



Until we are all equal

A life-skills session in Borno state



# Education in Emergencies in Nigeria

This wide-ranging project connects children, youth, parents and communities to ensure safe education – and so much more.

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## Project facts

**WHAT:** Education in Emergencies in Nigeria is a Plan International project – in partnership with Global Affairs Canada, CHAD International and GOALPrime Nigeria – that supports education for children and youth affected by conflict and crisis.

**WHO:** Children and youth ages six to 19, their families and communities

**WHERE:** The Borno and Yobe states of northeastern Nigeria

**WHEN:** This project began in December 2019 and will end in December 2023. This report focuses on the fourth year (2022 to 2023) of the project.

### WHY:

- Connects out-of-school children, especially girls, through education
- Creates inclusive learning and supportive community environments
- Advocates for education policies that protect children’s safety and promote girls’ participation



School construction in Borno state

# The First Word

Help girls find refuge in education when they’re surrounded by uncertainty or danger.

Getting an education isn’t just about going to school; it’s the key to unlocking a better future. When children, especially girls, have opportunities to learn without fear, they are equipped with knowledge, skills and a sense of security, confidence and hope.

Education has the incredible ability to break the cycle of poverty and create a foundation for success. Consider the case of Nigeria, where it’s estimated that 18.5 million children are not in school – and more than half of those children are girls. This alarming statistic underscores the importance of bolstering education in this region.

By supporting Plan International’s Education in Emergencies in Nigeria project, you’re investing in a brighter future, in which every child can dream and succeed. This project takes a direct stance against gender inequality. Its goal is to dismantle the barriers that prevent girls from accessing education and staying in school, particularly in the conflict-affected areas of northeastern Nigeria (specifically Borno and Yobe states).

“This is a project from the heart. We implement it with our heart like we are doing a service for our family,” says Gregory Okonofua, a project coordinator with Plan International Nigeria. “Education in Emergencies takes all levels of community into consideration. From the household

to the community to the state, we are ensuring that children are cared for until they’ve completed school.”

Education in Emergencies in Nigeria provides gender-responsive training for teachers, which helps create an inclusive learning environment. It also facilitates learning sessions for parents and offers cash and voucher assistance to keep girls in school. In addition, the project lends support to new construction and the rehabilitation of classrooms, water points and latrines designed with gender responsiveness and accessibility in mind.

In this report, you’ll meet Salamatu, a young girl with speech and hearing differences. After taking part in the project’s life-skills sessions, she has gained confidence and is now teaching her friends sign language. You’ll also get to know Bulau, a dedicated father who, while participating in parenting sessions, learned how to be more engaged with his three daughters. Read on to learn more about their inspiring journeys.

Your support is helping create equal opportunities for children in Nigeria. Through your generosity to the Education in Emergencies in Nigeria project, we are able to provide girls with the tools they need to overcome barriers and reach their full potential. Thank you for being the driving force behind this transformation.



These girls received school materials with the support of vouchers.

Thank you for your continued support.

# The Situation

The Education in Emergencies in Nigeria project is creating new opportunities for children, especially girls, to stay in school.

“Nigeria is facing a massive humanitarian crisis,” says Gregory Okonofua, a project coordinator with Plan International Nigeria. In northeastern Nigeria, 8.3 million people urgently need assistance. In this region, a mix of conflict, poverty, high inflation and limited access to supplies and services to meet basic needs is contributing to alarming levels of hunger and malnutrition. Recent floods have contaminated water sources and caused a cholera outbreak.

Attacks on the education system have also escalated. A decade ago, a Nigerian school was attacked by a non-state



Community members receive training in psychosocial support.

armed group, and 276 female students were abducted. These types of incidents have persisted, hitting particularly hard in the north-central and northwest regions of the country.

The reduced safety of education for girls is casting an unsettling shadow on what lies ahead for them. At the same time, teachers are wrestling with their own worries about getting to school, and parents are caught up in concerns about sending their children to learn. These fears, rooted in the very real possibility of attacks and abductions, paint a sobering picture. However, Okonofua remains hopeful. “Even with all the uncertainty, there are still individuals who choose to bravely attend school, standing firm in their pursuit of knowledge,” he says.

## STAYING OPTIMISTIC

Nigeria is home to roughly 223 million people who speak more than 500 languages, and according to a global survey of 53 countries, Nigerians are some of the most optimistic people in the world. Okonofua says that you can see this optimism shine through in “every nook and cranny of society,” including schools.

“In the average Nigerian classroom, you see excitement,” he says. “You see children who are full of life and who don’t look like the problems they are facing at home. This spirit also radiates from the teachers who stand at the front of the classroom.”

The Education in Emergencies in Nigeria project addresses the fundamental obstacles that stand in the way of children’s education, especially for girls. Collaborating with local partners, Plan International champions the importance of education and teacher training, enhances school facilities to promote inclusivity and provides remedial classes for children who have missed school due to conflicts.



A student reads from the board during an accelerated-learning class.



# The Rundown

In four years, the Education in Emergencies in Nigeria project has achieved the following:

A mother and daughter receive a cash voucher to cover school fees.



**5,040** adolescent girls and boys participated in life-skills training

to boost their confidence and communication skills and to increase their knowledge about gender roles, power dynamics and attitudes, positive masculinities, conflict resolution and self-protection.

**923** teachers participated in training to boost their skills in delivering inclusive education that is sensitive to the needs of girls, children with different abilities and children impacted by conflict.

**172** education officials were engaged to implement policies and guidelines related to protection, inclusion and safety and security in schools, especially for girls.

**5,432** girls received financial support or cash vouchers to cover school fees and materials.

**8** back-to-school communications campaigns – including radio broadcasts and talk shows, informative posters and educational plays and presentations – were launched to raise awareness about the importance of education, especially for girls and children with different abilities. The radio broadcasts alone reached more than 2 million listeners.

**40** schools were renovated or refurbished to become accessible (including the building of water points and gender-separated latrines), and 81 schools received desks.

**60** women participated in a mentorship course to enhance their knowledge about gender equality and inclusion, preventing gender-based violence, inclusion for girls with different abilities, and sexual and reproductive health. These women are mentors for adolescent girls participating in the project.

**520** community-based child-protection committees were established to prevent and respond to child safety risks.

**2,492** adolescent girls, including those with different abilities (like Salamatu – read her story on page 8), attended discussion groups.

**12,819** school and menstrual-health kits (with supplies like learning aids, markers, reusable sanitary pads and soap) were delivered to 5,503 students and 93 schools.

**130** teachers in 42 schools received training to support students with psychosocial care, including counselling, care referrals and other services to address the impacts of conflict.

**3,852** girls attended accelerated-learning programs to catch up on school they missed due to conflict, displacement or having had to drop out.

**15** feedback and complaint systems – such as toll-free phone lines, suggestion boxes in schools and trained trusted adults – were set up so that students can alert authorities about sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse and other safety concerns. So far, 1,258 requests for assistance have been received and resolved.

**3,736** parents of adolescent girls participated in parenting sessions to support their daughters' education and protection.

**37** girls clubs and 37 “boys for girls” clubs were created to foster gender equality and provide peer support for girls, including those with different abilities.

**69** school-based management committees were established and their members trained to advocate for the needs of students to ensure the sustainability and endurance of project activities.

**243** monitoring and mentoring support visits to teachers across project schools were conducted by education supervisors.

**915** traditional community and religious leaders were engaged to promote the importance of girls' education through discussion groups with their communities.

A STORY OF CHANGE

# Finding Her Voice

Salamatu is teaching others how to speak her language.

Salamatu, 11, is an enthusiastic leader in her class, a lively presence in her community and full of smiles. You wouldn't guess that she used to be quiet and isolated.

Salamatu has a hearing and speech impairment that developed as a result of a severe measles infection. She communicates through sign language, which few people in her community understand, so she used to stay home often to avoid interacting with others. Not surprisingly, her confidence took a hit.

That all changed when she joined the life-skills program as part of the Education in Emergencies in Nigeria project. These sessions help adolescents develop self-confidence, communicate assertively and deal with challenges such as bullying, discrimination and gender inequality.

During the sessions, participants are encouraged to share their opinions, nurture their dreams and relate better with their peers. They are also taught to create a welcoming environment in which people with different abilities, like Salamatu, can fully express themselves.



Salamatu has increased her confidence with the help of life-skills sessions.

The life-skills sessions increased Salamatu's confidence by leaps and bounds. She was fully engaged in the activities and was supported by the facilitator and other group members who know sign language to make sure everyone could understand what she was saying. She has even started teaching her peers sign language.

Salamatu's father is incredibly proud of his daughter's progress. "She has changed positively, even at home," he says. "She smiles more and is more playful with her siblings and other children. I have seen real improvements in my daughter, and this gives me so much joy as a father."

**“**I have seen real improvements in my daughter, and this gives me so much joy as a father.”

– Salamatu's father



Bulau credits his happier home life to parenting sessions offered through the Education in Emergencies in Nigeria project.

A STORY OF CHANGE

# A Family Man With a Plan

Bulau has become a better father through connection, communication and change.

"As a father of girls, I now appreciate the need to create and spend time listening to my children. They feel more relaxed around me and are confident to tell me things. It was not like this before; there is a clear difference at home." These are the words of Bulau, a father of three daughters from northeastern Nigeria.

Before he attended parenting sessions as part of the Education in Emergencies in Nigeria project, he says he didn't feel connected with his daughters, was often reactive in the face of conflict and spent lots of time away from home.

But when Bulau began attending the weekly sessions with other fathers in his community, he was inspired to change his ways. During the gatherings, the fathers had opportunities to share their parenting experiences.

"After hearing about the things they were doing at home, I was challenged to improve," recalls Bulau. The engaging discussions helped him gain a deeper understanding of family values and positive parenting practices and how they can improve the psychosocial well-being of children.

One way Bulau now comes through for his daughters is by supporting their education, which he admits he had never prioritized before. "I now find the time to ask them questions about school and check their notebooks to ensure that they are learning well," he says.

Bulau acknowledges the significant impact the sessions have made in his life and his family's. "I do things differently now," he says. "I don't get angry so fast, like before. My wife and children have the power to make decisions without worrying about my reaction, because we now connect more as a family unit and decisions are not just about me alone."

Overall, Bulau believes his personal growth has been immense. "I am now more patient and listen to my children more than before, which has made us closer," he says. "My desire is to continue to practise all that I've learned to have a healthy family life and become a better person and a loving father."

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

# The Power of Community Connections

Three community members talk about speaking up and taking action.

“

The community will embrace every opportunity to mobilize support for education for children, especially girls, because the future of the community and [our] values lies in the hands of these children.”

– A community leader involved in community-based monitoring and accountability

“

Girls’ education is important, but it has been neglected because of the belief that the duty of a woman is to be married to a man and make children, cook for him and keep the house clean. This has led to women not having a voice in the community and [being] forced to adhere to the culture. The intervention of the project has supported them in learning, and their voices are [now] being heard.”

– Mallam, a community member who participated in discussion groups led by traditional leaders

“

The matter should not be whether a person is male or female. The question should be, ‘Is this a human being?’ And if yes, then education is an absolute must.”

– Harira, a student who participated in a discussion group with community leaders



Participants in a girl-friendly discussion and mentorship group

## Thank you for your support

“We’ve made a real difference in these communities, but we’re not finished yet,” says Okonofua. “It’s incredible to see the momentum this project has sparked. So many girls are keen to learn and stick with school. Teachers are taking steps to improve their knowledge and the way they connect with students. Parents are picking up some valuable communication skills, and even boys are getting involved and are eager to learn how they can better support girls. We can reach more people and make an even bigger impact.”

Thank you for your continued support of children like Salamatu and parents like Bulau as they create a brighter future for themselves, their families and their communities. With your help, through the Education in Emergencies in Nigeria project, more children and communities will build their own foundation for success.

**Thank you again for your continued support.**



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**Girls show off their menstrual-health dignity kits.**

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## About Plan International Canada

Plan International Canada strives for a just world that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We stand with children, especially girls, wherever they are oppressed, exploited, left behind or not equally valued. Plan International and Plan International Canada have no political or religious affiliations; however, we do believe in the power of global citizenship. We are a member of a global organization that partners with youth, families, communities, local organizations, supporters, celebrated ambassadors and governments. We collaborate with women-led groups and youth councils in shaping our programs. We work to ensure that children, especially girls, are safe, healthy, educated and empowered.