

LEARNING FOR OUT-OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN SOME CRISIS AREAS IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND A WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

In crisis-affected areas, out of school children face numerous challenges that can impact their well-being, future livelihood and potential. However, education can serve as a powerful lifeline, providing emotional support, stability and hope. This article explores the transformative power of education in crisis contexts, highlighting its ability to foster resilience, promote social cohesion and offer skills and knowledge for future success. Through real-life examples and a review of the challenges and opportunities, the article demonstrates the critical need for increase support and investment for out-of-school children crisis areas, ultimately showing how learning can help them rebuild their lives and create a brighter future.

Keywords – Learning, out-of school, crisis areas, challenges and way forward.

Introduction

“What happens when education is disrupted by crisis? How can we ensure that children affected by conflict still access quality learning? Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to shape the world. Nelson Mandela’s words (1994) resonate deeply in crisis areas, where education can be a beacon of hope. However, leaning can bring light into the darkest of situations.

Crisis and conflict have a devastating consequences on children’s lives, including disrupting their education. In regions like Sokoto and Zamfara in Nigeria, the impact is particularly severe. Katsina and Maiduguri (Borno state) are other crisis-affected areas. Education has the power to transform lives, even in the most challenging contexts (UNICEF, 2020).

The Role of Learning in Crisis-affected Area

The intensity of violence in Nigeria poses significant risks for school children. Several places of learning have turned to piles of ruin due to attacks by non-state armed groups. Instances are more prevalent in Nigeria’s northeast zone, where the insurgency has been well over twelve years (Nextier, 2022). In some crisis areas in Nigeria, banditry poses significant threat to education due to large – scale kidnapping at places of learning. Education plays a vital role to for the children affected to a rebuilt their lives. Learning provides emotional support and stability, helping children cope with trauma and stress. It Foster resilience and coping skills, enabling children to navigate uncertainty and adversity. Promote social cohesion and community engagement, helping to rebuild social networks

and support system. Learning also offers skills and knowledge for future livelihoods, empowering children to build a better future World Bank (2018).

Roles of Education Programs in Crisis Areas in Nigeria

There are education programs and initiatives in crisis affected areas in Nigeria, aimed at supporting children and communities affected by crisis and conflict.

The International Displaced Persons (IDP) in Maiduguri, Nigeria:

In crisis affected areas, children are forced to leave their homes due to conflicts or disasters. The IDP in Maiduguri serves the following purposes; provided temporary learning spaces for IDP children. It trained teachers to address the trauma and psychosocial needs of students. It offered a condensed curriculum to help students catch up on missed education. The IDP distributed learning materials, including textbooks and school supplies. It also supported community-based education initiatives (UNICEF, 2018).

Challenges of the IDP in Crisis-affected Areas

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) in crisis - affected areas face significant challenges that impact their well-being, safety, and future prospects. Some of the key challenges include:

1. **Limited resources and infrastructure:** IDPs often lack access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and sanitation (UNESCO, 2019).
2. **Security concerns and attack on schools:** IDPs may be targeted or attacked disrupting education and putting children at risk (UNESCO, 2019).
3. **Stigma and discrimination against IDP children:** IDP children may experience stigma and discrimination, making it difficult for them to access services and integrate into host communities (UNICEF, 2020).
4. **Need for sustained support and funding:** IDPs require sustained support and funding to address their needs and rebuild their lives (Brooking institutions, 2017)
5. **UNICEF Nigeria, in Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina state:**
The UNICEF is another Education program which supports the crisis affected area. It focused on emergency responses. It provided girl child education. The UNICEF provided teacher training in crisis affected areas. It made the Provision of learning material (UNICEF, 2020).
6. **Save the children Nigeria:** This is another operating education programs in the Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina states. The program provided emergency education responses for the crisis affected areas. It also introduced child-friendly spaces to reduce the number the number of out-of school children in crisis affected areas in Nigeria. It provided Education in Emergencies (EiE). It also provided teacher training to the affected areas (Save the Children, 2019).
7. **USAID Nigeria:** USAID is also a supporting education initiative in Sokoto, Zamfara and Katsina state through: The Northern Education Initiatives plus (NEI+), which provides access to quality education. The Education Crisis Response (ECR) program, which provides emergency education for the affected areas (UNHCR, 2019).

8. **Nigerian Government Initiatives:** Through the Safe Schools Initiative (SSI), the Federal Government of Nigeria protected Nigerian children in schools from the insurgent attacks. The government also initiated the Education in Emergencies Working Group (EEWG) to ensure school age conflict affected children have continued equal access to quality basic education (Global Partnership for Education, 2019).
9. **Local NGOs and Organizations:**
Various local organizations such as Sokoto State Education Development Trust Fund, Zamfara and Katsina State Universal Basic Education Boards, etc are also working to support children in crisis-affected areas (Child Fund International, 2019).

Challenges Facing Out-of-School Children in Crisis Areas

Despite the benefits of education, learning opportunities remains a significant challenge for out-of-school in crisis areas. They include:

1. **Conflict and insecurity:** Insecurity in Nigeria poses a significant threat to Nigeria's stability and development as a nation. The scourge of kidnapping for ransom remains a pervasive threat to Nigeria's security landscape. To address this challenge, security agencies must adopt a proactive approach, leveraging advanced intelligence gathering capabilities and strategic partnership. Thus, enhanced collaboration with neighbouring countries and international partners is crucial for dismantling transnational criminals involved in kidnapping and other illicit activities (Save the Children, 2019).
2. **Displacement and migration:** Displacement is disruptive to education and livelihood. A range of factors, such as conflicts and disasters affect education attainment in some crisis areas in Nigeria. Government should promote educational stability to enable affected children rebuild their lives (Global Partnership for Education, 2019).
3. **Lack of resources and infrastructure:** in crisis affected areas, children lack necessary materials for learning. Funds should be raised to provide appropriate facilities and equipment for a sustainable education (Save the Children, 2019).
4. **Social and cultural norms that prioritize other needs over education:** In Nigeria, social-cultural norms lead to conflict and crisis which hinder the educational stability and livelihood of the children affected. There is the need for the adoption of inclusive governance to manage ethnicity in Nigeria (UNESCO, 2011).

Solutions

To address education crisis, stakeholders such as government, NGOs etc, need to establish temporary learning centres, implementing flexible and informal education programs, deploying mobile teaching units, utilizing digital platforms and online resources, and providing psychosocial support. Additionally, rebuilding and rehabilitating damaged schools, training and deploying teachers, implementing alternative education programs, addressing socio economic barriers, and promoting community engagement can provide long-term solutions. By implementing these solutions, Nigeria can ensure can ensure that all children have access to quality education, unlocking their potential and securing a brighter future.

Conclusion

Education is a lifeline for out-of-school children in crisis areas, offering hope, stability and a chance to rebuild their lives. Increased support and investment are crucial to ensuring access to quality learning opportunities, ultimately empowering children to create a brighter future. By prioritizing education, we can help mitigate the effects of crisis and conflict, supporting the most vulnerable population in their time of need.

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