



agile



Ruling the World

Parents Dream Big for Their Girls in Nigeria"

CASH APP:

How AGILE's Conditional Cash Transfer is Keeping Girls in School

Understanding AGILE

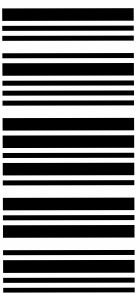
Educating Her:

Why Girls Will Save the World

IF YOU BUILD IT

The Importance of Building a Conducive Environment for Adolescent Girls Education

AGILE WORLD OF WONDERS



FOREWARD



Mrs. Amina Haruna

National Project Coordinator,

Adolescent Girls' Initiative for Learning and Empowerment, AGILE

In our quarterly magazine, The importance of ethical conduct in the classroom is highlighted, with a focus on respect and well-being being essential for effective learning. The challenges of accessing secondary education for girls are explored, and the role of various stakeholders, including government, community, religious leaders, and girls themselves, is identified. The Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE) Project, a 5-year initiative supported by the Federal Government and the World Bank, aims to improve secondary education opportunities for adolescent girls in selected states in Nigeria.

The project aims to address socio-cultural/religious norms and biases that hinder girls' access to education through Communication and Behavioural Change Campaigns. This publication seeks to showcase the impact of the project and how to sustain the progress beyond its lifespan.

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 attending 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 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, albeit prevailing social and religious norms that create barriers for the girl child. 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. Education is very important especially for the girl child, 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 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, 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 is preventing young girls from pursuing formal education. In some states, cultural beliefs, and the inability of parents to pay for school expenses play a significant role. 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 working in seven states to rebuild and construct new schools, 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 AGILE. "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 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, Northwest Nigeria who wants to become a graphics 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 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 “they did not like coming 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. In some public schools, students are subjected to sitting on the floor in poorly built or uncompleted makeshift classrooms while others learn under the shade of trees.

Many public schools in Nigeria are substandard, lacking basic sanitary rooms, health facilities, and clean drinking water, classrooms, furniture, lack of electricity, and teaching equipment.

**IF
YOU
BUILD
IT**

**AISHA GOES
TO SCHOOL**

BUILD IT

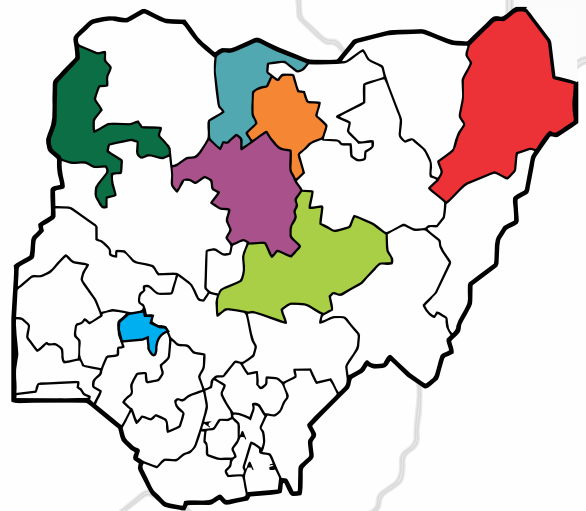
To counter this, the Nigerian government swung into action through the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE) project. The project has helped build new classrooms, toilets, chairs, and desks in schools across seven states in Nigeria, with **over 5,168 renovated or newly built 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 projects small grant scheme. And another 108 toilets renovated and 41 toilets upgraded. One sure way to encourage girl-child educate is by improving the hygiene conditions available in schools for an adolescent girl.



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increased
GIRL CHILD
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Another 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. For many parents in Nigeria ability to dream or achieve their dreams for the children is hindered as many factors arise, from funds, school infrastructure, to security and loads more.

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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. Despite her meagre income, she has had to choose which of her children would be able to attend school.

Lami Jonathan lives in Kachia, a popular town in southern Kaduna, Northwest Nigeria. She is dreaming big for her daughter who attends Girls 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.

But she has her concerns.

“They (students) did 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 wear to ease themselves.”

These varying issues has prompted the Nigerian government to come in and ease the challenges faced by secondary school girls in completing their education.

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 has 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.

Beneficiaries get N5,000 upon girls' registration and tranches of N15,000 on successful transition to the next grade. Little wonder parents can now achieve their

dreams 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.

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.

“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.”

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.

“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

Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi is a prominent Emirati politician and businesswoman who has made significant contributions to the development of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the wider Middle East.



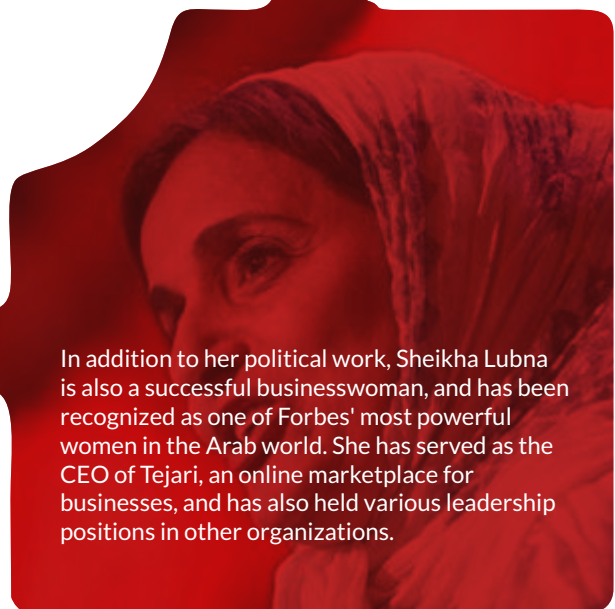
Born in 1961 in Dubai, Sheikha Lubna holds a degree in computer science and has worked in the technology sector before becoming a prominent figure in politics.



She served as the UAE's Minister of Foreign Trade from 2004 to 2008, and as the Minister of International Cooperation and Development from 2008 to 2017.



During her tenure as a minister, she worked to promote trade and economic development in the UAE and the wider region, and was instrumental in developing the UAE's economic relations with other countries.



In addition to her political work, Sheikha Lubna is also a successful businesswoman, and has been recognized as one of Forbes' most powerful women in the Arab world. She has served as the CEO of Tejari, an online marketplace for businesses, and has also held various leadership positions in other organizations.

Throughout her career, Sheikha Lubna has been committed to promoting education as a means of promoting development and progress. She has been a vocal advocate for women's education and empowerment, and has spoken about the need to invest in education and technology to drive economic growth and development in the region.

Sheikha Lubna's contributions to the UAE and the wider Middle East have been significant, and her commitment to promoting education and economic development has helped to drive progress and prosperity in the region. Today, she continues to be a role model for young women in the UAE and beyond, and a symbol of female empowerment and leadership.

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

CASH APP: How AGILE's Conditional Cash Transfer is Keeping Girls in School



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The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 put a lot of Nigerians under severe economic strain, thereby forcing many to obtain personal loans from digital platforms proposing collateral-free loans. They were called 'Cash App'.

These Cash Apps became so popular that an Afrobeats hit song was produced titled “Cash App” and featuring popular artistes including Bella Shmurda, Zlatan & Lincoln. The song has over 21 million views on Bella Shmurda's official YouTube account. It's a catchy and vibey tune to garner such attentions but it's more about the fact that 'Cash App' resonates a lot with Nigerians.

On Google search, type in 'Cash App', one of the top results you get is a question from users asking "Does Cash App work in Nigeria"?

The answer goes like this "Cash App is great, according to reviews from existing users. However, it's not available in Nigeria and many other countries". Cash App, has created by the developer Square Inc, is meant to be an easy way to send, spend, save, and invest money. But those two words mean a lot more to an average Nigerian.



These Cash Apps became so popular that an Afrobeats hit song was produced titled "Cash App" and featuring popular artistes including Bella Shmurda, Zlatan & Lincoln. The song has over 21 million views on Bella Shmurda's official YouTube account. It's a catchy and vibey tune to garner such attentions but it's more about the fact that 'Cash App' resonates a lot with Nigerians.

Due to this, individuals bowed to other means of survival, and some, unfortunately, got stuck in the web of predatory moneylending apps. These fraudulent and predatory

digital lending apps conceal themselves as platforms where you can access fast loans with no collateral. However, they demand a plethora of data such as the applicant's Bank Verification Number (BVN), name, permission to take picture and video recording, access to location, contact, media, and files on devices.

Due to prevailing economic conditions, many Nigerians run to these platforms funds to meet immediate needs such as paying for overdue rent, getting food for the

family, and paying of school fees. These funds are so quick and easily accessible that credit alert happens in minutes. But it comes with a distasteful catch. After all, they are loan sharks who exploit financial vulnerabilities of Nigerians struggling to keep up. While many Nigerians have also formed the habit of taking loans from these platforms without an intention to pay back, the loan sharks are

While the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) continues to battle these loan sharks, the fight may be far from over as the lending apps continue their activities of blackmailing and invading the privacy of their customers.

According to many parents, paying school fees and educational materials like books and uniforms can be quite tasking, leaving many children at home and 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 northern part of the country. As of October 2022, almost two years later, 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.

ONE OF THESE IS THE CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER (CCT).

Hauwa Jedda, a young girl who values education, is one such beneficiary of the program. She came from a family that could not afford her school supplies, but with the help of CCT, 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 from CCT to buy school supplies and start a small business. With the CCT program, 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.



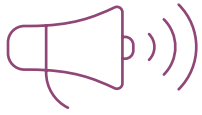
How it works

CCT provides 5,000 Naira upon registration in the Girls Scholarship Program (GSP), with a second tranche of 1,500 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 Nigerian government with funding from the World Bank. It operates in 7 states, including Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Plateau, Borno, and Ekiti.

Things looking up

Data from local and international organizations shows that many children are denied access to education due to socio-cultural and financial reasons, with girls often being at a disadvantage. AGILE's CCT initiative is changing that, providing equal opportunities for all girls to get an education. In Kaduna, an estimated 35,575 beneficiaries from all the 23 LGAs, Katsina has 54,741 girls in school because of the CCT initiative. While Plateau and Kano have 41,646 and 45,850 girls in schools. The numbers are confounding gives hope of things looking up.



Educating Her: Why Girls Will Save the World

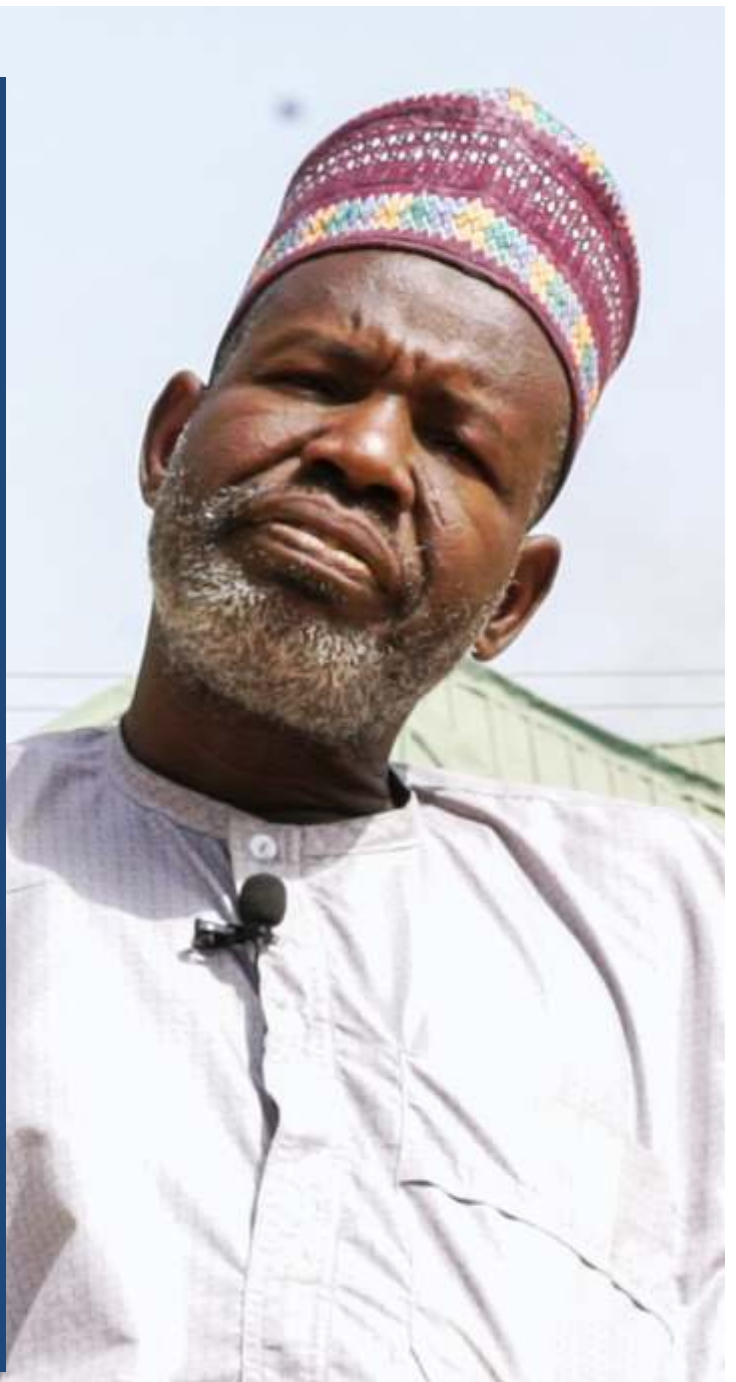
**“To educate a girl means to educate a nation”. - Lawan Abba Wakilbe,
the commissioner for education in Borno state, Northeast Nigeria.**

Shettima Abba Lawal, a middle-age 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 has been attending to scores of patients and the waiting list seems 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 about the reality that it's a male doctor that is available in the general hospital.

In the Muslim-majority northern Nigeria, adherents of the Islam religion 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 got even bigger with the introduction of insurgency in the region.

Eventually, Shettima and his mother got a surprise happy ending but the journey took sometime in the making. We will get to that soon and how some people with a quick and agile approach to thinking realized that it is girls who will save the world.





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

It's no longer news the devastation brought on by Boko Haram's insurgency on the people living in Nigeria's Northeast and other parts of the country. 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 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 particular one is crucial.



“Girl child education is a must. A lot of people did not understand this but now we the religious leaders are educating people. 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 in ensuring formal education, what Boko Haram terms 'Western', is crucial to the wellbeing and growth of his community. As an Islamic scholar, he teaches in sermons about the importance of education for all, including girls. He believes so strongly as to become the chairman of the School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) at his children's school. For the un-schooled (pun intended), SBMC is a voluntary body of parents, teachers, education authorities, community members and influencers tasked with looking after a school.

The Commissioner for 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 the Borno State. So, he's personally leading the state in lock-step alongside six other states across the country to effectively get girls in school, keep them in school and provide all they need to excel.

This is under the AGILE project, an initiative from the Nigerian government's Federal Ministry of Education. AGILE stands for the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment. Along with Borno, six other states are involved in the project. These are Kebbi, Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Plateau and Ekiti.

The project is helping Wakile 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.



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 is leading to increased interest in formal education. Thankfully and in most part due to the AGILE project, 111,546 students were reached.

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 girls' status, married early or not.

Shettima recalls a case he recently help 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 marries 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 it's people.





The Corner Stone Sustaining Structures

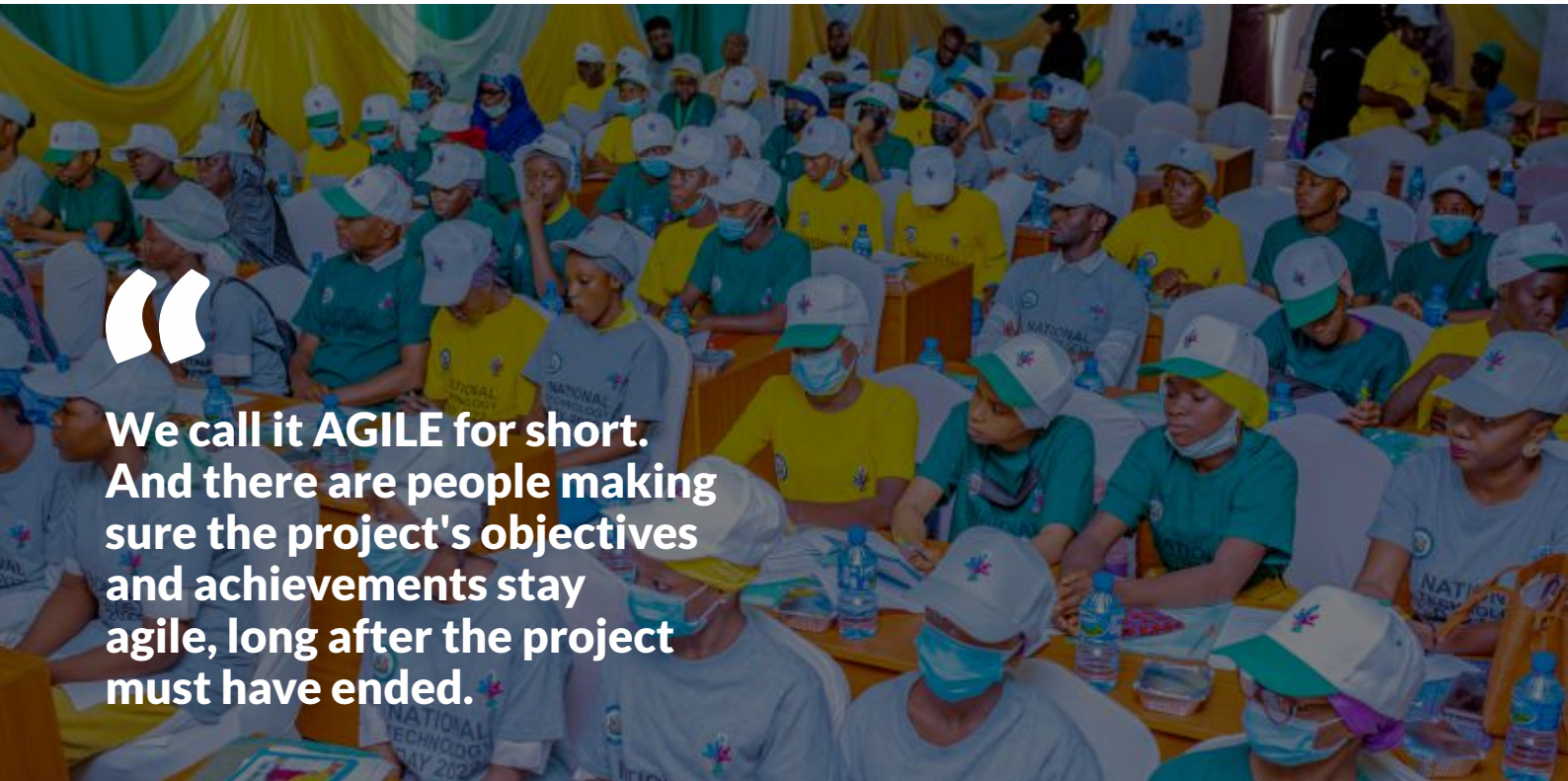
Says Alhaji Idris Yinusa Ayodeji, the chairman of the school-Based Management Committee (SBMC) of [insert name of school] in Ode-Ekiti, Ekiti state, Southwest Nigeria. He says besides capacity building sessions that have taken place, there is a symbiotic relationship between the SBMC and school authorities 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.

“His Majesty, the Olode of Ode has instructed everyone in the community about the roles they have to play to make sure the success recorded by the project is sustained”.

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

Funded by the World Bank, the Nigerian government through the Federal Ministry of Education is implementing a project called the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment. The aim of the project is to ensure girl-child education and that girls complete secondary education in a conducive environment.

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. This might be the thought driving HRM the Olode of Ode in Ode-Ekiti, [insert name], when he made a rallying call to his constituency.



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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.

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 commissioner for secondary education says whatever challenges arise during or after the project, the fact that the communities through the SBMC have owned the project, they come together as a community to make sure these challenges have solutions. This ensures 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 AGILE project are using communication campaigns as tool for sustaining the ideals of the project. This is because they recognise that the need to involve stakeholders at community level is essential to the sustainability of ensuring girls stay in school and complete secondary education. Therefore, messages are being disseminated in not just English, but in local languages such as Kanuri, Hausa and Babur Bura.



SAFE SPACE:

THE GIRLS WE WANT

Education is a vital aspect of life and is essential for the development of a community. Everyone in a community benefits from education, and it contributes to creating a stable and resilient society that provides equal opportunities for individuals to fulfil their potential.

However, several obstacles, such as poverty, gender-based violence, and underage marriage, prevent girls from accessing education. As a result, many girls drop out of school, leading to a decrease in their overall well-being and mental and physical health. Creating a safe environment for girls to learn is crucial, and the Nigerian government, along with several organizations, is working towards providing equal access to education for both boys and girls.

-The Spotlight Initiative is one such project aimed at ending school-related gender-based violence and providing psycho-social support to girls in secondary schools-.

The Federal Ministry of Education have been key in the implementation of the project. One of the things they realized quickly was that providing safe space for learning, including proper hygienic practices, is important in keeping girls in school. They introduced lessons on menstrual hygiene and provided sanitary pads for teenage girls attending secondary school.

Additionally, the AGILE project, a joint initiative between different organizations, focuses on providing inclusive and equitable education for marginalized girls in Nigeria. It takes a community of bodies and individuals with a common interest in educating and empowering girls to make a difference.

UP AND RUNNING: A PRESIDENTIAL STAMP

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

“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.

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.”

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 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.



“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



Federal Ministry
of Education



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