



agile



Ruling the World

Parents Dream Big for Their Girls in Nigeria

How Financial Incentives are Keeping Girls in School

SAFE SPACE:
THE GIRLS WE WANT

The Corner Stone Sustaining Structures

Educating Her:

Why Girls Will Save the World

IF YOU BUILD IT

The Importance of Building a Conducive Environment for Adolescent Girls Education



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FOREWORD



Mrs. Amina Buba Haruna
National Project Coordinator

Adolescent Girls' Initiative for Learning and Empowerment, AGILE
 Federal Ministry of Education

We are excited to bring you this quarterly magazine aimed at highlighting the Federal Government's efforts to improve and promote adolescent girls' access to retention, and completion of secondary education in the country, particularly in the AGILE project's current participating states of Borno, Ekiti, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, and Plateau.

It is a well-known fact that girl-child education in Nigeria is faced with a lot of obstacles, from dilapidated/ inadequate school buildings, uncondusive teaching, and learning environments, inadequate hygienic toilets (designated to male and female students), Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Early Marriage, insecurity, to sociocultural norms and religious beliefs/biases, etc.

Combating these challenges and more, is the sole purpose for the creation of the AGILE project.

The Adolescent Girls' Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE) Project is a 5-year initiative of the Federal Government, supported by the World Bank. It is aimed at improving secondary education opportunities for adolescent girls in selected states in the country.

Let me note that girls' education goes beyond getting girls into school. It is also about ensuring that girls learn and feel safe while in school and have the opportunity to complete all levels of education but there is still a lot of school-age children who are not in school.

The Nigerian government estimates that there are about 11 million children between the ages of 6 and 15 who should be in school but are not. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), has found out that this includes girl-child in Northern Nigeria, boy-child dropouts in the South-South and South-East regions, internally displaced children, and the Almajiri/ Qur'anic and itinerant children who are predominantly found in the northern part of the country.

As the National Project Coordinator, my duty is to ensure we meet the Project Development Objective (PDO), broken into the various activities:

<p>Objective 1: Creating Safe and Accessing Learning Spaces</p>	<p>Objective 2: Fostering an enabling environment for girls</p>	<p>Objective 3: Project Management and System Strengthening</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is aimed at addressing the infrastructural barriers that deter girls from accessing and completing secondary education. • Create new learning spaces in secondary schools. • Support girls' access to secondary education through the construction of new climate-smart school infrastructure. • Improve existing infrastructure in secondary schools. • Accommodates an increase in girls' enrolment and transition to secondary schools as well as makes schools safe, accessible, inclusive, and conducive for teaching and learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is aimed at creating and sustaining support for girls' education and empowerment among families, communities, and schools. • Promote Communication and Social Norms. • Empower girls with Life Skills and Digital Literacy. • Provide financial incentives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support capacity building at the Federal and state levels to manage, implement, and provide oversight for the Project. • System strengthening for sustainability and Technical Assistance (TA) • Strengthen the institutional capacity of the Federal and State teams to support girls' education and empowerment. • Project Management, Monitoring, and Evaluation support the Federal and State teams on effective project coordination, procurement, financial management, and project communications.

We look forward to taking you on this new and exciting journey with us.

INTO THE STORM:

“The Battle for Education Faced by Girls in Nigeria”

Education is a right that should be granted to every child, regardless of their gender, background, or location. Unfortunately, in Nigeria, this is not the case for millions of young girls. According to President Muhammadu Buhari, over 13.2 million school-aged children are not in school, with young girls making up 60% of this figure. The reasons for this are varied, from displacement caused by insurgency and banditry to cultural and religious beliefs. The reality is that many girls, especially adolescents in Nigeria, are denied access to education, let alone quality education.



Despite this, there is still a strong desire by many parents to educate their girls, despite prevailing social and religious norms that create barriers for them. One of such is Haruna Abba Kaka'abani who lives in Borno, one of the states in Northeast Nigeria ravaged by insurgency.

He says: *“Educating a girl child is very important, this generation is different from the former generation. When you don't educate the girl child she could be led in a wrong direction. If you educate a girl child you educate a nation, If a girl child becomes wayward then the nation goes wayward. So the importance of educating a girl child is endless.”*

Also, meet Aisha Adamu, a young girl from Kebbi State who loves the idea of going to school and learning with her peers. However, her dream is hindered by the lack of basic infrastructure in her school. With no chairs to sit on, no toilets or water for ablutions, Aisha is forced to settle for the shack she calls home. This is a common experience for many girls in Nigeria.





Fatima Ahmed, from Borno State, shares the same passion for learning. But her family's financial struggles prevent her from obtaining the necessary school supplies, like a uniform, which deters her confidence and desire for education. Adebayo Joseph Idowu, the principal of New Era College in Ekiti, shares the difficulties faced by girls in his state. "They have to go to the bush when they need to use the toilet and sometimes, they get mugged or bitten by snakes," he says.

It's not just lack of infrastructure that prevents young girls from pursuing formal education. In some states, it is the cultural beliefs and the inability of parents to pay the tuition fees and other expenses. Blessing Richard from Jos says, "Our parents do not like to sponsor the girl child to school because they believe she will eventually get

married and leave their house." This mindset is a barrier to progress, but there is hope.

Enter the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE), a World Bank-funded project currently working in seven states to renovate dilapidated school buildings and construct new ones, provide access to clean toilets and running water, and support parents in keeping their girls in school. The impact of AGILE has been significant, with Aisha Musa, a student in Katsina, saying: "the renovation that was done by AGILE in our school encouraged me to return to school, there is a toilet and running water, even better than the one in my house."

Fatima Ahmed is grateful for the support she has received from the AGILE Project. "Before the arrival

of AGILE, some of us did not have uniforms, some did not have books, others did not have school bags but after the AGILE intervention, we now have these things," she says.

The struggle faced by young girls in Nigeria is real and ongoing. However, with projects like AGILE, the storm is slowly but surely being tamed. In the seven participating states combined, you have over **206,503** girls benefitting and getting quality education. The hope is that one day, every girl in Nigeria will have the opportunity to receive a quality education, free from obstacles and hindrances.





Aisha Musa Adamu is a teenager in Katsina State, North-west Nigeria who wants to become a graphic designer and take on the world with her art. To achieve this though, she has to learn the fundamentals, she has to be bold and driven. She needs life skills.

To achieve this, Aisha believes she needs an education.

But Aisha and so many other girls in Katsina State and other parts of Nigeria find schooling difficult because of the lack of proper infrastructure and facilities needed for a conducive learning environment.

Aisha says: “we did not like going to school because there were no good toilets and no water and as we all know water is life, we can't survive. Most times the girls do not come to school during their menstrual cycle because the toilets were not convenient, they were in very bad shape”.

From run-down buildings, inadequate classroom space, lack of health facilities, broken class furniture to lack of proper toilet facilities, many public schools in Nigeria are in deplorable conditions.

**IF
YOU
BUILD
IT**

**AISHA GOES
TO SCHOOL**

BUILD IT

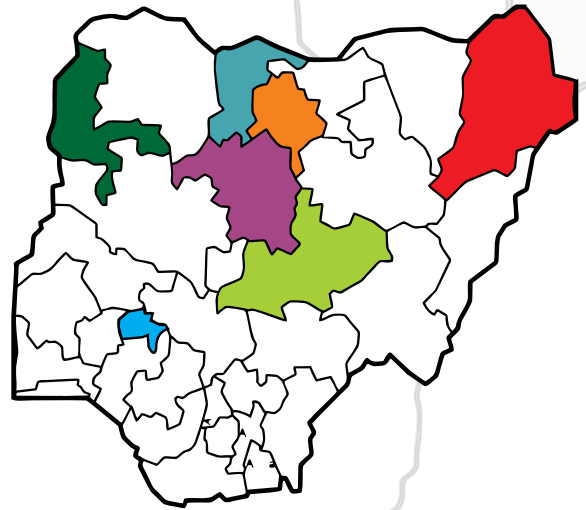
To counter this, the Nigerian government swung into action through the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE) project. The project has helped to build new classrooms (renovate existing ones), toilet facilities (dedicated to male and female students) as well as provide class room furniture, and Teaching and Learning Materials (TLMs), in schools across seven states in Nigeria, with **over 5,168 renovated or newly built classrooms and estimated 8,482 toilets constructed across the seven states.** There is a record-breaking enrollment of girls in formal education.

Aisha says “I like coming to school because of the renovations AGILE did in my school, it encourages me to come to school. The toilets are renovated, there is water everywhere it is very encouraging. After you eat, there is water everywhere for your consumption. The toilets are really good, we do not have such toilets at home but we have them in school so it encourages us to come to school”.

The AGILE project has been instrumental in changing the attitudes of communities, parents, and students towards formal education for adolescent girls. The new structures have created a sense of excitement and renewed hope for formal education. From community leaders to students, everyone is eager to be part of the success stories being built through AGILE.

In conclusion, the AGILE project has demonstrated the importance of building a conducive environment for adolescent girls' education. **With the new facilities available and 16,216 SBMCs trained on sustainability for the seven states,** girls are more likely to attend school, stay in school, and achieve their full potential. Let us continue to invest in creating safe, inclusive, and empowering learning environments for all girls in Nigeria.

An example is in Kaduna State where a total of 1,447 toilets were constructed while 615 toilets were renovated under AGILE project's Small Grant scheme. With another 108 toilets renovated and 41 toilets upgraded, one sure way to encourage girl-child education is by improving the hygiene conditions available in schools for an adolescent girl.



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renovated or newly built
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16,216 SBMCs
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increased
GIRL CHILD
enrolment in secondary school



Malama Hafsat Abdullahi
Parent and petty trader, Kebbi State

“
A petty trader, Malama Abdullahi, faces the added challenge of balancing her business and her daughter's education. However, thanks to AGILE, she now only needs to pay N200 for PTA fees and can focus on growing her business, which will in turn allow her daughter to continue her education.
”

Ruling the World

Parents Dream Big for Their Girls in Nigeria”

Petty trader Malama Hafsat, based in Kebbi state, has always dreamed of providing her children with a quality education. With her meagre income, she has had to choose which of her children would attend school.



Lami Jonathan lives in Kachia, a popular town in southern Kaduna, Northwest Nigeria. She dreams big for her daughter who attends a 'Girls Only' secondary school. She says she is not happy the way her own life turned out. *“I want a different story for my daughter”* she says.

access and complete quality secondary education, with so much financial burden taken off them. With the help of AGILE, Malama's daughter can now receive the education she deserves, regardless of the socio-cultural norms and practices that once put her at a disadvantage.

But she has her concerns.

“They (students) do not have toilets, sometimes they defecate in the classrooms. It got so bad that the principal bought padlocks and locked the classrooms. Because when they are pressed they do not have where to ease themselves.”

Retired media practitioner Abdullahi Supagi, based in Kano, also expresses his gratitude for AGILE, as he no longer needs to worry about his daughter's N24,000 school fees and can focus on other ways to support her education.

These varying issues prompted the Nigerian government to evolve measures to surmount the challenges faced by these girls in accessing and completing secondary education.

“My daughter's enthusiasm towards learning has improved,” says Malama Abdullahi. “She now looks sharp in her new school uniform and is eager to attend school, no matter what they are asked to bring.”

For these parents and their daughters, AGILE has been a lifesaver, transforming their hopes and dreams into reality. These seven states experiencing the AGILE project have had astronomical numbers of homes living their dreams. 7,748 parents in Katsina were able to save money because their daughters got free school uniforms. While 54,741 parents do not have to spend a dime in paying school fees.

Beyond the financial incentives and better hygiene facilities now available in her daughter's school, Lami Jonathan is benefitting from her daughter's education and rewriting her own life.

Beneficiaries get 5,000 Naira upon registration, 10,000 Naira on entry and 5,000 each on the 2nd and 3rd tranches of disbursement respectively. Little wonder parents can now achieve their dreams of seeing their daughters

“When my daughter comes back from school with her assignment, I help her go through it but most times I have no idea how to help her, so she ends up doing it and she teaches me how to do it. She also teaches me how to read. I see the importance of educating her.”

It's a story of hopelessness turning into inspiration and a future where these girls can truly rule the world.

LEARNED AND INSPIRED

Amina J. Mohammed is a Nigerian Diplomat who is currently the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. Before she started working at the UN, she previously held positions with successive governments in Nigeria, serving as Special Adviser on the Millennium Development Goals(MDGs), providing advice on issues including poverty, public sector reform and sustainable development, and coordinating programmes worth billions of dollars annually for aimed at improving the standard of living for millions of people across the globe.



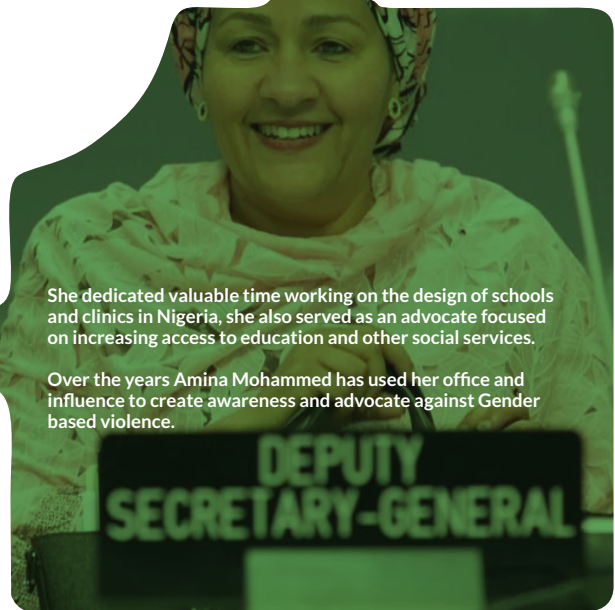
She attended the prestigious Kaduna Capital School in Kaduna, Northwest Nigeria. The school was initially a primary school, established in 1957 by Sir Ahmadu Bello in a push to ensure formal education for more children in northern Nigeria. Today, the schools has extended to junior and senior secondary school where students acquire quality education.



Since then, she has gone on to make remarkable success of educational opportunities, even travelling to the United Kingdom for higher education. After graduating from the prestigious Henley Management College, Amina Mohammed went on to become an accomplished project coordinator and a successful businesswoman.



Amina J. Mohammed was first nominated by former UN secretary general Ban Ki-Moon to serve as special adviser on post-2015 development planning where she was instrumental in bringing about the 2030 agenda for sustainable development including the sustainable development goals.



She dedicated valuable time working on the design of schools and clinics in Nigeria, she also served as an advocate focused on increasing access to education and other social services.

Over the years Amina Mohammed has used her office and influence to create awareness and advocate against Gender based violence.

Speaking at the joint press briefing on the global 16 days of activism against gender-based violence campaign tagged Orange the World in 2019, she said:

“Rape and other forms of gender-based violence have huge economic, social and political losses to individuals, households and nation states and continue to be an obstacle to achieving equality, development and peace.”

She is also a recipient of a national award, Order of the Federal Republic of Nigeria(OFR), an order of merit.

Amina Mohammed is hard work and success personified, she serves as an inspiration to girls in Northern Nigeria and other parts of the country who dare to dream beyond boundaries that aspirations can become reality with hard work and dedication.

How Financial Incentives Are Keeping Girls in School

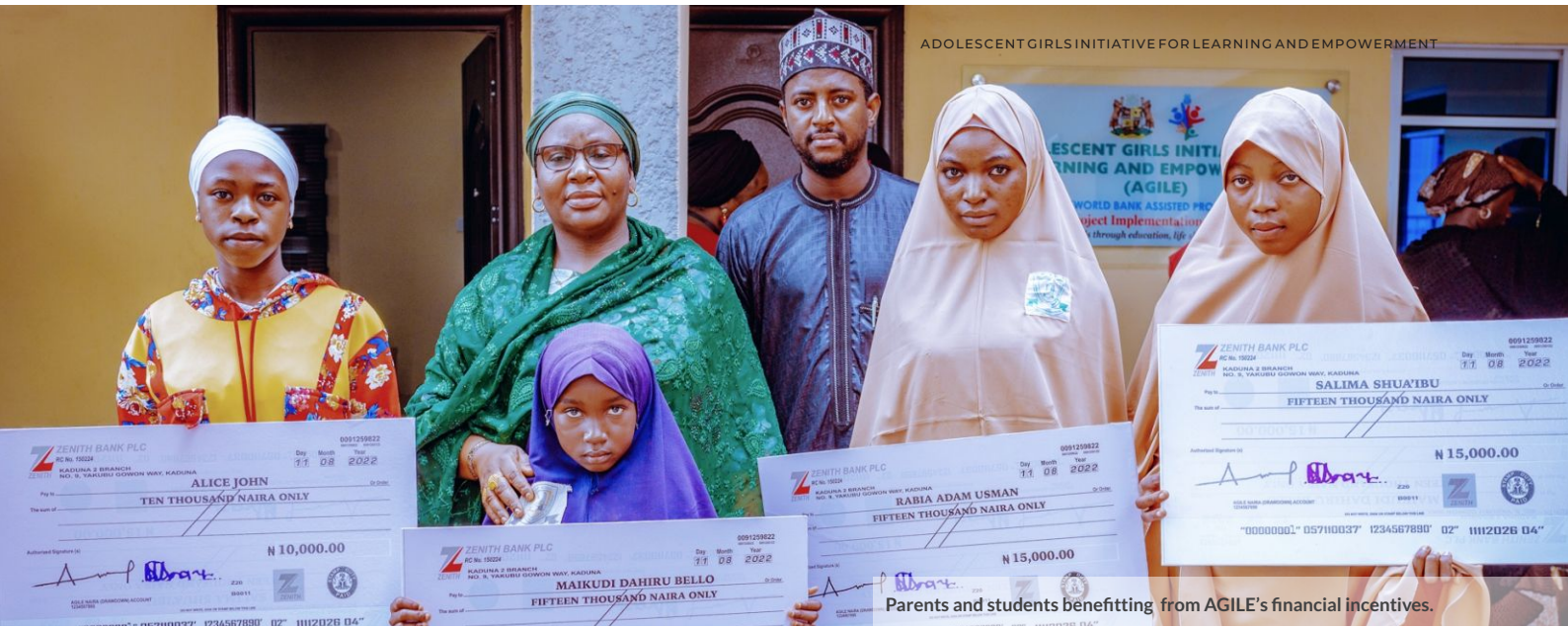


Many parents find the payment of their children's school fees and purchase of educational materials very burdensome, leading to many children not attending school. According to the World Bank, Nigeria, in 2020, had more than 11 million out-of-school children between the ages of 6 and 15.

This figure represents 1 in 12 of all out-of-school children globally and 22 per cent of all children in the age group in Nigeria.

Out-of-school children in Nigeria, according to the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), include girl-child in northern Nigeria, boy-child dropouts in the south-south and south-east regions, internally displaced children and the almajiri Qur'anic and itinerant children who are predominantly found in the northern part of the country.

As of October 2022, about 20 million children are out of school in Nigeria, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).



The Nigerian government, through the Federal Ministry of Education has since stepped in to address this, especially the most affected, which is girls, with the introduction of the AGILE project - Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment. One of the project's innovative initiative is the introduction of a variety of financial aids to students, parents and schools to help get girls back to school and complete secondary education.

Hauwa Jedda, a young girl who values education, is one of such beneficiaries of the initiative. She came from a family that could not afford her school supplies, but with the financial support from AGILE, her dream of attending school has come true.

"Now I have uniform and I enjoy my studies. We were given ten thousand each to help us purchase some of our school needs like pen, school bag, books, and other supplies, this is one of the reasons I come to school due to this incentive, I am very happy". - Hauwa Jedda

Basira Aminu, an orphan from Kaduna, used the money received to buy school supplies and start a small business. With the financial initiative provided, she no longer struggles with finances and is inspired to do more.

"When the money arrived, we divided it into two - used one half to buy school supplies and the other half to start a small business selling earrings so we can continue to turn over the money. Before the AGILE intervention, we were struggling with finances but after we received the money, things are a bit better for us and I am inspired to do more." - Basira Aminu.



How it works

The AGILE financial incentives provides 5,000 Naira upon registration in the Girls Scholarship Program (GSP), with a second tranche of 10,000 Naira provided upon successful transition to the next grade. The remaining two tranches of 5,000 Naira are provided at the end of each school term, to encourage girls to stay in school and meet scholarship conditions.

AGILE, the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment, is run by the Federal Ministry of Education, with support from the World Bank. The Project currently operates in 7 states; Borno, Ekiti, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, and Plateau.

Things looking up

Data from local and international organizations show that many children are denied access to education due to socio-cultural and financial reasons, with girls often being at a disadvantage.

AGILE's financial initiative is changing that by providing equal opportunities for all girls to get an education. In Kaduna, there are estimated 35,575 beneficiaries from all the 23 LGAs. Katsina has 54,741 girls in school because of the initiative. Plateau and Kano have 41,646 and 45,850 girls in schools respectively, from these figures, it is evident that there is hope for girl-child education in Nigeria.

DARTS

AGILE MADE THE SCHOOL COMFORTABLE FOR STUDENTS TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS.

**HOPE PHILLIP, HEAD GIRL
GOVERNMENT
SECONDARY SCHOOL
SABON-TASHA
KADUNA STATE**

The toilets AGILE constructed for my school has helped increase my level of concentration in class, when I grow up, I want to be a gynecologist because I know more female doctors are needed in the medical field.

Maryam Mohammed Abacha, SS2 student of Old Maiduguri senior secondary school, Maiduguri Borno state.

Our classroom used to be congested, now we are comfortable in class as a result of AGILE intervention, they built new classroom blocks for us, I want to be a Pharmacist in the future because I want to find the cure for AIDS.

Rukayat Tajudeen, SS3 student of GSS Rigasa (Main) Kaduna state.

We no longer have to go to people's houses during school because AGILE has provided all we need for us in our school.

Emmanuella Kuyet Michael, SS3 student of GSS Ungwan-Boro. Kaduna state

Our classes were renovated, they dug a borehole for us, and they also gave some of us 10 thousand naira to support our education.

**Fatima Kabir, JS2 student of
Government Girls college
Katsina.**

I want to become a graphic designer when I grow up, I also want to become an AGILE ambassador because of how they encourage us by supporting us with supplies needed for our education.

*AISHA MUSA ADAMU, SS3 student,
Government Girls college Katsina*

AGILE provided efficient materials for the smooth running of our education, and they even provided us with scholarships, from the money AGILE gave me, my parents bought me learning materials, provisions and many other good things

Zainab Idris Gede. SS2 student at GGSS Jibia, Katsina state

AGILE WORLD OF WONDERS

AGILE world-of-wonders is a pictorial collection of AGILE activities across the seven participating states.



RENOVATED CLASSROOM BLOCK AT GOVERNMENT GIRLS COLLEGE FUNTUA, KATSINA STATE



RENOVATED CLASSROOM BLOCK AT GOVERNMENT JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL JAEN CO-EXIST, KANO STATE



CONSTRUCTED WASH FACILITY AT GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL TUDUN SAIBU (SENIOR) KADUNA STATE



NEWLY BUILT CLASSROOM BLOCK AT METHODIST GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL IFAKI, EKITI STATE



A RENOVATED CLASSROOM BLOCK IN BORNO STATE



CONSTRUCTED WASH FACILITY AT GOVERNMENT JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL BAKORI, KATSINA



STUDENTS OF GOVERNMENT GIRLS SECONDARY SCHOOL KWA, KANO STATE



NEW DESKS, NEW CLASSROOM BLOCKS NEW HOPE AND OPTIMISM FOR LEARNING AT GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL PAMBEGUA, KADUNA STATE



PROVISION OF LEARNING MATERIAL AT GOVERNMENT GIRLS SECONDARY SCHOOL, ALIERO KEBBI STATE



RENOVATED CLASSROOM IN ONE OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BORNO STATE



CONSTRUCTED CLASSROOM PROJECT AT GOVERNMENT JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL BAKORI, KATSINA STATE



WASH FACILITY PROVISION OF BOREHOLE AT GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL RIGASA (MAIN) KADUNA STATE



WASH FACILITY PROVISION OF BOREHOLE AT GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL, UGWAN BORO, KADUNA STATE



RENOVATED SCHOOL BUILDINGS IN ONE OF SCHOOLS IN BORNO STATE



RENOVATED LABORATORY IN ONE OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BORNO STATE

Objective 1: Construction and renovation of classrooms and provision of teaching and learning materials



PLATEAU STATE GOVERNOR SIMON LALONG AT THE FLAG OFF CEREMONY OF FINANCIAL INCENTIVES TO STUDENTS IN THE STATE



THE FIRST LADY OF EKITI STATE ERELU BISI FAYEMI WITH TRADITIONAL RULERS AT THE FLAG OFF CEREMONY FOR THE DISBURSEMENT OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GRANT (SIG) TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN EKITI STATE.



STUDENTS UNDERGOING DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS TRAINING IN BORNO STATE



THE EMIR OF ZAZAU HRH AHMED NUHU BAMALLI RECEIVING AN AGILE SOUVENIR FROM KADUNA STATE AGILE COORDINATOR HAJIA MARYAM SANI DURING AN ADVOCACY COURTESY VISIT



SBMC MEMBERS OF NEW ERA COLLEGE ODE-EKITI COMPRISING OF STUDENTS, TEACHERS, NON-TEACHING STAFF, PARENTS, RELIGIOUS & TRADITIONAL LEADERS, MEMBERS OF STATE EDUCATION BOARD AND OTHER STAKE HOLDERS. EKITI STATE



STUDENTS UNDERGOING DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS TRAINING IN BORNO STATE



AGILE NPCU MEETING WITH MINISTER OF WOMEN AFFAIRS PAULINE TALLEN



AGILE STATE COORDINATOR FOR KADUNA MRS MARYAM DANGAJI AND SOME BENEFICIARIES OF FINANCIAL INCENTIVES AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE PROGRAMME RECENTLY IN KADUNA.



THE NATIONAL PROJECT COORDINATOR, MRS. AMINA BUBA HARUNA, WITH STUDENTS OF ADDO COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL, ADO-EKITI, DURING THE NPCU'S VISIT TO EKITI STATE.

Objective 2: Fostering an enabling environment for girls through advocacy, financial incentives, empowerment and life skill training using the safe space approach.



THE NPCU AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE IMPLEMENTING STATES AT THE END OF A CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP IN KANO STATE.



TEACHERS IN KEBBI STATE DURING CAPACITY BUILDING SESSION



TEACHERS IN KEBBI STATE DURING CAPACITY BUILDING SESSION

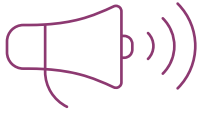


SENSITIZATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING SESSION FOR SBMC MEMBERS IN KANO STATE



TEACHERS IN KEBBI STATE DURING CAPACITY BUILDING SESSION

Objective 3: Project management and system strengthening. This supports efforts to strengthen the institutional capacity of Federal and State Governments to support girls' education and empowerment.



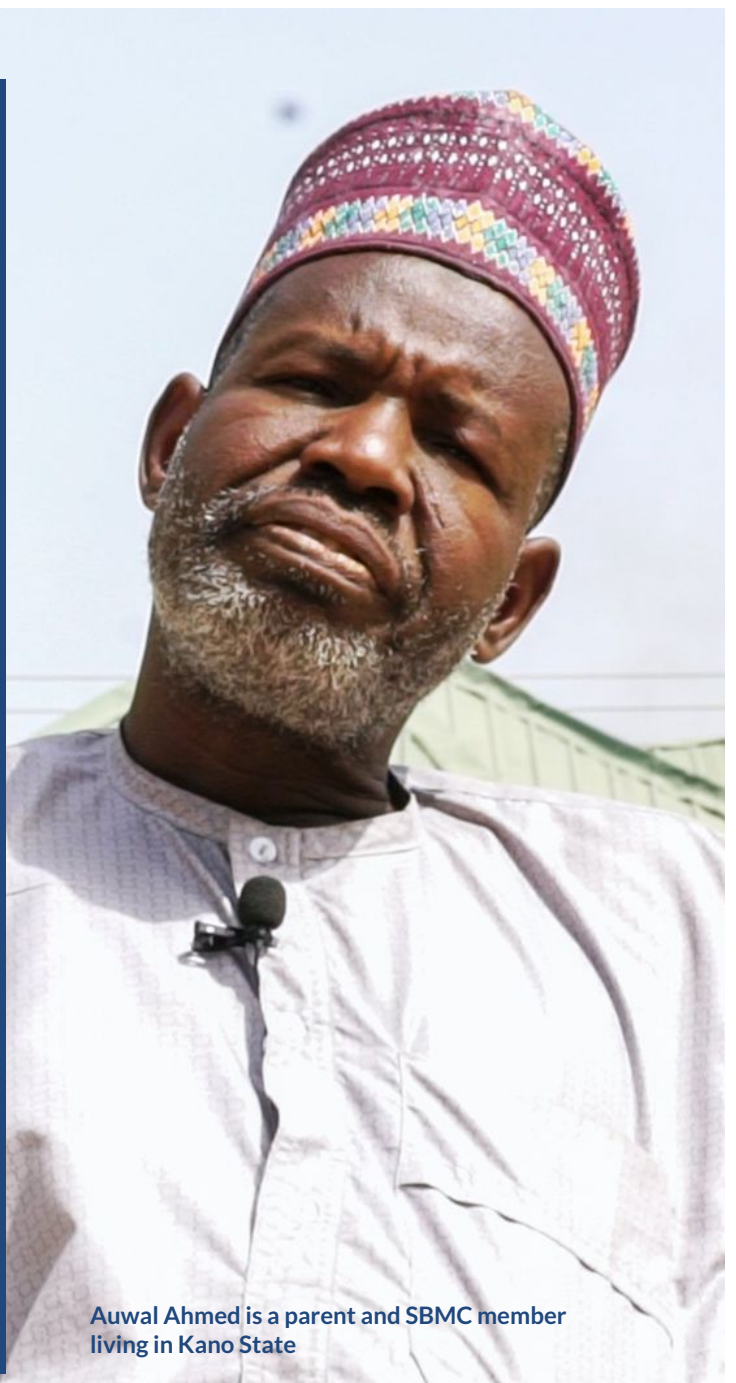
Educating Her: Why Girls Will Save the World

**“To educate a girl means to educate a nation”. - Lawan Abba Wakilbe,
the Commissioner of Education in Borno State, Northeast Nigeria.**

Shettima Abba Lawal, a middle-aged man living in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state in Northeast Nigeria, took his ailing old mother to the general hospital. After waiting for hours to see a doctor, they hit a snag. There are very few doctors on duty that day, and the particular doctor available to them had been attending to scores of patients and the waiting list seemed endless. The doctor came to Shettima and announced that the earliest his mother can be attended to is in a week's time. Shettima was dejected.

“My mother was not happy at all”, says Shettima when narrating his ordeal in getting basic healthcare service in Maiduguri. Both him and his mom were already petrified of the reality that it's a male doctor that was available in the general hospital.

In the muslim-populated northern Nigeria, adherents of Islam prefer same-sex doctor-patient consultation and service. A male doctor to a male patient and a female doctor to a female patient. But with a dearth of female doctors, the males have had to step in – even in situations where they are not desired by the patient. Not that it's their fault. It's a big problem that has gotten even bigger with the introduction of insurgency in the region. Eventually, Shettima and his mother got a surprise happy ending but the journey was long in the making. We will get to that soon and how people with quick and agile thinking realised that it is girls that would save the world.



Auwal Ahmed is a parent and SBMC member living in Kano State

However, to go forward, there is need to go back... back in time.

The devastation brought upon the northeast by Boko Haram insurgency is no longer news. Over 40,000 women have been made widows and over 50,000 children orphaned.

In Hausa, the main language spoken in Northern Nigeria, Boko Haram means Western education is forbidden. True to it, Boko Haram has heavily targeted the country's education system, assaulting schools, students, and teachers in Northeast Nigeria and disrupting access to education and social services, especially for young girls who are already marginalized due to poverty and socio-religious beliefs such as early marriage for girls. Teachers have been threatened too, and in some cases, killed. The destruction of 5,000 classrooms has made rebuilding the education sector a challenging task, but the people are resilient. They understand that there is need to fill the obvious gaps in skilled personnel across all sectors - healthcare, construction, agriculture - so that Shettima and his mother will not have to wait long hours at the hospital and so that they can have the female doctor they desire. This is crucial to their accessibility to qualitative health care.



“Girl-child education is a must. A lot of people did not understand this but now we the religious leaders are educating people on its importance. It used to be a problem but now we teach people in the mosques, after the usual teaching we always bring up other teachings like the girl-child education. We always give examples of women who have achieved a lot in the society, there are Doctors, professors and lots more. They help their parents and their families including men. All these is because they are educated”

- Shettima Abba Lawal.

Shettima Abba Lawal has always believed that formal (Western) education is crucial to the wellbeing and growth of his community. As an Islamic scholar, he teaches his congregants the importance of education for all, especially the adolescent girls. His belief and advocacy for education led to his being the chairman of the School Based Management Committee (SBMC) of his children's school. SBMC is a voluntary body of parents, teachers, education authorities, community members and influencers tasked with looking after a school.

The Commissioner of Education in Borno state, Lawan Abba Wakilbe, shares Shettima's opinion about educating girls. He believes that education is the key to rebuilding and growing the state even stronger. Wakilbe and other

stakeholders understand that educating both genders is crucial to the growth and development of Borno State. So, he's personally leading the state alongside six other states across the country to effectively get girls in school, keep them in school and ensure they complete their secondary education, by providing the needed conducive environment to excel at their studies.

All the needed interventions/measures to ensure improved secondary education opportunities for adolescent girls are currently being implemented by the AGILE Project in the participating states of Borno, Ekiti, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, and Plateau.



The project is helping Wakilbe and Shettima get more girls back in school. And this is true across other states.

Elizabeth Samson, a student at Government Girls Comprehensive in Aliero, Kebbi state, initially stopped going to school due to the lack of proper facilities. AGILE's improvements in the school, including better classrooms and toilets, have renewed her interest in education. "I want to be a medical doctor in the future, and I know I am on the right path because I am learning very well," says Elizabeth.

Aha! A girl who wants to be a medical doctor in the future and Shettima and his mother's ordeal at the hospital. Let's get back to that story shall we?

After their doctor's appointment got pushed by a week, Shettima and his mother were in a pickle, they needed to see a doctor desperately. As they sat in the hospital lobby pondering what to do next, a female doctor recognized Shettima and beckoned to a hospital staff to fetch them. Shettima says: *"She (doctor) asked if I am Mallam Shettima, and I said yes, I am the one. She bent down and greeted me very well. She asked if I recognize her and I said no. She reminded me that I was her teacher and the types of things I taught them and the encouragement I gave them is what pushed her to become a medical doctor. She did not only help me, she also took the files of five other people who were supposed to see the other doctor that left and attended to them. The people were surprised and asked who I am, they were told I was a teacher at a secondary school"*.

AGILE has made a significant impact on the communities and schools it serves, with more female students enrolling in schools and winning state-wide competitions. Jemilan Yakansai, a teacher in Kano, attests to the success of AGILE and the importance of vocational education for girls. "Vocational empowerment is important because when they get it, they are helpful to all," says Yakansai.



Girls enjoying better hygiene facility at Government Girls Comprehensive School Aliero in Kebbi State

Like Shettima, the renewed passion for educating girls is gaining momentum, and the girls themselves who are driving change. Ekiti state in Southwest Nigeria was renowned for having one of the highest numbers of professors in the country. But in recent times, a high teenage pregnancy rate has prevented many girls from receiving an education. The ones in school however, are pushing their peers back to school, becoming advocates selling the importance of education to girls. This has led to increased interest in formal education.

For a nation to reach its full potential, equal access to education for all genders is essential, and this can be achieved regardless of a girl's status, married early or not.

Shettima recalls a case he recently helped settle where a boy wanted to marry a girl. According to Shettima, the father of the girl reached out to him because he was worried his daughter's education will stall if she married the boy. He wanted assurances. So Shettima got the love-struck boy to promise that the girl will finish secondary school and go to a higher institution, that's the only condition that he will be allowed to marry his friend's daughter.

"The boy agreed and I signed as a witness. So, in our town here in Maiduguri, more girls go to school", says Shettima.

If this trend continues, and more girls have the opportunity to become like the female doctor who came to Shettima's mom's rescue, the future looks bright for Nigeria.





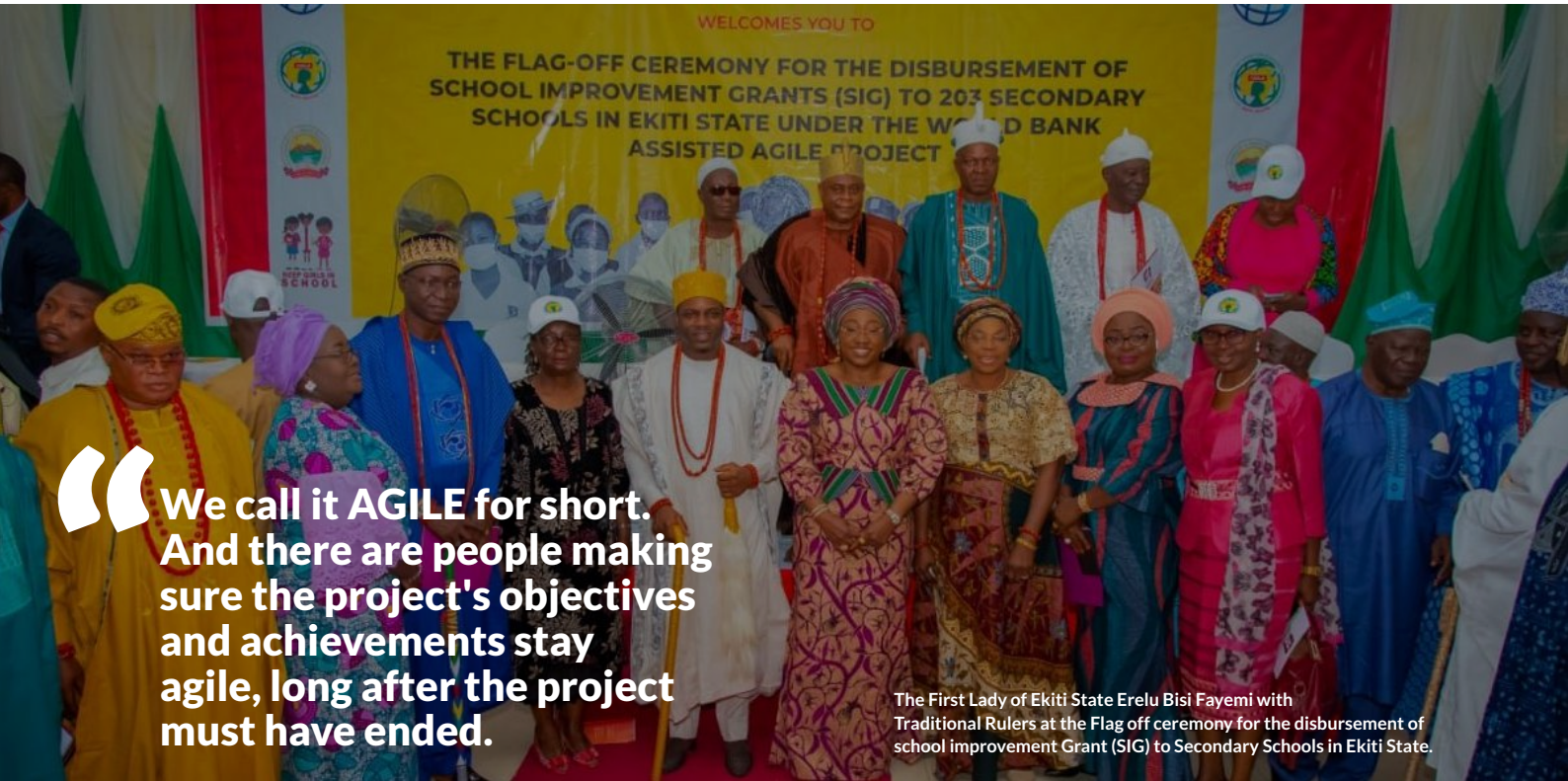
The Corner Stone Sustaining Structures

Alhaji Idris Yinusa Ayodeji, the chairman of the school-Based Management Committee (SBMC) of New Era College in Ode-Ekiti, Ekiti state, Southwest Nigeria, says besides capacity building sessions that have taken place, there is a symbiotic relationship between the SBMC and school authorities with the full support of the traditional ruler on how all will work together to safeguard the success stories that stemmed from the AGILE project. The results from the project are in themselves enough motivation for everyone in the community to keep ensuring better, continuous and complete secondary education for their children.

And this is the general feeling across the 16 local government areas the AGILE project is being executed.

A popular Yoruba proverb goes like “one hand cannot lift a heavy load all the way to the head”. Meaning, every hand available is needed for success all the way to the pinnacle. Easier said than done. But for some people, it’s better done than not.

**The Emir of Zazau
HRH Ahmed Nuhu
Bamalli receiving an
AGILE souvenir from
Kaduna State AGILE
Coordinator Hajia
Maryam Sani during
an advocacy courtesy
visit**



“ We call it AGILE for short. And there are people making sure the project's objectives and achievements stay agile, long after the project must have ended.

The First Lady of Ekiti State Erelu Bisi Fayemi with Traditional Rulers at the Flag off ceremony for the disbursement of school improvement Grant (SIG) to Secondary Schools in Ekiti State.

In Plateau state, the SBMC of participating schools are following in the same vein, owning the AGILE project at community level. Mrs Elizabeth Petkwap Wapmuk, the state's Commissioner for secondary education says whatever challenges arise during or after the project, the reality is that the communities have stepped up their acts to own the AGILE Project in their respective domains. They work together to seek ways to surmount the challenges that crop up in the cause of the project's implementation, thus ensuring sustainability.

Engaging all stakeholders that can carry the project on even after AGILE spans out was not the only measures Kaduna state took. They took it further by creating communication campaigns that can last for a long time and not just in the mind but as well as in the faces. From toll-free call-in programmes, billboards, TV and radio drama series, even learning materials, the communication campaign is above all fixated on modelling good practices and getting the buy-in influencers in communities.

Media content have been carefully designed and produced to show the linkage between education and good life, better economic opportunities for families and giving inspiration to girls and stakeholders to continue being part of and creating more success stories.

Borno is not far behind despite the security challenges being faced in the state due to the Boko Haram insurgency. Like Kaduna, the state is using communication campaigns as a tool for sustaining the ideals of the project. This is because they acknowledge that the involvement of stakeholders at the grassroots/ community levels is crucial to the sustainability of the efforts geared at enuring that these girls enrol for, remain in, and complete their secondary education.





**EDUCATION IS GOOD.
THAT IS A FACT.
IT IS A FACT WE CAN ALL AGREE ON.**

According to UNESCO estimates, around the world, 129 million girls are out of school, including 32 million of primary school age, and 97 million of secondary school age.

In Nigeria, according to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), nearly 30% of girls in Nigeria have experienced physical violence by the age of 15, with COVID-19 lockdowns in major cities across the country resulting in an increase in violence against women and girls in Nigeria. Along with poverty and socio-cultural norms and according to the World Bank, gender-based violence (GBV) prevents girls from accessing and completing education – often girls are forced to walk long distances to school placing them at an increased risk of violence and many experience violence while schooling.

Most recent data estimates that approximately 60 million girls are sexually assaulted on their way to or at school every year.

This often has serious consequences for their mental and physical health and overall well-being leading to lower attendance and higher dropout rates. An estimated 246 million children experience violence in and around school every year.

So, ending school-related gender-based violence/exploitation and providing safe spaces for girls to learn is critical. While for decades the Nigerian community has placed premium on boys' education, we continue to work on the girls we want.

It is largely dependent on 'a community of bodies and individuals' with common interest to get the girl they want – educated, enlightened and empowered. The belief is that a girl educated is for the good of the community. The Nigerian government through the Federal Ministries of Education, Finance, Budget and National Planning, Women Affairs, Environment, and several other organizations such as the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, European Union etc. have formed a community determined to ensure equal access for both boys and girls.

A clear example of the coming together of different people from different organizations is the AGILE project, an initiative aimed at keeping girls in school.



Training participants during practical Safe Spaces session with Center for Girls Education director in Kaduna State

The Federal Ministry of Education, alongside its implementing and development partners has put heads, skills and resources together to design a plan under the AGILE project called Safe Space. This Safe Space is included in component two of the project and the aim is to promote the importance of the need for a safe, enabling, and inclusive learning environment, including prevention and mitigation of Gender Based Violence, (GBV)/ Sexual Exploitation Acts (SEA), and ensuring

a specific focus on the inclusion of learners living with disabilities.

Adolescents are caught between being a child and an adult. They say they are no longer children yet they are not adults. They need life skills to help them navigate life. They have developmental issues, puberty issues, relationship issues. For example, how do girls say 'no' and people understand they mean no? How can they negotiate their opinion and their goals?

“
Ending school-related gender-based violence/ exploitation and providing a safe space for girls to learn is critical.
 ”

How does this work?

AGILE is engaging with psychosocial experts to go to secondary schools and empower girls with these critical life skills knowledge for navigating adulthood and digital literacy skills. The objective is to empower girls with different skill sets which will be useful as they transition to adulthood.

A Safe Spaces approach is being used to deliver these life skills training in schools.

The experts deployed by AGILE to carry these trainings also incorporate non-discrimination sensitization, which focuses on marginalized groups, such as girls with disabilities. All these are done in an environment of confidentiality and trust

Building facilities in schools is also another way of ensuring safe spaces. Good hygiene facilities help girls learn

better. Not only that, they also build their mental capabilities. Because of all these, the girls themselves have become change agents. Not all young people have the opportunity to be in these safe spaces but the ones who are, go on school breaks and share their experiences with others and give feedback to mentors. By so doing, they are helping to change their communities.



Girls posing beside a signpost against gender-based violence at Ayo-Daramola Memorial High School in Ekiti State.

UP AND RUNNING: A PRESIDENTIAL STAMP

Back in January 2020, while the majority of global citizens were largely unaware of the corona virus that was spreading across the globe, President Muhammadu Buhari was making a bold statement that would greatly enhance the growth and development of the country.

“The well-being of women and girls remain a pivotal indicator of how well any nation is doing in driving her developmental plans.”

President Muhammadu Buhari



President Muhammadu Buhari meeting a secondary school student during the launching of the AGILE project.

“A key priority of our government is the development and implementation of social inclusion and economic sustenance policies. Our determination is to ensure that many people feel the impact of economic growth and prosperity.

“In particular, we are emphasising education of the girl-child. The high level of out-of-school girls or those unable to complete their schooling due to socio-economic pressures is disturbing and must be addressed”.

Fast forward three years later, the President emphatically put in place systems that will deliver on his pledge by inaugurating the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment, (AGILE) project. He also launched the High-Level Advisory Council, (HLAC) to support women and girls' projects and initiatives.

How is this significant you might ask? It is a big step towards upholding the education and empowerment of Nigerian women and girls in Nigeria. The essence of HLAC is to effectively coordinate women empowerment-focused programmes and initiatives like AGILE and others, such as the National Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Policy

Dialogue, and Nigeria for Women Project Scale-Up (NFWP-SU).

The focus of the AGILE project is to impact the lives of 40 million Nigerians. It has been established that educating and empowering women would help in exploring and enhancing their potentials to be productive members of society, thereby contributing to the growth of the country.



He also noted that while there has been progress, “we are not unmindful of the gaps associated with harnessing the available resources of government, the innovation and efficiency of the private sector, and the technical expertise of our social and development sector partners to drive women's and girls' empowerment outcomes.”



Hajia Binta Abdulkadir,
Director of Senior Secondary Education, Federal Ministry of Education

A Child of Hope

Over the years and before the AGILE project, a lot of research went into identifying some of the problems affecting adolescent girls, some of them included access to secondary school, retention after enrolment, completion, and transition. Other factors were cultural and social factors such as early marriage and teenage pregnancy, insecurity and recently COVID-19, which caused a staggered calendar in education.

Hajia Binta Abdulkadir had to take in all these and along with colleagues, find solutions. Because, as the Director of Senior Secondary Education Ministry of Education, it is one of her primary responsibilities to ensure that adolescent girls go to and complete secondary school.

She believes the importance of educating the girl child cannot be over emphasized.

“The education of the girl child should not just equip the girl economically but should also equip her socially and even politically. The female gender has been found to contribute immensely to the growth and development of any given society especially when they are educated.”



Ongoing construction and renovation of classroom blocks and toilets in schools around Plateau State.

Having identified the major problems militating against adolescent girls' education, solutions were carefully curated to tackle these problems to ensure that girls at the critical adolescent stage get the requisite education to prepare them for the adulthood journey.

Hajia Abdulkadir says as part of fostering an enabling environment for girls, traditional and religious leaders were sought to promote

behavioural change through communication in their domain to militate against cultural practices that hinder girls' education.

“Fundamentally, a friendly learning environment in school is what attracts learners. The ministry is leaving no stone unturned in making sure that children learn skills in school that will make them better individuals and be well equipped.” She hopes that the AGILE project

will help mop up a lot of street children, girls especially, to go back to and stay in school to complete their secondary education, then transition to higher institution.

As evident across the participating states, implementation has started and in some cases, results are becoming apparent.

Hajia Abdulkadir believes the future for adolescent girls in Nigeria looks good.



Ongoing construction and renovation of classroom blocks at JSS BUKURU Plateau State.

PLATEAU



AGILE Plateau distributing digital literacy Skills devices to secondary schools in the state

NATIONAL PROJECT COORDINATING UNIT



The Executive Governor of Katsina State, Rt. Hon. Aminu Bello Masari(4th left); the TTL, Aisha Garba(3rd left); AGILE Project's DNPC, Mrs. Ajanigo Abuka(7th right); other members of the World Bank, AGILE team members(Federal and State levels) and development partners during the Project's implementation monitoring visit to the state.

KANO



PLANTING OF TREES IN BY ECO CLUB MEMBERS IN ONE OF THE AGILE SCHOOLS IN KANO STATE

One of the School's renovated WASH facilities



The National Project Coordinator, Mrs. Amina Buba Haruna (L) with her Deputy, Mrs. Abuka Ajanigo



Members of the National Project Coordinating Unit(NPCU) at the Project's Implementation Support Mission(ISM) that took place in December, 2022.



Renovated Government Secondary school, Sheka



Members of the National Project Coordinating Unit(NPCU) at the Project's Implementation Support Mission(ISM) that took place in December, 2022.



Members of the National Project Coordinating Unit(NPCU) at the Project's Implementation Support Mission(ISM) that took place in December, 2022.

KATSINA



Katsina State Governor, Rt. Hon. Aminu Bello Masari flagging off the disbursement of Financial Incentives to beneficiaries in the state



The First Lady of Ekiti State, Dr. Olayemi Oyebanji distributing laptops to students during the launch of the AGILE Project in the State.



Students with their laptops



School children undergoing vocational training in Katsina State.

KEBBI



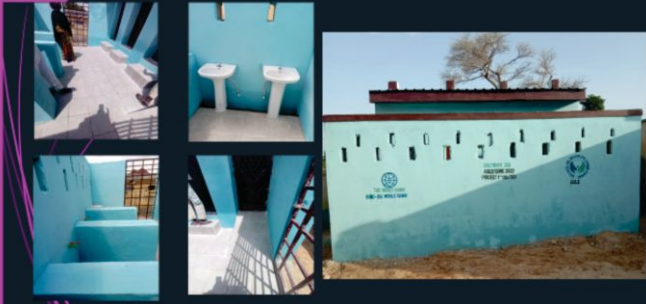
One of the AGILE Billboards on the streets of Kebbi State



Kebbi SPIU on an advocacy visit to Argungu Emirate Council

PICTURES OF SIGs (Completed Toilet)

GALTIMARI JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL (COMPLETED TOILET)



PICTURES OF SIGs



GDSS Mudi Kamba Before Renovation

GDSS Mudi Kamba After Renovation



GDSS Mungadi Before Renovation

GDSS Mungadi After Renovation

PICTURES OF SIGs

Government College Malduguri



Main Gate Renovation



PICTURES OF SIGs



JSS Bahindi Before Renovation



JSS Bahindi After Renovation



JSS Bandam Before Renovation



JSS Bandam After Renovation



Federal Ministry of Education



WORLD BANK GROUP

AGILE IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS



FEDERAL MINISTRY OF HEALTH



FEDERAL MINISTRY OF BUDGET AND NATIONAL PLANNING



FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT