

Development Research and Project Center (DRPC) Support to Safe School Declaration (SSD)

Millions of children across the world are out of school as a result of humanitarian emergencies including conflicts, natural disasters and health crises. Education is lifesaving. Not being in school in emergencies can leave children at risk of child labour, early marriage, exploitation and recruitment.

Hazards affecting schools and community are categorized based on five common approaches; “**Violence**” (threatened use of unlawful force; corporal punishment, physical, sexual abuse etc.); “**Natural Hazards**” (flood, fire, wind); “**Conflict**” (School occupation by security forces, abduction/kidnapping, recruitment of child soldiers); “**Everyday Hazards**” (Epidemic, accidents, nutrition deficiency) and “**School Infrastructure**” (vandalism of school property, theft of school property, building collapse). Recently, the Nigerian government introduced some policy framework and programmes that are aimed at ensuring the safety of learners and educational personnel within and outside the school. Some of these policies and programmes include the National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence- Free Schools (NPSSVFS) and the Implementation Guidelines, the Minimum Standards for safe schools, the domestication of the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD), the Safe Schools Initiative (SCI), among others. The Safe Schools Declaration is an inter-governmental political commitment that provides countries the opportunity to express support for protecting students, teachers, schools, and universities from attack during times of armed conflict; the importance of the continuation of education during armed conflict; and the implementation of concrete measures to deter the military use of schools.



Fig1:
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Some of my experiences over the years includes:

1. My Experience at Gamboru Ngala Borno State is so fresh. There I met Captain *I Yusuf (fig2 :)* is a soldier from 3rd battalion Delta state who is on special operation in Gamboru Ngala. His doggedness and resilient attitude towards eradication of the menace posed by insurgency in the lives of the children and other younger generation. He reopened the first primary school in Gamboru Ngala town with the help of other



Fig2: Myfriend Mentoring Cpt. I Yusuf

soldiers after a long time, they were practically going to the class to teach in addition to their special assignment in the Northeast. The school had over a thousand and eight hundred pupils being thought by soldiers and other volunteer under his command.

2. My visit to Gamboru Ngala to monitor, mentor and support the teachers and the pupils due to incessant attacks by Boko Haram on the schools exposed other

practices that would further put the learners at risk. A close look at the picture in *fig3*, you will see a soldier teaching in the class and an AK47 rifle of one of his colleague military teacher kept at a close reach of any of the learners. This could put all other learners in danger.



Fig 3: a soldier teaching with a rifle beside him

3. The BAMA experience made me visit other schools identified to have military instructors. Some of these observations made me have mentorship sessions with most schools in Borno State that have military as instructors see **Fig4**.



Fig4: Myfriend Mentoring teachers on school safety measures

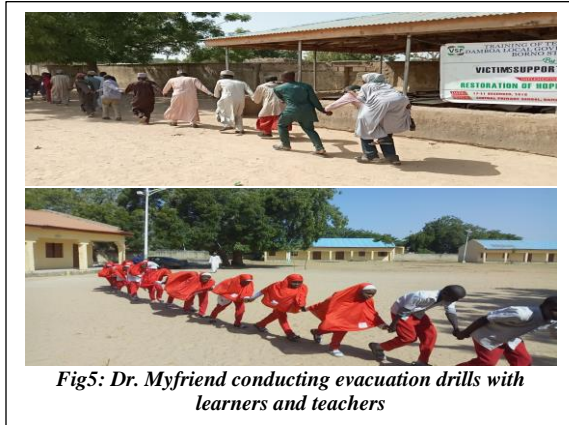


Fig5: Dr. Myfriend conducting evacuation drills with learners and teachers

This inspired me to begin writing on attacks, conflicts and issues of gender based violence in schools, mentoring, observing and conducting research and training of teachers, School Based Management Committee (SBMC), CBMC on attacks in schools, conflict, hazards, evacuation drills. See **fig5**

My humanitarian work are mostly to develop training manuals on safe school, conflict and sensitive education, psycho-social support as a post conflict measure, training of teachers, SBMC on conflict and disaster risk reduction. The manual on Education Cannot-Wait (ECW) which was sponsored by UNICEF and other NGOs in Borno State, was put together by me. I have conducted researches for UNICEF, in Admawa, Borno and Yobe State and also conducted research for TDH on Assessment of the nature of policy standards in the Education in Emergencies programme of TERES DE HOME (TDH) in Borno State, Nigeria; Girls Education Project (GEP 3): Assessment of the effectiveness of school Based management committees on covid-19, conflict disaster risk reduction on girl Child Education in girls education project (phase 3) schools in Bauchi State, Nigeria (2020) and also develop training manual for plan international on School safety education, for SCI on School Safety and Gender Based Violence. I also developed training manual for SBMC which is widely used in the North. I have facilitated trainings as a resourced person, for UNICEF, SCI, ROHI, Plan Int. TDH, GEPDC, VSF, VSO. I was also a consultant to Victim Support Fund, Terres Des Hommes and Plan Int. all my engagements has seen me transverse all the I.G.A in Borno State, some LGAs in yobe state, Adamawa, Bauchi, Taraba, Kaduna, Plateau. Banue, Enugu, Ebonyi State.

My experience in all this is that attack on our educational facilities has affected our facilities, learners and teachers. Efforts need to be put in place to bring things back to normalcy. These measures include:

- collecting reliable data on attacks and military use of schools and universities
- providing assistance to victims of attacks
- investigating allegations of violations of national and international law and prosecuting perpetrators where appropriate
- developing and promoting 'conflict sensitive' approaches to education
- seeking to continue education during armed conflict
- supporting the UN's work on the children and armed conflict agenda
- using the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict, and bringing them into domestic policy and operational frameworks as far as possible and appropriate

About 1.3 million Nigerian children have been affected by attacks or abductions at schools in Nigeria in the past few years. Recent spate of attacks has seen the abduction of a total of 1,462 learners and education personnel from December 2020 to November 2021 in 19 episodes of school-related abductions as well as abductions of Learners and teachers away from their learning environment (at home and in the community). The highest number of abductees in a single kidnap (327 learners) was recorded in Zamfara State while Kaduna State has experienced the

greatest number of incidences of attack of education (7). Out of 19 educational institutions attacked 12 were secondary schools while 5 were within the tertiary educational systems. Non-formal education was not exempted from attack as about 200 students of Islamiyya School, Tegina in Rafi Local Government Area of Niger State were reportedly abducted on Sunday on the 30th of May 2021, sadly the life of one learner was lost. A total of 17 lives of teachers and learners have been lost in these abductions. Attacks on school has seen 1,400 schools damaged, more than one million children forced out of school, and 2,295 teachers killed between 2009 and 2021 in the North East Nigeria.

My engagement with Development Research and Project Center (DRPC) is so rewarding because of how it implement transformative and sustainable development intervention. The workshop for civil Society Organization (CSO) in Abuja in December, 2021 to implement the resolutions reached at the International Conference on Safe School Declarations was awesome. The dRPC is currently supporting 14 states in Nigeria to step down recommendations from the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) with funding from Ford Foundation. The project's objectives are:-

1. Increase the knowledge base of Civil Society Organizations on 4th International Conference on Safe School Declaration outcomes for transfer to community levels
2. Enhance the capacity of CSOs to transfer demonstrable SSD knowledge, skills and practice to SBMCs/CBMCs at community level
3. Support CSOs to mount advocacy to State Governments and SUBEB for SSD scale up to other LGAs/Communities

The CSOs were trained in Abuja by dRPC to compile data, organize advocacies, have round table discussion, organize seminars, conferences and workshop; carrying out drills such as evacuation drills, lockdown, identification of safe heavens as effective response strategies in case of attacks. This is achievable due to the technical support provided by dRPC. Providing intervention, establishing teams and engaging dRPC staff and masters trainers in monitoring, supervising and given technical support during round table meeting, training and seminars at various states.

CONCLUSIONS

The engagement of CSOs at the Train the Trainer (TOT) workshop at Abuja was an excellent decision by dRPC. This is unique because other trainings have been conducted for government partners and other non-governmental organizations. This has a positive impact because the CSOs are a coalition that can hold government accountable to ratification of statement of intensions. During the step-down, the CSOs were able to involve all the educational stakeholders at the state level to be part of the step-down training. Some civil society organizations contributed on their own to meet up the grants that was given to them by dRPC. This is a deviation from other workshops, seminars and conferences that government partners are involved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The masters trainers should form part of the team to observe trainings at the state level
2. There should be another refresher training to the same sets of CSOs were experiences of the step-down training can be shared.
3. As a post conflict measure, Psychosocial Support training should form part of the Educational Intervention for Safe School Declaration