



# NILDS REPORT ON SAFE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

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*Facilitating Inclusive Development*



**THE CSO SAFE SCHOOL  
MOVEMENT**



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## Foreword

I am delighted to write the foreword to the Investigative Hearing Report of the Senate Joint Committee on Education (Basic and Secondary); and Tertiary Institutions and TETFUND on the utilisation of the funding proposed and budgeted for the safe school initiative, including monies, supports and donations received from foreign government and agencies. This report is produced under the NILDS-dRPC collaboration that covers essential areas including capacity building, provision of technical support to Leadership and relevant committees of the National Assembly. One of these committees is the Senate Joint Committee on Education.

This collaboration is undertaken with the broader mandate of the Institute to provide technical support and inputs to the legislature and other institutions of democracy in Nigeria both at the national and sub-national levels. Specifically, the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Act 2011 (as amended in 2018), particularly section 2(2) of the Act, empowers the Institute to provide technical support services to the National Assembly in the law-making process, improve the capacity of legislators in policy formulation and to assist the legislators with technical input in the legislative governance process, including preparing reports on investigative hearing and publication of reports of the hearings.

Since its inception, the Institute has provided these services to the National Assembly. In the past, the Institute has collaborated with dRPC to support the Senate Committee on Health in the 8<sup>th</sup> Assembly with far-reaching outcomes. The Institute is pleased to continue this partnership towards delivering essential services to Nigerians.



I, therefore, recommend the investigative hearing report to members of the Joint Committee and indeed the National Assembly particularly as it relates to the objective of the investigative hearing. The recommendations provide useful insights and entry points for legislative actions by the Senate.

I wish to thank the Leadership of the National Assembly under the President of the Senate, Sen. Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan, PhD., CON and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabamila, both of whom serve as the Chairman and the Alternate Chairman of the Institute's Governing Council.

**Professor Abubakar Sulaiman**  
**Director General**

## 1. Background

In conflict and violence-affected settings, schools are targeted by conflicting parties for political, military, ideological, ethnic, religious or criminal reasons. In situations of violent conflict, government forces and/or armed non-state groups convert schools to bases, barracks, weapons stores, detention facilities and in some cases camps for refugees and internally displaced persons. As a result, school premises become theatres of military operations instead of learning centres thereby disrupting access to education.

Over the years, the nature, incidence and potency of attacks on educational facilities have grown exponentially around the world. From Afghanistan, Colombia, Cambodia, Mali, Syria, to Yemen among others, schools have been targeted for killings, kidnapping and abduction, rape, recruitment of child soldiers, intimidation and other forms of danger.<sup>1</sup> It was reported that between 2015 and 2019, there were more than 11,000 attacks on schools, harming more than 22,000 students and educators in at least 90 countries.<sup>2</sup>

In Nigeria, government forces are engaged in combat with different forms of insurgents and violent groups. However, the Nigerian case is unique because Boko Haram (literally meaning “education is forbidden”) openly declared their rejection of education. Hence, one of their primary motives is targeting schools, teachers and students for abduction and violent attacks. This was brought to global limelight with the abduction of 276 schoolgirls from Government Girls’ Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State on April 14 2014. Since the Boko Haram conflict started in 2009, 611 teachers have been killed, 19,000 teachers displaced, 910 schools damaged or destroyed, and more than 1,500 schools forced to close.<sup>3</sup> An estimated 900,000 children have lost access to learning while 75 per cent of children in IDP camps do not attend school. Seventy per cent of girls of primary school age are out of school in Borno State alone—the highest percentage in the country.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, the spate of attacks on schools is not limited to the North East. The North West and North Central parts of Nigeria have witnessed

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<sup>1</sup> Education under Attack 2022: A Global Study on Attacks on Schools and Universities and their students and staff between 2017 and 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> UN 2019 Humanitarian Overview; <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/04/11/nigeria-northeast-children-robbed-education>.

<sup>4</sup>[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/01022019\\_ocha\\_nigeria\\_humanitarian\\_needs\\_overview.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/01022019_ocha_nigeria_humanitarian_needs_overview.pdf). 3 <https://time.com/5921701/students-missing-nigeria-school/>

increasing number of violent attacks on schools by armed ‘bandits.’ On 11 November 2020, Government Science Secondary School, Kankara in Katsina State came under attack by armed bandits and more than 300 students were abducted.<sup>5</sup> Similar incidents were reported at various times in Kagara (Niger State), Jangebe (Zamfara State), Rama and Afaka (Kaduna State) among others. These illustrate the increasing potency of threats to education as parents and guardians become fearful of sending their children to school due to safety concerns in regions already battling high rate of out-of-school children.<sup>6</sup> This sets the context within which the Safe School Initiative in Nigeria as part of the global efforts to protect education from attack was conceived.

## **2. Overview of Safe School Declaration and Safe School Initiative in Nigeria**

### **2.1. Origin and Evolution**

Globally, the foundation for Safe School Declaration was led by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), an inter-agency group dedicated to addressing the problem of targeted attacks on education during conflict. After series of preliminary consultations, engagements and activities, the Safe Schools Declaration was launched on 29 May 2015 in Oslo, Norway. The Safe Schools Declaration is a multi-stakeholder coalition that guarantees political commitment to protect students, teachers and schools from the worst effects of armed conflict. It highlights the broad impact of armed conflict on education and outlines a set of commitments to strengthen the protection of education and ensure its continuity during armed conflict.<sup>7</sup> Countries that endorse SSD are expected to develop guidelines that stipulate a set of actions that parties to the conflict can take to reduce the military use of schools and to minimize the negative impact such use may have on students' safety and education. As at 2021, 113 countries have joined the SSD network.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) (2018). “I will never go back to school”: the impact on attacks on education for Nigerian women and girls.  
[https://protectingeducation.org/wpcontent/uploads/documents/documents\\_attacks\\_on\\_nigerian\\_women\\_and\\_girls.pdf](https://protectingeducation.org/wpcontent/uploads/documents/documents_attacks_on_nigerian_women_and_girls.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://protectingeducation.org>

## **2.2. Domestication and Implementation of SSD in Nigeria**

The Safe School Initiative was launched at the World Economic Forum on Africa which took place in Nigeria by a coalition of business leaders working in collaboration with the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown. It was set up in the wake of growing incidence of violent attacks on the right to education in Nigeria and A World at School. The Initiative was premised on the best practices from global standards and initiatives encapsulated in the Safe School Declaration.

Nigeria endorsed the Declaration on 29 May 2019 thus becoming the 37<sup>th</sup> country to join the SSD framework. The Federal Executive Council approved the Memorandum on “Mainstreaming and Implementation of the SSD Laws and Policies in Nigeria” thereby paving the way for the domestication of SSD on 20 March 2019. Subsequently, on 31 December 2019 President Muhammadu Buhari signed the Safe Schools Declaration Ratification Document signaling the country’s commitment to ratify and uphold the principles of the SSD. The Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with related Ministries and other stakeholders spearheaded the process of formulating a comprehensive National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools (NPSSVFS), which integrated and harmonised two existing policy proposals on Violence-free Schools and Safety and Security in Schools in August 2021.<sup>8</sup>

Following the approval of the NPSSVFS by the National Council of Education, the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with Education in Emergencies Working Group in Nigeria (EiEWGN) developed the Minimum Standard for Safe Schools to provide implementation roadmap and principles for NPSSVFS.<sup>9</sup> The Minimum Standard lays out the guideline based on the Safe School Common Approach (SSCA) that earmarks the activities and roles of each

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<sup>8</sup> *National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools*, Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education, August 2021.

<sup>9</sup> *Minimum Standards for Safe Schools*, Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education, June 2021

stakeholder to keep school users, teachers, learners and the school safe and violence-free.

### 3. Contending Perspectives on the Implementation of SSI in Nigeria

Many years after the adoption of SSI and formulation of policy and implementation guidelines, opinions are divided on the level of success attained in terms of safety and security of schools in Nigeria. The contending perspectives can be classified into three broad areas:

Specific purpose and impact:

The rationale for the Safe School Initiative was premised on the fact that the absence of well-coordinated system of safe and security practices across Nigeria has created vulnerabilities accentuated by human-induced natural hazards as well as violence and abuse perpetrated against learners and teachers. Therefore, the SSI framework is aimed at protecting learners and education workers, ensure continuity of education even in the face of hazards, safeguard education investment and strengthen disaster-resilient citizenry through education.<sup>10</sup> However, these broad objectives have not been fully understood thereby generating different perspectives on the relative impact of the Initiative. There are some critics who question the impact of the Initiative given continuous attacks on schoolchildren.<sup>11</sup>

*Inclusiveness in the design and implementation of SSI:*

Nigeria practices federal system of government which presupposes that federating units and the central government have opportunities for differentiation in policy preferences while maintaining space for convergence on core guiding principles. The SSI and NPSSVFS laid out the principles, minimum standards and guidelines to guarantee safety and security of learning environments across the federation. However, there is on-going debate on the level of inclusiveness of state and local governments as well as community level actors in the design and

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<sup>10</sup> *National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools*, Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education, August 2021, pg. 3

<sup>11</sup> [Unending attacks on schoolchildren despite Safe School Initiative | The Guardian Nigeria News - Nigeria and World News — Features — The Guardian Nigeria News – Nigeria and World News](#)



implementation of SSI. Indeed, there are questions on whether sufficient resources are available to subnational levels to ensure effective implementation of the Initiative.<sup>12</sup>

*Transparency and accountability:*

One of the heavily contested and controversial issues concerning the implementation of SSI in Nigeria is the degree of transparency and accountability particularly in relation to the management of the fund earmarked for the Initiative. Questions have been asked on the modalities for the disbursement and utilization of the USD10million pledged at the launch of SSI. There were specific calls for the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice to open an inquiry into the mismanagement or diversion the USD 30million budgeted for the Safe School Initiative.<sup>13</sup> The controversies surrounding the utilization of the fund meant for SSI was not limited to media and civil society. The House of Representatives and the Senate have passed resolutions demanding probe largely because transparency and accountability in the implementation of SSI have been very limited.

#### 4. Legislative Intervention and the Investigative Hearing

Following ceaseless public demand for accountability in the disbursement and utilization of the fund meant for safety and security in schools and increasing spate of abductions and violent attacks on schools, Senator Stephen Adi Odey (Cross River North) moved a motion titled, “**Urgent Need for the Restoration and Revalidation of Safe School Initiative Nigeria**” on 23 February 2021. The Motion was subjected to intense debate.

Contributing to the debate, the Senate Minority Leader, Senator Eyinnaya Abaribe averred that “The Safe Schools Initiative when it was started, there was also a budgetary provision for it. A couple of Million Dollars and I would have expected Senator Stephen Adi Odey, while supporting his Motion that he could have dogged into what happened to the funds that were brought out for the Safe School Initiative. May be at the time that we are going to consider all the resolutions that are

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<sup>12</sup> [Nigeria: 7 Years After Launch - States Yet to Get \\$30m Safe School Fund - allAfrica.com](#)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

going to follow this Motion, we may now add that a Joint Committee within this Senate maybe set up to investigate what happened to those monies because it came to about N2 Billion for that Safe School Initiative.”

In another contribution to the debate, Senator Abdullahi Kabir Birkiya (Katsina Central) noted that, “I keep asking myself; is it because the student of the public schools are 99 per cent children of the masses of this country that nothing is being done? At least, it happened in the first and second time, we should not allow this to continue. If allow this to continue, we are sitting on a time bomb. If students of these public schools do not continue with their education, we are going to have many bandits.”

At the end of the extensive and thorough debate on the substance of the Motion, the Senate resolved, among others, to “*direct the Committees on Basic and Tertiary Education to look into what happened to the funding of the Safe School Initiative.*” On the strength of this Resolution, the ground was set for the convening of an Investigative Hearing on the “Utilisation of the Funding Proposed and Budgeted for the SSI, including Monies, Support and Donations Received from Foreign Government and Agencies”

## **5. Highlights of the Senate Joint Committee Investigative Hearing**

### **5.1 Opening:**

The Senate Joint Committee on Education (Basic and Secondary); and tertiary Institutions and TETFUND organised a one-day investigative hearing on the utilisation of the funding proposed and budgeted for the Safe School Initiative (SSI), including monies, support and donations received from foreign governments and agencies. The hearing was conducted in Senate Conference Room, New Building, National Assembly Complex, Abuja. The hearing was organised sequel to a

resolution passed by the Senate on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021, after the Senate considered a motion on the “Urgent Need for the Restoration and Revalidation of the SSI in Nigeria” in fulfilment of the mandate of the National Assembly of its power of oversight as provided under Sections 81, 82 and 88 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as altered).

In his opening remarks, the President of the Senate, His Excellency, Senator Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan, PhD, CON, gave a little background of the investigative hearing. He stated that the SSI started in 2014 with about 20 million USD to support the Northeast of Nigeria, after incidents of abductions of students, particularly in Borno state. He added that the implementation of the programme was anchored by the Federal Ministry of Finance. Consequently, due to rising cases of insecurity all over the northern region, there is a need to carry out a study of the policy of the SSI and modalities of the implementation of the policy. He added that the investigation was not designed to find faults but to ascertain how the funds were expended.

The President of the Senate further asserted that basic education is a human right issue because there would be no significant development if people were not educated. He encouraged the participants to respond positively to have a way forward on the funding regime of the Initiative and declared the hearing opened. Immediately after the hearing opening, Senator Sadiq Umar gave votes of thanks for the opening ceremony.

## **5.2 Participants:**

The Investigative Hearing was attended by several critical players in the education sector, including the Permanent Secretary Federal Ministry of



Education, UNICEF, Traditional Institutions and the Hon. Commissioner of Education, Yobe State. Other participants were:

1. Community Aid for Health and Development Foundation (COMMUNIAID NIGERIA)
2. Traditional Institutions
3. Northeast Civil Society Forum
4. Development Research and Project Centre (dRPC)
5. UNICEF
6. National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)
7. Federal Ministry of Education
8. Federal Ministry of Works (FMoW)
9. Kaduna State Univeristy (KASU), Kaduna
10. Girl Child Concern (GCC)
11. National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies

### **5.3 Technical Session:**

The Chairman of the Joint Committee called the hearing to order. He then provided a roadmap for the proceedings of the hearing. Over 14 memoranda were presented to the Committee. Some of the memoranda included—

### **5.4 Community Aid for Health and Development Foundation (COMMUNIAID Nigeria):**

**Represented by its Executive Director Dr Abdullahi Maiwada, MON, mni, FIPH, FDA, FAIPH (Jekadan Gusau)**

He started with a background discourse stressing the importance of literacy. He said literacy was at the core of Education. He added that good quality basic education equipped pupils/learners (adults/youth) with skills for life and further learning. He said that literate parents were more likely to

send their children to school; literate people could better access continuing education opportunities; literate societies were better geared towards meeting the pressing developmental challenges. (GMR: 2006). Finally, he noted that the global question that practitioners continued to ask was, "after literacy, what next?" This idea called for linking literacy with empowerment initiatives to equip learners with functional skills for lifelong learning.

Dr Abdullahi opined that 1 out of every three children is out of school, particularly in Northern Nigeria. Similarly, there were 9 million Almajiris in Northern Nigeria roaming around the streets. Dr Abdullahi discussed the security challenges in Zamfara State and other states in Northern Nigeria, which made the schools and children unsafe.

Dr Abdullahi further made the following observations—

- (a) There was not enough accommodation in many schools to cater to teaching and non-teaching staff in most northern States despite massive funding through UBEC and even at some tertiary institutions with all the funds from TETFUND.
- (b) That there are inadequately secured staff quarters across many secondary and primary schools, especially those located in the heart of communities.
- (c) The Bandits always gained entry through the gates without breaking or hindrance, as the watchmen were powerless and could not contain the bandits since they always came in mass numbers when attacking their victims.
- (d) There are no officers of security agencies attached to almost all schools in the region and across the country.

Based on the above, he recommended:

- That State Governments should see the possibilities of de-boarding all Boarding Secondary Schools in the interim, pending the time the security situation improved in the state. And, if the de-boarding showed no severe drawback to the system, it could be maintained as it was obtained in most developed countries across the globe. There was enough research evidence that alludes to the fact that there is no difference between the performance in a standard examination between the day and the Boarding Schools' students.
- And where/if the State Governments in the insecurity affected area should continue with the boarding system, there is a need to consider the following security measures in schools with support and funding through the SSI in Zamfara and the other Northwestern States as the previous funding was only restricted to Northeast especially that which was support by the SSI Donors.
- The stakeholders should be sensitised across the states, especially in communities, to pay regular attention to security matters in schools (especially boarding schools) in their areas and even non-boarding schools.
- The School Communities should improve synergy among themselves, especially on matters of security consciousness, and try to build the same among students with funding supporting to create security awareness in communities.
- That Government at the State and Federal should consider the possibilities of drilling staff and students on some simple measures to take during any security incident in a School through Security Awareness capacity building.

- The SSI and Government should provide funding to reinforce most school fencing and fit it with razor wire, strong gate and escape or emergency doors at various strategic points.
- The SSI funds should support States in providing and installing electronic security gadgets like CCTV, security-alarm and long-range sensor-alert activation systems in the current state of technology of the day.
- The SSI and funds should support State Governments on the possibilities of creating buffer zones of about 10KM from the boarding schools along all routes leading to the schools, especially in communities and insecurity prone areas. At each point, members of the vigilante group can provide security from dusk to dawn. In case of any security threat at any buffer zone, the group at that point would then alert the security personnel in and around the respective School.
- The Safe School fund can also support State Governments on the possibilities of beefing or complimenting the current local night watchmen with trained security personnel from the vigilante or even private security personnel, particularly around schools.
- The State Government should see the possibilities of relocating all boarding schools to a more secure place or building and beef up security architecture around them.
- The Nationally Assembly should support State Governments in establishing, recruiting, and redeploying the State Constabulary Police Officers to serve in the boarding schools.

### ***5.5 Traditional Institutions:***

**Representative by Alh. Salihu Umar Sarkin Yakin Gagi (District Head of Gagi)**

Sarkin Yakin Gagi stated that education is a human right that governments must make available for all children as part of their development plan – even if through progressive realisation. The school environment should be safe and conducive to learning without fear, stress, and anxiety. However, schools in Nigeria are fast becoming soft targets. He added that children are one of the most vulnerable groups to disasters. When a population at risk is predominantly children, each death means an entire lifetime of lost life and productivity. Therefore, the economic gains of protection are going to be very high. One of the most systematic ways to protect children is to preserve their education; safe schools include measures to protect children's lives by building secure infrastructure and educating children around early warning, evacuation and more comprehensive disaster risk reduction.

He amplified with concern that the prevailing security situation across the country remains uncertain, especially in the Northern part of Nigeria and pockets of insecurity across other parts of the country with the abduction of students gradually becoming a norm and a weapon of war or negotiations. Nigeria in recent times has witnessed an unprecedented level of insecurity. Amid COVID 19, insecurity is a significant concern that affects children, parents, teachers, communities, the general population, and more importantly, the education sector. For a country like Nigeria to attain Sustainable Development Goal four, inequalities must be bridged. This bridge can only be achieved in Education when teaching and learning can happen in a safe and protective learning environment.

Sarkin Gagi highlighted Safe Schools Priority Areas as follows:

1. A regional approach allowing for different activities based on the school and state realities under the national umbrella, with greater regional coordination.



2. On the physical safety front, several actions could be integrated into the government response to improve information-sharing, planning and community programming. Specifically, there are five recommended pillars as part of a blueprint across the respective regions of the country:

- a) Information-sharing and communication about security threats: Engage the Northern Governors and Northern Governor's Forum in inter-governmental information-sharing of intelligence and security information;
- b) State by State School Safety Plans: Require each state governor to develop a state school safety plan which is made public, with detailed actions that will be actioned and reported on;
- c) Community outreach and engagement programs: Launch a community engagement initiative, working with traditional and religious leaders;
- d) Local school safety interventions: Empower the school-based management committees to make local decisions that prioritise safety alongside other aspects of school funding; and
- e) Mobilise international support and partnership: Engage UNICEF as a national implementation partner to mobilise global resources and deliver programming alongside community programmes in the states. In addition, the stakeholders can be engaged to assist in the campaign alongside international partners and to advise the Ministry of Finance.

Finally, he recommended the development of a National Security Plan, mobilisation of international support to tackle the security challenges, comprehensive fencing of schools, capacity building for the stakeholders of the programme, more investment in Education and combatting challenges associated with climate changes that cause global warming and desertification and proper management of Nigerian's porous borders.

## **5.6 Northeast Civil Society Forum:**

### ***Represented by Amb. Abba Sirajo Shehu***

The Chairman of the Forum, Amb. Abba Shehu informed the Committee that even before the current crisis, there was limited participation in formal education in northeast Nigeria; armed conflict, communal violence, natural disasters and resulting economic challenges have aggravated existing challenges and gaps in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states. An estimated 52% of school-aged children have never attended school, and the annual drop-out rate for children in the Northeast is also the highest in Nigeria. The formal education sector is struggling to cope with educating IDPs and returnee students and host community students in poorly maintained school buildings where teachers are often poorly qualified and class sizes large. Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, including access to potable drinking water, are often lacking or insufficient in schools and have been identified as barriers to attendance by families, especially for children living with a disability.

He suggested the following:

- (i) Instead of hosting the SSI in the Federal Ministries of Education and Finance, the SSI should be directly implemented by the government institutions to manage basic education in Nigeria. He also stressed the need to have more security presence in affected communities to provide adequate security services. He added that establishing the School Base Management Committee and internal security architecture would also assist in implementing the SSI. He further recommended that the government should ensure timely payment of its counterpart funds to ensure uninterrupted implementation of the Initiative.

- (ii) The Committee should support the capacity strengthening of affected populations, community-based organisations and civil society for better engagement and increased ability to provide inputs to decisions concerning the planning and implementation of programmes, transparent use of resources, fostering resilience, and bringing about peace in their communities.
- (iii) The Committee should support efforts to reach and address the urgent humanitarian needs of affected populations in problematic areas. As areas become accessible, a protection strategy of safe schools should be identified before establishment.
- (iv) The Committee should support the scaling-up of livelihood and early recovery interventions, especially in locations where school establishment is feasible, which support current efforts in these communities.
- (v) The Committee should reinforce existing horizontal and vertical coordination systems, enduring gaps in the humanitarian and development planning and intervention frameworks covered, and continue development and adoption of the citizen – education funding tracking should be encouraged for more effective coordination, planning, transparency, and accountability in the education sector.
- (vi) The Committee should obtain a commitment from the government to clarify and strengthen education coordination mechanisms, including presence and support at the local government area/community level.

- (vii) The Committee should support local initiatives on peacebuilding efforts, de-radicalisation and reconciliation in respective communities.
- (viii) The Committee should commit to adhering to international Human Rights Law and other conventions and norms on protecting civilians in conflict, taking measured steps towards implementing the Kampala Convention and holding perpetrators to account.
- (ix) The Committee should provide multi-year and flexible resources to ensure continued support for humanitarian and development efforts.
- (x) The Committee should advocate with government authorities to address the root causes of the crisis, particularly intensify ongoing efforts to recharge Lake Chad for livelihood support and restoration of community-based socio-economic activities.
- (xi) The Committee should support states through the Universal Basic Education commission through counterpart grants to address some of the critical challenges within School.
- (xii) The Committee should support establishing an effective monitoring Unit across states to monitor the utilisation of resources within the various states for proper and effective management of resources meant for the SSI.

### **5.7 Minister of Education:**

#### **Represented by the Permanent Secretary- Arc. Sonny Echono**

He informed the Committee that the FMoE did not receive money from any institution related to SSI. However, he admitted that the Ministry had dedicated itself to SSI. Furthermore, the Ministry coordinated the safe transfer



of students from Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states to other schools in the Northern Region

### **5.8 President of the Senate:**

At this point, the President of the Senate expressed his displeasure on how the FMoF is handling SSI. He stated that it was designed to fail from the beginning and recommended transferring the programme from the FMoF to FMoE. He added that the schools that are benefiting or that have benefited ought to have been visited or attended the hearing to testify and probably tender document(s).

The President of the Senate also recommended the establishment of the National Schools Committee and conducting a needs assessment to ascertain the actual needs of the schools that will guarantee their safety. Furthermore, the PS recommends more investment in education. Finally, he advised that the Committee should invite the Minister of Finance.

### **5.9 Development Research and Project Centre (dRPC):**

#### **Representative by Kareem Abdul Razak**

In a 10-page memorandum, Mr. Kareem Abdurazak informed the hearing that the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2015 allocated the sum of N1.6 billion as a matching grant for the SSI programme under the Federal Ministry of Finance, Service-Wide Vote (SWV) capital expenditure. He added that the figure was reduced to N1 billion in 2016 under the Ministry of Budget and National Planning SWV-capital expenditure. Furthermore, in 2017, 2018, and 2019, N3 million, N20 million, and N8 million were allocated respectively for SSI-related budget lines under the Federal Ministry of Education capital expenditure. He submitted that, between 2015 and 2019, the sum of N2.63 billion was budgeted for the SSI in Nigeria, but there are no official reports on the utilisation of the funding regimes.

Finally, dRPC made the following recommendations:

1. To introduce an accountability framework and mechanism into SSI in moving forward. CSOs, which are part of the accountability platform, have a third-party monitoring role in determining and verifying exactly how and where funding is being allocated.
2. To introduce a public accountability platform and dashboard with regular updates of allocation, releases, spending on the SSI.
3. To introduce a regulatory framework and guidelines back-up by legislation, if possible, to prevent and disallow funding meant for SSI to be repurposed to unrelated budgetary heads.
4. In the interest of transparency, establish through consultation, clear guidelines and criteria for accessing SSI funds at the national and sub-national level with regular updates of applications received, approval granted, funds allocated and released, accessible in open access platforms.
5. To introduce value for money components and assessment criteria to ensure the efficient use of SSI funds by end-users at the state level with transparent procurement procedures and processes.
6. There should be regular voluntary reports on SSI to the global community to demonstrate Nigeria's transparency.
7. To demand the anti-corruption agencies i.e. the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) to thoroughly investigate cases of corruption within specific timelines and report accordingly.

8. To investigate the spending on other SSI-related programmes such as the Safe School Declaration (SSD), approved by the Federal Executive Council (FEC) in March 2019. The Initiative was by the Education in Emergencies Working Group Nigeria (EiEWGN) and has a total budgetary allocation amounting to N10 million in 2019, N3.8 million in 2020, and N10.8 million in 2021. This project is implemented by the Ministry of Defense - Head Quarters. The Training Safe and Secure Environment (TSSE) was also for schools in the northwest, northcentral, and northeast programme with a budgetary allocation of N350 million in 2019, N80 million in 2020, and N100 million in the 2021 fiscal year.
9. Lastly, NASS should investigate the N5.9 million allocated in 2019 for developing a National Policy on Safety and Security in Schools by the Federal Ministry of Education. This is to ascertain whether or not the fund was released to the responsible Ministry and utilised for the programmes in which it was released.

### **5.10 UNICEF:**

#### ***Represented By Judith Giwa Amu***

In its memorandum submitted to the Committee, UNICEF provided a brief background about the project. The memo informed the hearing that the SSI was a national programme launched by the Nigerian Government, UN Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, Nigerian Global Business Coalition for Education and private sector leaders, in May 2014, in immediate response to the abduction of 276 students from the Government Girls Secondary Chibok, Maiduguri State. The programme was aimed at addressing emerging safety and security needs towards the assurance of educational continuity.

UNICEF, supported by the Government of Norway, led the implementation of the Safe Schools Initiative from 2014 to provide emergency preparedness and

response interventions specifically in North-Eastern Nigeria with emphasis on Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. However, the initial intervention had included Gombe State (2014-2016). She also stated that the Towards Safe Schools Initiative Programme is ongoing, with an implementation span from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2019 till 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022. It identified three models as 'quick win' interventions and implemented them in Adamawa, Borno, Gombe and Yobe states from 2014 to 2016.

Model 1. 'Safe School Model' in 30 pilot schools in low-risk areas led by DFID included Safe School Infrastructure and Equipment, which entailed the provision of School in a box (teaching and learning materials) and Community-led school protection initiatives.

Model 2. Transferring students from high-risk areas is led by the Federal Ministry of Education with funding from GIZ, which entailed inter-State transfers for Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary School students and intra-State transfers for primary leavers and Junior Secondary School students.

Model 3. Double shift schools (DSS) for communities absorbing Internally Displaced People (IDPs) led by UNICEF, which entailed the provision of additional teaching and learning materials (School in a box) and mobilisation and training for other volunteer teachers and provision of additional temporary classrooms.

### **5.11 National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA):**

#### **Represented by Alh. Al-Hassan Nuru**

In his submission, the Director, Planning of NEMA, Alh. Al-Hassan Nuru informed the meeting that NEMA had handed over the project component that it was handling to the defunct Presidential Committee on Northeast Initiative, now known as North East Development Commission. He also gave the Committee a tabular analysis of its involvement in the SSI project before



handing over the project to NEDC, adding that N771million was spent by NEMA on student transfer and consultancy services.

### **5.12 Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMoWA):**

The representative of the Federal Ministry of Works, Mr Ali Andrew Madugu, conveyed the support of the Honourable Minister of Women Affairs to the Committee to review the SSI and wished the Committee a fruitful investigation.

### **5.13 Commissioner of Education Yobe State- Dr Mohammed Sani:**

The Honourable Commissioner informed the hearing that Yobe State is one of the beneficiaries of the project. He appreciated the contributions of the federal government and all the non-governmental organisations and made the following observations:

- (a) The project did not address the root of the problem, which is the insurgency. He added that the insurgency problem must be addressed for schools to be safe;
- (b) The project has no component for the Almajiri system that is designed to teach the Quran. This system of education should be integrated into conventional education.

He then recommended as follows:

- (a) In designing the project, the stakeholders should engage the grassroots at the policy formulation stage; and
- (b) Finally, he recommended that the Committee visit the schools that benefited or benefited from the project to interface with principals of the schools and see things themselves.

#### **5.14 Prof. Bala Dogo of Kaduna State University (KASU), Kaduna:**

The Professor, who was not physically present at the hearing, submitted a 6-page memorandum. He gave a little background of the present precarious situation and issue of the Unsafe Nature of Early Child, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Institutions in Kaduna State necessitating the urgent and strategic action/intervention of the Committee.

He stated that lately, there had been significant reports on the front pages of newspapers and media houses on the many kidnapping, banditry, and destruction of life and properties in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions of learning. Students and staff have been kidnapped, tortured, and ransom paid; school properties have been destroyed; school calendars disrupted; children and their parents have been abducted and had to stay in the bush for days, weeks, and months under appalling and dehumanising conditions not fit for living, let alone for learning to take place.

He discussed some fundamental issues emanating from the challenge of Unsafe Schools, which include:

1. Schools at all levels seem unsafe, and it does not appear there is any remedy insight to bring the situation to a halt. The achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) is likely to be hampered as students feel unsafe in their classes. This is due to regular attacks by armed gangs on schools and government establishments.
2. The Safe School Declaration endorsed by Nigeria in 2015 urged individual States to promote and protect the right to education and facilitate the continuation of Education in situations of armed conflict. Continuation of Education can provide life-saving health information and advice on specific risks in societies facing armed conflict.

Finally, he suggested baseline survey/investigations/studies concerning the unsafe nature/situation of schools across primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Kaduna State and, in fact, the whole country and the perceived solutions to the problem;

Need for an immediate halt to all kidnapping by community-driven, military, and para-military collaborations;

- (a) Re-engineering and rehabilitating the security architecture will make all learning institutions safe at any time and anywhere, like most places of the world.
- (b) Immediate and short-term rehabilitation/trauma counselling of all kidnapping victims in Kaduna State both at home and abroad in schools.
- (c) Transferring students from high-risk areas to better/safer locations;
- (d) Immediate rehabilitation and construction of all educational institutions affected by kidnappings in recent times;
- (e) Long-term systems and structures put in place to enhance the safety of both students and teachers in all levels of education with a provision in Kaduna State and other states with similar challenges to catch up with meeting the goals of Sustainable Development Goals; and
- (f) Adequate funding for the above by appropriation from the National Assembly, donations from bilateral agencies, and donors.

### **5.15 Girl Child Concern (GCC):**

The Girl Child Concerns (GCC) is a Non-Governmental Organisation in Nigeria dedicated to improving the lives of youth, with a particular focus on girls, through enhanced educational opportunities. GCC aims to provide holistic intervention to meet the needs of adolescent girls, focusing on their reproductive health and educational needs.

GCC articulated 2 fundamental issues and proffered suggestions.

**1<sup>st</sup> Issue:** The North East, which is the epicentre of the crisis in Nigeria, does not provide a holistic perspective of the state of Education in the country. Several attacks across the country on education range from hoodlum attacks, vandalism of school property, invasion of school grounds, cultism, kidnapping, detaining or torturing students and staff. Hundreds have died or gone missing as a result, and thousands more have missed out on the right to education, with several states shutting down schools indefinitely.

About 1,400 schools have been destroyed since 2014, with over 1,280 casualties among teachers and students. The crisis has further devastated the education system, and children, especially girls, teachers and schools, are on the front line of the conflict. The short-term impact of attacks on Education includes death, injury, and destruction of educational infrastructure. The long-term implications include disruptions in attendance, declines in student enrolment, diminished quality of Education and learning, lower rates of transition to higher education levels, overcrowding and reductions in teacher recruitment.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Issue:** Often, there is no balance between physical and psychological safety in most learning environments in the country. Striking a balance is essential for avoiding overly restrictive measures such as armed guards and mounted roadblocks that can undermine the learning environment. Instead, a more measured approach would combine reasonable physical security measures (e.g., locked gates and surveillance in public spaces) with efforts to enhance the learning environment, build trusting relationships and encourage everyone to identify and report potential threats.

Safe Spaces programmes established in schools have been proven to be highly effective for children with high levels of stress and trauma. These are designed to offer therapy, support and a place of refuge for many students to express themselves freely, which makes learning possible. Providing safe, inclusive

spaces in schools also helps prepare young people for the diverse world, giving them a sense of belonging and support to identify and overcome challenges using healthy ways.

### **Recommendations:**

(a) Provide funding for sustainable crisis and emergency preparedness, response and recovery planning by setting up a team of experts and military personnel, engage in professional development for all school employees and security personnel on identifying key indicators of students' stress as well as employee-specific roles in implementing crisis response plans, focusing on promoting and protecting both physical and psychological safety of school children, and review of the Universal Basic Education Act to strengthen legislation on protecting schools from attack with the death penalty mandated for perpetrators.

- Institutionalise Safe Spaces in all places of learning. The minimum standards should include: a) a universal safe spaces curriculum developed and implemented for different age groups, b) engaging personnel to run safe spaces, c) trauma-informed training for safe spaces coordinators and d) developing and equipping designated safe spaces in all places of learning.
- The general public should support schools to work toward more effective approaches that ensure all schools create safe, orderly learning environments.
- Schools should be empowered to create safe spaces for their students to receive adequate psychosocial support and speak up on personal issues.

- Schools must develop effective emergency preparedness and crisis prevention, intervention, and response plans coordinated with local first responders.

### **5.16 Federal Ministry of Finance (FMoF):**

The FMoF submitted its report 2 days after the hearing. The Ministry also gave a brief background of SSI. It noted that the Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) was launched by the FGN in collaboration with the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, Mr. Gordon Brown and a coalition of Nigerian Business leaders on May 7, 2014. Similarly, during the World Economic Forum for Africa (WEFA) in Abuja. In October 2016, the SSI was subsumed by the Presidential Committee on Northeast Initiative (PCNI). With this, the overall management of the implementation of the SSI program now lies within the purview of the North East Development Commission. The main objective of the SSI Program is to urgently protect hundreds of schools across the country, starting with those in North-Eastern Nigeria from future attacks and kidnaps.

Furthermore, the FMoF added that the programme components were designed to enable the SSI to achieve the desired results/outcomes using Students Transfer Program (STP) Psycho-Social Support (PSP) Schools Rehabilitation Program (SRP) and Innovative Education Strategies (IES).

On the funding regime of the SSI, the FMoF stated that the funding for the SSI entails the combination of the FGN's resources and contributions from other philanthropists and the International Community. The FGN established a Trust Fund domiciled at the Central Bank of Nigeria and committed \$10 million into the Fund towards the initiative in 2014. Nigerian business leaders contributed \$10 million to the Trust Fund through the Victims Support Fund (VSF) in May, 2015 with a value of N2,000,000,000.00 reflected on the statement.

The African Development Bank approved a grant of USD 1 million from its Special Relief Fund in January, 2016 with Naira value of N213, 576,404.65. The German Government committed EUR2 million to the fund, (with EUR1 million disbursed so far) with other multi credit entries that translated to N1,000,000,000.00. The Norwegian Government donated USD4 million (which was managed by UNICEF). A Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) was set up by the UN to support Nigeria's SSI. The US Government, via USAID, contributed USD 2 Million to the fund, while the Qatar Government (via the Qatar Foundation) also donated USD 2 million, bringing the total MDTF to USD 4 million. This MDTF was jointly managed by UNICEF, UNOPS and UNDP, and it co-financed the SSI jointly with the Nigerian Trust Fund.

## **6 Recommendations**

After careful study of all the suggestions made by the stakeholders, it is recommended:

1. To address the security challenge which made most schools unsafe.
2. That State Governments should see the possibilities of de-boarding all Boarding Secondary Schools in the interim, pending the time the security situation improved in the affected states.
3. The stakeholders should be sensitised across the states, especially in host communities, to pay regular attention to security matters in schools (especially boarding schools) in their areas and even non-boarding schools.
4. The SSI and Government should provide funding to reinforce most of the school fencing and fit it with razor wire, strong gate and escape or emergency doors at various strategic points.

5. The SSI funds should support States in providing and installing electronic security gadgets like CCTV, security-alarm and long-range censor-alert activation systems and other state-of-the-art security technology.
6. Instead of hosting the SSI by the Federal Ministries of Education and Finance, the SSI should be directly implemented by the government institutions with the mandate of managing basic Education in Nigeria.
7. The Committee should support establishing an effective monitoring Unit across states to monitor the utilisation of resources within the various states for proper and effective management of resources meant for the SSI.