also have access to cleaner water, many of whom are glad to have a close place to go after relieving themselves that doubles as a drinking fountain. Even the animals are excited at the development. A group of peacocks stay drinking the dripping water droplets from the tap for a long time. Now the students have more time to attend classes and more time to concentrate on their future ambitions and class lessons.



An Unwitting Hindrance to Sokoto's Education Bill



How Rampant Poverty Affects Even the Best Intentions

Of the numerous hopes for the SBMC program, and the myriad challenges facing its implementation, none perhaps comes across as more insidious than the poverty problem. School principals have remarked on the issue, as have SBMC members and government officials. For many families, the simple truth is they just cannot afford to send all their children to school. And for some cultural reasons, outlined by the honorable representative of Gabu local government, many people believe that educating a girl is not yet as valuable as a boy. Coupled with the long term benefits and value of education which might seem like a long wait to a poverty stricken family.

The SBMC women's leader also touched on the issue of poverty as one of the driving forces behind the hesitation to educate girls. As effective as the education bill has already been, with the impressive enrollment figures outlined in previous posts, the challenge of getting a family to send all their children in school still

seems like a tall order, unless the poverty crisis is tackled head on.

With the consistent support of ActionAid Nigeria, and the education bill, in addition to the efforts spearheaded by the local SBMC chapters and the rewards of time, the value of education in Sokoto will reveal itself with the newly educated crop of professionals and decision makers, who can tackle and reduce poverty for the upcoming generation of girls.



PROGRESS MILESTONES





Published By ActionAid

With Support From

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