

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)

UNICEF NIGERIA

BASIC EDUCATION

FLN AT A GLANCE

Globally, **53 per cent** of 10-year-olds in low- and middle-income countries cannot read and understand a simple storyⁱ.

This figure rises to **87 per cent** in Sub-Saharan Africa.

70 per cent of children in Nigeria cannot read with meaning or solve simple math problemsⁱⁱ.

Only **49 per cent and 55 per cent** of children in school achieve basic proficiency in literacy and numeracy, respectively.

Literacy rates are as low as **38 per cent in the Northwest** and **42 per cent in the Northeast for young women** compared to 57 per cent in the Northwest and 53 per cent in the Northeast for young men.

Only **14 per cent** of young women from the poorest quintile are literateⁱⁱⁱ.

Fewer than **6 per cent** of children under age 5 have 3 or more children's books at home^{iv}.

IMPACT ON QUALITY LEARNING



Education

Nigeria's low **Human Development Index score of 0.539** is largely attributable to poor performance in education.^v

High rate of school dropout, low transition, and completion rates largely because of poor-quality education: 4 million children drop out annually between Primary 1 & JSS 3 due to poor quality education.

Only 37% of youth are employed; half of employers cannot find employees with requisite skills set.^{vi}

POLICY LANDSCAPE

Nigeria National Policy on Education (2013) aims to inculcate literacy, numeracy, and the ability to communicate effectively.

Nigeria's National Language Policy (1985) is encompassed within the **National Policy on Education** and specifies that mother tongue or language of the immediate community shall be the medium of instruction at pre-primary and early primary levels.

Education for Change: A Ministerial Strategic Plan (2018-2022) aims to strengthen human capacity for child-centered, interactive teaching and quality assurance at all levels of educational development in Nigeria.

BARRIERS AND BOTTLENECKS

- **Low public spending on the quality of education.** Only 6% of recurrent expenditure is dedicated to non-salary items^{vii}.
- **Large class sizes** (classroom-to-learner ratios of 1:55)^{viii} are prohibitive of effective teaching and learning.
- **In-adequate & under-prepared workforce**^{ix}: 27% of the teaching staff are unqualified; 175,000 qualified teachers are needed to fill capacity gaps^x.
- **Teacher Professional Development (TPD)** is heavily dependent on cascade training and limited provision is made for coaching, mentoring support, and instructional leadership.
- The National Education Policy provides for the transition from mother tongue instruction to English by Primary 3; **most teachers are unable to teach in English especially in Northern Nigeria.**
- School's lack **appropriate, inclusive, and child centered teacher and learning materials**, including graded readers and content in children's mother tongue.
- A **one-resource-per-child and per-teacher ratio** is not maintained in all schools

UNICEF RESPONSE

1. Investment in scaling quality **early childhood education** through development of a strategy, investment case and play-based curriculum.
2. Trialing of models on **structured pedagogy** (TARL, RANA, Mukaranta and HASKE) and **mother tongue instruction** in 15 states in development and humanitarian contexts.
3. Training of teachers on **differentiated instruction** and **formative assessment**.
4. Integrating FLN in **non-formal learning** for Almajiri children.
5. Ensuring **learning continuity on FLN** through no-tech, low-tech and high-tech options (print materials, community learning hubs, radio, television, and digital learning).
6. Development of Nigeria's first robust National Learning Assessment Framework and roll out of a **large-scale national assessment** for grades 3, 5 and 7 in 2022.
7. Provision of **inclusive, and child centered teaching and learning materials** including in mother tongue.
8. Provision of **micro grants** to SBMCs/CBMCs to rehabilitate infrastructure

KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2022



1. Provide grants to SBMCs/CBMCs to **rehabilitate school infrastructure** and advocate adequate provision in state budgets
2. Strengthen **evidence generation** on FLN and develop a **national costed scale up strategy** on FLN.
3. Pilot a **model on teacher continuous professional development** with a focus on mother tongue instruction, structured pedagogy, and formative assessment.
4. Support national efforts to **improve the quality of mother tongue instruction** in the early grades.
5. Develop child-centered and inclusive **quality teaching and learning materials** including graded readers, a minimum, affordable, and low resourced TLM package among others.
6. Develop **flexible and accredited multiple learning pathways** to ensure a wider acquisition of FLN inside and outside of schools, and in development and humanitarian settings.
7. Expand access to quality **early childhood education** through national policy review, implementation of play-based curriculum and parental engagement.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Saadhna Panday-Soobrayan
Chief Education
UNICEF Abuja, Nigeria
spanday@unicef.org

Footnotes & References

ⁱ See <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/learning-poverty>

ⁱⁱ Nigeria Measuring of Learning Achievement (MLA) (2017)

ⁱⁱⁱ National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and UNICEF. (2017). Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016-17, Survey Findings Report. Abuja: NBS & UNICEF

^{iv} *Ibid.*

^v Human Development Index (2020) <https://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/NGA>

^{vi} ILO (2021) Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan (2021-2025) https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--africa/--ro-abidjan/--ilo-abuja/documents/publication/wcms_819111.pdf

^{vii} UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning and the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2020). *Education Sector Analysis*.

^{viii} UBEC (2019). 2018 National Personnel Audit (NPA) Report on Public and Private Basic Education Schools in Nigeria ([Link](#)).

^{ix} *Ibid.*

^x *Ibid.*