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Nigeria, Education

### **Nigeria and a Feasible Approach to Solving Their Education**

Nigeria is a country in West Africa, home to about 250 *different* ethnic groups and a population of around 214,000,000. Not only is Nigeria diverse in its ethnic groups, but it's also diverse in its geography, with deserts, mountains, swamps, jungles, and plains. Nigeria exists as a federal presidential republic, where 52% of their population is urban (CIA, 2021). With an economy based on agriculture, 37.3% of Nigeria's land is currently arable and as a whole, their major agricultural exports include oil, rubber, and cacao (National Geographic).

Family is very valuable to Nigerians. Typically, a family in Nigeria consists of about five people, and that number is slightly higher in rural areas than in urban areas. In terms of the dwellings these families live in, 85% of the urban population live in single room houses (Nations Encyclopedia). When it comes to what there is to eat, families typically get their food from local markets and from their farms. Nigeria's roads have extensive infrastructure and are an important element in the country's transportation, accounting for 95% of their goods and people. However, currently, the conditions of the roads are not the best, leaving some to be unusable (Nations Encyclopedia). Access to local markets may be difficult for some families living in rural areas where the condition of the roads aren't best. A typical breakfast can consist of anything between fried plantains, to a simple bowl of cornflakes. Lunch or dinner may consist of a type of rice, garri (drained, ground cassava with some sort of starch that is pan fried), some soup, and many other components (Nigerian Food TV).

There are many available jobs in Nigeria, but some of the most common include being a factory worker (38,700 USD a year), IT Manager (31,000 USD a year), farmer (6400 USD a year), software developer (30,000 USD a year) and many more (Teleport). According to Akindare Okunola, from Global Citizen, Nigeria's healthcare system is, "one of the world's most underfunded and least robust." Those who are amongst the poorest have extremely limited access to healthcare, and have to pay between 28-110 USD for a consultation with a general practitioner (Expatriate Assure). Aside from that, most Nigerians have no health insurance (Global Citizen, 2019).

According to the World Health Organization, it is estimated that 75% of the urban Nigerian population has an improved water supply, but only 42% of the rural population has access to clean water. 41% of Nigerians have access to sanitation facilities, while about a third of the rural population practices open defecation (World Health Organization, 2014). As for electricity, Lighting Africa states that, in rural areas, only 41% of Nigerians have access to grid electricity. However, amongst those, about 40% are on a timed schedule of 12 hours of electricity a day. In the urban Nigerian populations, around 86% of people have access to electricity (Lighting Africa, 2014-2018).

The quality of the roads in Nigeria, as previously mentioned, pose a major barrier typical families may face when trying to access nutritious food, as it blocks families from accessing markets. Other barriers to nutritious food may include a lack of time to prepare it and the cost. When looking at earning a living in Nigeria, a possible barrier people may face could include a lack of education or possible social-cultural barriers that deter certain groups of people from working in an area. Mentioning this helps to transition into the next topic; Nigeria's education system.

Due to frequent political instability over the years in Nigeria, the education system has been negatively affected (Nuffic). As of 2010, Nigeria was ranked first as the country with the most children out of school, with numbers reaching around 11 million (Nation Master, 2010). During the colonial period, according to State University Education Encyclopedia, Western-type of education was introduced to Nigeria in the 1840s. As a result of this new education system, there was dramatic growth in how many students were attending school in the northern, western, and eastern regions of Nigeria. After celebrating their independence in 1960, Nigeria fell into a Civil War, which was a result of political, religious, ethnic, and economic tensions. The results of the war left Nigeria's education system in shambles, with the military and government paying little attention to education, and further deteriorating the education system (State University Education Encyclopedia).

As a result of the political instability in Nigeria, the trends of this issue seem to be staying about the same; According to BBC, in the Southern states of Nigeria, the schools are poor and dilapidated. In the Northern states there aren't enough schools and teachers for all of the children. The education of Nigeria's rural population, as of being affected by the faulty education system, is characterized by poor infrastructure and inadequate teachers and materials, according to Rotimi Olawale from The Nigerian Voice, which has led them to lag behind at the basic education level (IISTE, 2013). The education of Nigeria's urban population has easier access to education services than they would in the rural areas. This access to educational services and improved school conditions means the urban populations are keeping up at the basic education level than rural populations (IISTE, 2013).

Women are often discriminated against for involvement in certain academic disciplines, which creates less involvement of women in STEM and a higher dropout rate amongst them (ASEC, 2018). The inadequacy of women's education in Nigeria also contributes to a female adult literacy rate of 59.4%, compared to the male adult literacy rate of 74.4% according to ASEC. Receiving education as a woman in Nigeria can also lead to the dangers of being abducted (African Sisters Education Collaborative, 2018). Looking at children, the hindrances of Nigeria's government negatively impact their education; the lack of sound educational planning has led to the inadequacy of education facilities, teachers, and materials. The hindrances have also been the cause of strikes amongst teachers and lecturers that further negatively affects and disrupts the children's education (Science Direct, 2011).

Disparities exist between the north and south regions of Nigeria and amongst certain ethnic groups (CRISE). According to an article by the Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE), "Due to historical factors such as the misguided colonial educational policy in Northern Nigeria [Barnes, 1997], and different levels of ethnic receptivity to western education," there is a gap between the northern and southern regions of the country, in education and other areas, which negatively affects minorities. In the same article, a chart was presented that displayed admissions to Nigerian Universities;

The table showed that the percentage of admissions was fairly lower in the northern regions compared to it being higher in the southern regions because they have more educational opportunities. The article states that in the regions of the country where education is not as available, people will be disturbed by the university admission gap, which will promote the loss in the confidence of “fair play” and the realization of favoritism to the population in the southern regions (CRISE, 2005).

The instability of Nigeria’s education system affects the social environment of people, more specifically in rural areas, in which 80% of people live below the poverty line; Because of the poor education system and high poverty levels, many children are left without an environment where they can enhance their academic work, and instead participate in agricultural or other income-earning activities in order to help support their families. It is because of these disparities from the urban population that contribute to the lack of a basic education. From that lack of basic education, a child living in rural Nigeria is less likely to contribute to the development of their society and their physical/social environment (IISTE, 2013).

To address these issues, Nigeria has had the idea to get companies to sponsor schools and introduce the idea of there being more public schools (BBC). Looking at Ethiopia, a country where education is also struggling to be maintained, one of their solutions was to join the Global Partnership for Education (The Borgen Project, 2016). These solutions would be beneficial in meeting the needs of the population of Nigeria because the idea of receiving sponsors or joining the GPE will help to improve school conditions, hire adequate teachers and have access to proper materials. On the other hand, the idea of opening more public schools will address the issue with how many children aren’t in school, since public schools will allow for more children to attend than a private school. However, all of these solutions do have some weaknesses; When receiving sponsors, there may not be enough sponsors or enough money to reach every school. With the idea of opening more public schools, because of poor infrastructure, public schools may not be in the best condition; more kids enrolling can be a negative because schools may become overpopulated in areas where they have not been built to occupy large populations. Lastly, with joining the GPE, they may try to influence where the money they provide will go, which countries may not want them to do.

Aside from these solutions, the research of this project has helped to sprout a new solution; To solve this challenge, the use of incentives is recommended. Offering to pay families a certain amount of money to enroll their children in school would encourage others to do so, therefore increasing the number of children in school. The project can be led by Education Cannot Wait; since they receive funding and support from, according to TheirWorld, “donor countries, the commercial sector, foundations, philanthropists, diasporas and faith-based groups, as well as traditional donors.” They will also be able to fund this project.

When it comes to roles in solving this challenge, The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) plays an important role in this plan, because they are the hosts of the ‘Education Cannot Wait’ project. Nigeria’s government plays an important role, because they know of the issues their education system has and, with this plan, it would be beneficial for them to be the ones to distribute where the funding goes. Community members play a role as well; in participating and taking advantage of the education incentives if they become available.

In order for the project to be successful in increasing the amount of children in school and improving the adequacy of children's education the following policies would need to be put in place; 1. Families who decide to take advantage of the incentives must make an effort to send their child/children to schools as consistently as possible. 2. Incentives should be evenly distributed amongst the entire country. 3. Incentives should first be distributed amongst the areas of the country that are affected the most by the issue. 4. Incentives should be able to fund the children's school materials, school clothing, and food. With this plan, some cultural norms/behaviors do need to be accounted for; the fact that Western-type education is not widely accepted and that holy days, which take place on Fridays in the Muslim North of Nigeria, should be considered in the time children spend in schools. This recommended solution to the challenge of Nigeria's education can be considered sustainable because, since it's goal is the improvement of children's education, children will become more knowledgeable about sustainability while in school, which therefore contributes to the sustainability of our planet.

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