

DELIVERING UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION (UBE) IN KADUNA

Introduction

“Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine that a child of farmworkers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.”

– Nelson Mandela.



The crisis in the education system in Nigeria has been one of the most glaring manifestations of the absence of good governance and pervading corruption, which in turn puts the spotlight on the many unmet expectations of millions of citizens. Two decades after the return of democracy in 1999, there have been questions around how democratic governance has translated into the improvement of the social conditions of the vast majority of citizens, especially in the delivery of critical services like education and health. Nowhere is the problem of quality service delivery more apparent than in the Universal Basic Education sector. Despite the enactment of a legislation to ensure all children of school age in Nigeria get the opportunity for basic education, the UBE system continues to fail millions of children, who ideally should be benefiting from a well-run public education system capable of molding young minds in preparation for their roles as citizens.

As things stand however, the UBE system across the country is producing outcomes, which are at variance with Nigeria's core developmental aspirations.

This fact is worrisome because of the foundational nature of Universal Basic Education (UBE), and its critical role in achieving the goals of banishing illiteracy, tackling poverty and contributing to building citizens as they work for national development. Figures from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS5), 2016/2017 conducted by the NBS indicate that as at 2017¹, Nigeria's population of out-of-school children stood at 10.5 million, a figure which is even higher than the figure quoted in the UIS 2016 report.

ADDRESSING THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF CORRUPTION ON BASIC EDUCATION DELIVERY IN KADUNA STATE



“The project contributes to On Nigeria's goal of reducing corruption by building an atmosphere of accountability, transparency, and good governance”.

CHRICED intervention to mobilize supply and demand side actors to promote transparency and accountability in the UBE service delivery chain in Kaduna State is in line with the specific constitutional directive. The CHRICED project of Social Mobilization for Accountability and Transparency in the Implementation of Universal Basic Education supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has been focused on addressing the problem of lack of transparency and accountability in UBE service delivery. It monitors and advocates for accountability in the flow and use of the Universal Basic Education funds in 50 schools in Kaduna State.

CHRICED currently works in three Local Government Areas of Kuru, Kubau and Zaria. It trains community actors including school-based management committees, parent-teacher associations, school administrators, teachers, students, and traditional and religious leaders to track and report on the Universal Basic Education Commission's matching grant funding. An important dimension of CHRICED intervention to promote cost effective and quality basic education services, has been creation of a platform for dialogue between those on the demand side, and those on the supply side of UBE services. Working with stakeholders and communities, CHRICED is also conducting a data-centered monitoring of the UBE system to strengthen accountability and transparency in the management of UBE funds in Kaduna State. The project's ultimate goal is to minimize corruption and financial leakages, by improving the quality of service delivery and outcomes of basic education. The project

contributes to MacArthur Foundation's On Nigeria's goal of reducing corruption by building an atmosphere of accountability, transparency, and good governance.

To understand community perceptions about the core issues around basic education delivery, a field survey was conducted by CHRICED on the state of the UBE in Kuru, Kubau and Zaria. The survey brought to the fore a number of the problems, including lack of infrastructure and inputs. The survey drew conclusion that the enumerated problems of the UBE system are basically a result of a deeper reality: the lack of transparency and accountability in the management of UBE funds. CHRICED town hall meetings and other forms of citizen engagement threw up the issue of lack of active citizen participation in the design, award and implementation of UBE projects. In other words, in most cases, the prevalent view is that communities have been largely kept in the dark about the specific projects within their domain. There were allusions to cases of contractors executing shoddy works, use of sub-standard materials and the abandonment of projects even after monies have been paid by government. In other words, one of the major issues facing the UBE system in Kaduna State is the problem of how to galvanize citizens to keep an eye on the UBE project implementation process and ensure that resources meant for the critical service of basic education are not used for other purpose.

CHRICED holds the view that Nigerians in the local communities, the ultimate beneficiaries of government's intervention in the education sector should take the interest in closely monitoring and

According to UNICEF, there has been an increase in primary school enrolment in Nigeria in recent years, but net attendance is only about 70 per cent. Yet, Nigeria is still faced with a situation of having 10.5 million children out of the school system, thereby earning itself the unflattering reputation of being the country with the world's highest number of out of school children. UNICEF data also points to the fact that 60 per cent of these out of school children are in northern Nigeria².

One dimension of the challenges of the UBE system is that there have been policies and a clear legal framework aimed at producing better outcomes than what is currently the case.

Resources, financial and otherwise, have also been devoted to the cause of ridding Nigeria of illiteracy. Why these efforts have fallen short, calls for an investigation of the implementation framework, and to make findings focusing on where the resources allocated actually end up. In terms of creating a holistic legal framework for basic education, the UBE legal architecture is one instance in which the Nigerian governance system has attempted to address a core issue, right from the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Therefore, among the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy contained in chapter two of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution as amended, the objective on primary education is one that has received attention from successive governments since 1999.

Section 18 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended), under the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy is explicit about the need for government to direct its policy towards ensuring there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels. Specifically, Section 18 (3a) provides that "government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide; free, compulsory and universal primary education." There can be no debating the fact that among the many other fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy, the directive on UBE is one on which governments at both Federal and State level, have acted by devoting resources to the realization of the objective.

Constitutional Imperative for UBE Services and the Case of Kaduna State.

Nigeria, according to UNICEF is reputed to have over 10 million out of school children³ who ordinarily should be passing through the UBE system in respective states across the country. In Kaduna State, the UBE system faces a number of challenges, which negatively impact the quality of outcomes and keep pupils out of the system. These challenges include the problem of inadequacy of basic infrastructure, as exemplified by the anecdotes of children learning under the shade of trees, and in classrooms with open roofs, which open roofs, which have been apparently blown off as a result of windstorms.

The insufficiency of other basic infrastructure, without which teaching and learning would never be effective, hampers the strategic objectives of the system. Many schools do not have toilets, and potable water running, resulting in hygiene problems, which have implications for the health and wellbeing of pupils.

Similarly, the lack of basic inputs to make basic education functional and effective, such as teaching and learning materials contributes in no small measure to the poor quality of pupils being produced by the school system in the state.

Some of the inputs, without which learning would be next to impossible, include furniture, as well as teaching and learning aids for the impartation of knowledge. Yet the Nigerian Constitution, under the sections focusing on the fundamental objectives and directive principles of state policy clearly identifies Universal Basic Education (UBE), as one of the objectives that government policy should focus on addressing. The constitutional mandate on UBE is supported by an Act of the National Assembly, the UBE Act of 2004. These legislations recognize the importance of free and compulsory basic education to many communities, especially in places where the rural poor cannot afford to send their children to private schools.

²<https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education.html> ³<https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education.html>

tracking those resources to ensure the duty bearers put those resources to proper use. If this problem of monitoring education spending is not addressed such that communities are able to keep an eye on

what the contractors are doing, the desired change in terms of improved accountability and transparency in the implementation of UBE funds will be an illusion to be pursued but never attained.

Conclusion and Recommendations

CHRICED extensive interface with the communities showed clear cases of misplacement of priorities in terms of projects and inputs. In such cases, scarce resources were wasted and communities denied the real benefit which would have accrued from well-targeted projects in line with their needs. In the light of the challenges of accountability and transparency in the Universal Basic Education (UBE), which in turn results in many of the deficiencies and inadequacy of infrastructure and material needed for effective teaching and learning, CHRICED recommends the following:

1. The creation and maintenance of regulatory systems. This involves adapting existing legal frameworks to focus more on corruption concerns (rewards/penalties), designing clear norms and criteria for procedures (for instance, with regard to fund allocation or procurement), developing codes of practice for the Kaduna State Basic Education Board (SUBEB), and defining well-targeted measures, particularly for fund allocation and disbursements.
2. The strengthening of management capacities to ensure the enforcement of these regulatory systems. This involves increasing

institutional capacities in various areas, particularly information systems, setting up effective control mechanisms against fraud as well as promoting ethical behavior.

3. The encouragement of enhanced community ownership of the school management process. This involves developing decentralized and participatory mechanisms, increasing access to information, particularly with the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and empowering communities to help them exert stronger 'social control'.
4. Citizen oversight: it is critical for agencies on the demand and supply side to strengthen the process of citizen oversight. Structures like the School Based Management Committees (SBMCs) and community groups should be repositioned through training and capacity building to understand the importance of their roles as watchdogs. This would enable them keep a close eye on all processes to ensure UBE projects of the topmost quality are delivered for the benefit of communities.
5. Similarly, there should be needs assessment process to determine what exact projects schools requires to be activated.

Issued by:

Resource Centre for Human Rights & Civic Education (CHRICED)



46, Lawan Dambazzau Street, Behind Shoprite, Gandu Albasa, New Layout, Kano State, Nigeria
chricedng@gmail.com
www.chriced.org.ng
facebook.com/chricedng
@chricedng

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