

Conversations with Local Government Officials on their participation in the Consortium Project, lessons learnt and commitment to sustaining best practices and promising models.



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Summary of findings

This end of project assessment is report as conversations with LGA officials to capture the complex and diverse experience of project implementation in 3 LGAs of the project. Findings suggest that given the realities of low levels of LGA autonomy over planning and budgeting for girls' education the project's expectations and performance indicators may have been too ambitious. Even where LGAs did make budgets for education as in the case of Giwa LGA in Kaduna state, sums allocated doubled between 2013 the baseline year of the project and 2014 when project activities were in full operation. However, the budget for 2015 was only half that of the 2014. Data on releases is not readily available. This feature of girls' education planning and budgeting at the local level suggests that more emphasis should have been placed on advocacy at the state level for increased funding and project sustainability. This feature also suggests that there has been a missed opportunity for the NGOs to target LGAs, building their capacity to plan, budget and mobilize communities to change attitudes to early marriage and support education as an alternative.



The dRPC provided Monitoring and Evaluation technical assistance on the Building Collaboration, Partnerships and Political Commitment to Delay Early Marriage and the Onset of Childbearing in Northern Nigeria project (2013-2015)

Introduction

The development Research and Projects Centre (dRPC) is currently supporting the Consortium of 4 indigenous Nigeria non-governmental organizations working to delay early marriage in Kaduna and Kano states under the rubric of the project - Building Collaboration, Partnerships and Political Commitment to Delay Early Marriage and the Onset of Childbearing in Northern Nigeria. One of the key aims of this project is that of collaboration between local government and the NGOs to build concrete political and financial commitments for delaying early marriage. To do so the project document stated that:

“coalition partners will work with local government to scale-up girls clubs and empowerment camps, two of the best practices featured in the Early Marriage in West Africa report. Each partner will collaborate with one LGA to adapt and implement the proven components of the on-going community engagement, provision of school fees and books, and mentored tutoring and support in safe space girls clubs and camps. After discussions with officials at Ministry of Education and Local Government Areas, each organization will work closely with one employee from each Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) to serve as the local implementing partner. They will be the project desk officer at the local government level. The implementing partner will work closely with the one of the consortium partner’s outreach officers, and together they will coordinate the program in the LGEA.

At the state level, the implementing partners will work closely with the government officials, through the State Ministry of Education, the State Universal Basic Education (SUBEB) and the State Ministry of Women Affairs. The partners at the state level and representative of these three agencies and the community will have a periodic meeting that will serve as a State Implementation Committee (SIC). The SIC will serve as the steering committee for the state level implementation and give some level of involvement and power to the government, which will allow for government to take quick actions that will help achieve the advocacy work of the project and in the long run, part of the sustainability of this initiative.

Key indicator for tracking this important cluster of activities are - Number of new policies focused on child marriage prevention; and % increase in resources allocated by local government for child marriage prevention in cash and kind”

Source: Project proposal, pages 13-14 and 17

Objective of this assessment

This assessment was embarked upon as part of the eight year collaboration between the development Research and Projects Centre (dRPC) and the Center for Management Development (CMD) over research and capacity building to strengthen local level project implementation. The aim of this assignment was to determine LGA buy in a support for the project and the extent of readiness to learn from and sustain project activities upon completion in October 2015. This assessment also aims to determine the extent to which the LGAs involved in the project aim to scale up and sustain the initiative at the end of the project.

Methodology

The methodology used in this assessment is a retrospective qualitative analysis of LGA officials perception of collaboration and support for the Consortium project. This will be conducted through one-on-one in-depth interviews with both current and past local government officials with responsibility for budgeting and education in four LGAs in which the project was active. In-depth interviews were complemented by a technical analysis of LGA budgets for the period 2012 prior to the project, and project years 2013 and 2014.

Conversations with the LGA Chairman and the Education Secretary on the project, Ajingi LGA, Kano State

I arrived in Ajingi LGA from Kano on Tuesday 6th October, 2015. This was my first port-of-call where there was absolutely no one to talk to. The Chairman of the Local Government Council was not in and so were almost all principal officers of the LGA. When I met the Secretary to the LG Chairman, M. Aminu, he directed me to go and see the Education Secretary of the Local Government whom he believed would give extensive data on the project. When I eventually met the Education Secretary, M. Nasiru A. Wali, he opted not to talk to me because he indicated that he was not 'formally' informed of my coming. More importantly, he said he was not in a position to talk on the project because he was never part of the implementation. My first day ended without any useful piece of information except that most workers in the LGA do not come to work regularly.

Not satisfied with the situation I found in Ajingi, I went back the following day believing to meet more officials than I met on my first day. I was mistaken for I met less officials in the LG Secretariat than my first visit. However, after much effort and persuading I was lucky to get the Education Secretary to talk to me this time. When he settled down to talk to me, I was able to have a fruitful interview.

LGA participation and responsibilities in the consortium project

My first question sought to establish the areas of participation that the Local Government is responsible for in the project. He responded that the Local Government was not part of the implementation and so was not responsible for any aspect of the entire project. However, he added that they were always informed of what was happening and they witnessed some events “but never participated in the planning”. Some of the activities they witnessed include sinking of boreholes in girls’ schools and construction of different toilets for boys and girls where there are boys and girls in the same school.

Budgeting for education in the LGA

My second line of question sought to determine whether the Local Government Area, Ajingi LGA actually makes education budgets. His response was that the Education Department of the LG does not prepare any education budget. He explained that the Federal Government mainly finances basic education and therefore provides the budgets for them to implement every year. He emphasized that the Local Government plays no role in providing education budgets even though the Local Government’s counterpart funding of education is deducted at source and given straight to the education department for implementation. Consequently, he explained there was no budget for education in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015, and

added that even when some rough allocation is made, in most cases not released to them to use.

Local Government learning from the project and prospects for sustaining project activities

When asked this question the respondent stated: “I have no idea”! He explained that this was because they were not actually involved in the implementation. “Any development project that needs scaling up and sustained, those to do so must be actively involved”.

Continuing Conversations with the Chairman, Ajingi Local Government Area

On Friday 16th October 2015 that I met the Chairman in his house in Ajingi from where we moved to his office for the interview. The Chairman, confirmed that the LGA did not directly work with the implementing NGO but were fully aware and in support of their activities. He was aware of the indirect goal of delaying early marriage of the girls by keeping them in school. He stated that the impact of the NGO, IWEI was so significant that a rich business man in the community donated 2 school buses to take girls to schools in the area. He explained further that the Local Government Council, through the Chairman, stepped into provide the funds and the drivers’ salaries. He said the Local Government Council is also responsible for paying the salaries

of all the teachers at the Primary level while the state government pays for those teaching in the secondary schools. The federal is mainly responsible for infrastructural development of the Primary schools through Universal Basic Education Commission, (UBEC).

When asked about the specific sums the LGA budgeted for education in 2012, 2013, 2014 and this year, he replied that since the LGA was not responsible, it was not possible to give me figures for these years. He explained that the only specific funds they budgeted for girls' education activity is the one for their transportation to and from school. He could not however give me the figures. He also explained that though the education department does not make budgets, at least it provides cost items for important areas of expenditure. He lamented that even when figures are attached to these cost items, no releases are made in most cases.

Asked if the LGA will be sustaining any of the activities on girls' education which they learnt from the NGO project, he said they will only continue to provide transportation to the girls to and from schools. "For now we have no idea on how to deal with the limiting factors....we have to continue to pray".

Conversations with Giwa Local Government Area, Kaduna State on their collaboration with GCC on the Consortium project

Giwa LGA was my next research site. I conducted the interviews on Thursday 7th October, 2015 in the offices of the Education Secretary and Head of Department, Planning Research and Statistics. Even though the Local Government Chairman was not available to talk to me, all the relevant officials at the education department were available to be interviewed.

I reported to the Chairman's office and then proceeded to the education department which is outside the Local Government Secretariat. My interview started with the Head of Department, Planning, Research and statistics, (PRS), Mohammed Sani Abdullahi and then included others for verification.

Areas of the consortium project the LGA partnered on

On the question what areas of Education the Local Government partnered on he responded that the LG was part of all aspects of the project. This is to say that the implementing NGO worked hand –in –hand with the LG . He reported that their one and only constraint is funding.

Education budget increase as a result of the project

On budgeting for education, he admitted that the main budget was always prepared by SUBEC and stated what happens to the money in the budget is entirely known only to SUBEC. He provided some budget figures prepared for the past 4 years but had no data on releases. An analysis of the figures showed that the budgets were in fact decreasing rather than increasing. The figures are as follows:-

Year	Amount budgeted by the LGA for education
2012	NA
2013	N1, 788,500.00
2014	N4,420,100.00
2015	N2,250, 000.00

The respondent indicated that the Local Government had no specific funds for any girls' education activities in the past 2 years. The reason advanced is that the education department has no control over its budgets and so whatever was provided was used mainly to buy chalk and other minor things. The funds are never enough to set anything aside for girls education.

Potential for LGA scaling up NGO activities after the project

The respondent stated that for the 2 years they have been part of the project, they have learnt and gotten some new ideas that they would like to scale up. These include advocating for and encouraging girl-child education, delaying early marriage and training of teachers. They will continue to give extra lessons to the girls and interact with parents. Most of the constraints centre on funding.

I then sought to establish whether the Local Government will be funding any new activities on girls' education which they have learnt from the NGOs. The response was a resounding yes. These activities include meeting the special education

for girls, continuous interaction with parents to support the funding of their wards' education activities. When asked how they plan to deal with the funding limiting factors, the respondent said that they plan to advocate for teachers to support the initiative by sacrificing time to give the extra lessons without demanding payment. They will also ask parents to support in little cash or kind.

Throughout the interview the Local Government respondent referred to the project as their project and said that they learnt useful lessons which they intend to scale up even in the face of serious funding challenges.

Conversation with Zaria Local Government Area, Kaduna State on the GCE-led component of project

Zaria Local Government was the last of the 3 project sites I visited on Friday 8th October, 2015. I first went to the Local Government Council and then the Education Department but nobody appeared to know about the project.

The Zonal Education Connection

I was then asked to interview Sani Aminu, the Zonal Education Officer, nominated by the Director to be the key respondent to talk to me. He reported that the implementing NGO, GCE, only informed them when the project started and reported back to them when the project was rounding up. Practically they were not involved in the implementation of the project. I then triangulated this information by calling the representative of the implementing NGO, Victoria O. Bello. She confirmed that they did not work with any Local Government but worked directly with the selected girls and community stakeholders. They only informed the LGA because they implementing the project in their LGAs.

Despite the difficulties of working with local government, the reasons why GCE opted not to do so is not clear to me.

Appendix 1: List of key informants interviewed

Chairman, Ajingi Local Government Area

Nasiru A. Wali – Education Secretary, Ajingi Local Government Education Authority

Head of Dept. PRS, Ajingj LGA

A. Sulaiman – Deputy Director, Planning Research and Statistics, Ajingi LGA

Abdullahi M. Gabas

Aminu Ajingi – Confidential Secretary to the Chairman, Ajingi LGA

Project Officer, Girl – Child Education, Ajingi LGA

Abdu Danladi, - Education, Giwa LGA Education Authority

Mohammed Sani Abdullahi – Head of Dept., Planning, Research and Statistics, Giwa Local Government

Abdulkareem Isyaku – Implementation, PRHI Project

N.J. Sulaiman – Giwa MOE Zonal Office

Sani Ahmed Soba – Zonal Education, Zaria

Sani Aminu – Zonal Education Office, Zaria

Victoria O. Bello, -Associate Researcher, PRHI Nigeria

Mohammed Musa – PRHI

