

# Improving Nigeria's Basic Education System

Case Study of the Adopt-A-School Initiative (AASI)



LEA BUNGHA-GIDA PRIMARY  
SCHOOL MANGU, PLATEAU

Supported by



Oando Foundation





Over **500,000 pupils** in public primary schools across Nigeria, have benefitted directly from the **Adopt-A-School Initiative of the Oando Foundation.**

# Adopt-A-School Initiative (AASI)

The Adopt-A-School Initiative (AASI) is the flagship project of the Oando Foundation. AASI deploys a holistic approach of integrated school improvement, addressing critical supply and demand factors that affect learning, teaching, management, parental/community participation, and responsiveness to children's needs while creating proof of concept for project replication and scale.

Riding on Oando PLC's commitment to achieving the right of every child to quality education in Nigeria, Oando Foundation was established as an independent charity to support the Nigerian Government in achieving its Universal Basic Education goal. The vision is to create sustainable and equitable educational systems in communities that empower every child through the Adopt-A-School Initiative (AASI).

We are building on the goodwill and commitment demonstrated by state and local partners, working through government systems to create ownership and sustained participation in the programme – improving skills and building capacity of the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs), Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs) and School Based Management Committees (SBMCs) to deliver basic education dividends to their communities; and strategically contextualizing our approaches and solutions for sustainability and scale.

This case study highlights the insights gained while implementing the AASI, challenges and lessons learnt for replication and knowledge sharing.

## Our Commitment

The world is changing very rapidly. To prepare our children for this new world, we need to create an education system where all students, regardless of income or socioeconomic status, have the knowledge and skills needed to unlock their potentials and flourish in an ever-changing 21st century.







# Why School Improvement?

Education has long been critical to human welfare, but it is even more so in a time of rapid economic and social change. Delivered well, education—and the human capital it creates—has many benefits for economies and societies. For individuals, education promotes employment, earnings, and health. It raises pride and opens new horizons.

For societies, it drives long-term economic growth, reduces poverty, spurs innovation, strengthens institutions, and fosters social cohesion.

Unfortunately, in Nigeria, far too many children are not in school, while those in school are not learning sufficiently. Nigeria reportedly has the largest number of children not enrolled in school globally, with girls comprising the larger proportion by far (UNICEF). Issues affecting the delivery of education are complex and interconnected; unavailability of schools in some communities, unfriendly school environment, incessant teacher strikes, shortage of teachers and caregivers at all levels of basic education and factors relating to politics and governance, including a low level of political will, the politicization of basic education, weak school level governance, and poor financing of education. This was the exact situation of many public primary schools in Nigeria when the Oando Foundation operationalized the AASI in 2011.

Prior to the establishment of the Foundation, Oando PLC had engaged in various community projects and periodic donations to causes that aligned with its corporate social responsibility initiatives. However, the approach was not sustainable, interventions were arbitrary and did it have the consistency required for long-term impact. Following extensive stakeholder engagements, research, and review of best practices in public education support, especially from existing programmes such as the UKAid-funded Education Sector Support

Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN), the AASI was conceptualized as Oando Foundation's response to the national basic education challenges.

In 2013, the Foundation carried out a baseline study across 25 initially adopted primary schools across 8 states covering southern and northern regions. Our result corroborated existing evidence that huge geographical disparities exist; there is considerable variation with northern states showing significantly higher proportions of children not in school compared to those in the south. Learning outcomes are deeply unsatisfactory.

Public primary schools are in deplorable conditions, with many parents losing faith in teachers' ability to transfer knowledge. Learning is constrained by teachers who lack pedagogical skills and are often poorly motivated. School communities are fragmented, lacking the voice to call education service providers to account or effectively support school improvement processes. School infrastructure is either inadequate, decaying or both.

Findings from the study showed that 52% of pupils enrolled were girls. Less than 20% of Early Childhood Education Development Center (ECEDC) classrooms were in good condition, requiring an additional 57 to reduce the pupil classroom ratio from 1:62 to 1:40.



At the primary level, about 58% of the classrooms were in fairly good condition, whilst an additional 207 classrooms would be required across the 25 AASI schools to reduce classroom-pupil ratio from 1:78 to 1:40; the recommended class size per teacher. Furniture requirements topped every other school supply request.

The gap between what was available and what was required was also evident during school assessment visits, in collaboration with the SUBEBs. The quality of teaching and learning was below par, as results of our Teacher Development Needs Assessment (TDNA) revealed a weak capacity base for teachers in our target schools, with significant capacity gaps exist in classroom management and subject content knowledge especially numeracy, literacy and science and technology. School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) were established in 36% of adopted schools, and majority of them had not received any formal training on their roles, responsibilities, boundaries and relevance.

The limited and sometimes inaccurate and unreliable data from education agencies saddled with the responsibility of data collation and management meant our intervention could be severely challenged without an improvement in the process.

Based on this evidence, the need for change was imperative. The opportunity to introduce sustainable change innovations requires approaches that are multifaceted and fits local realities. Oando Foundation AASI model leveraged best practices on scalable whole school improvement

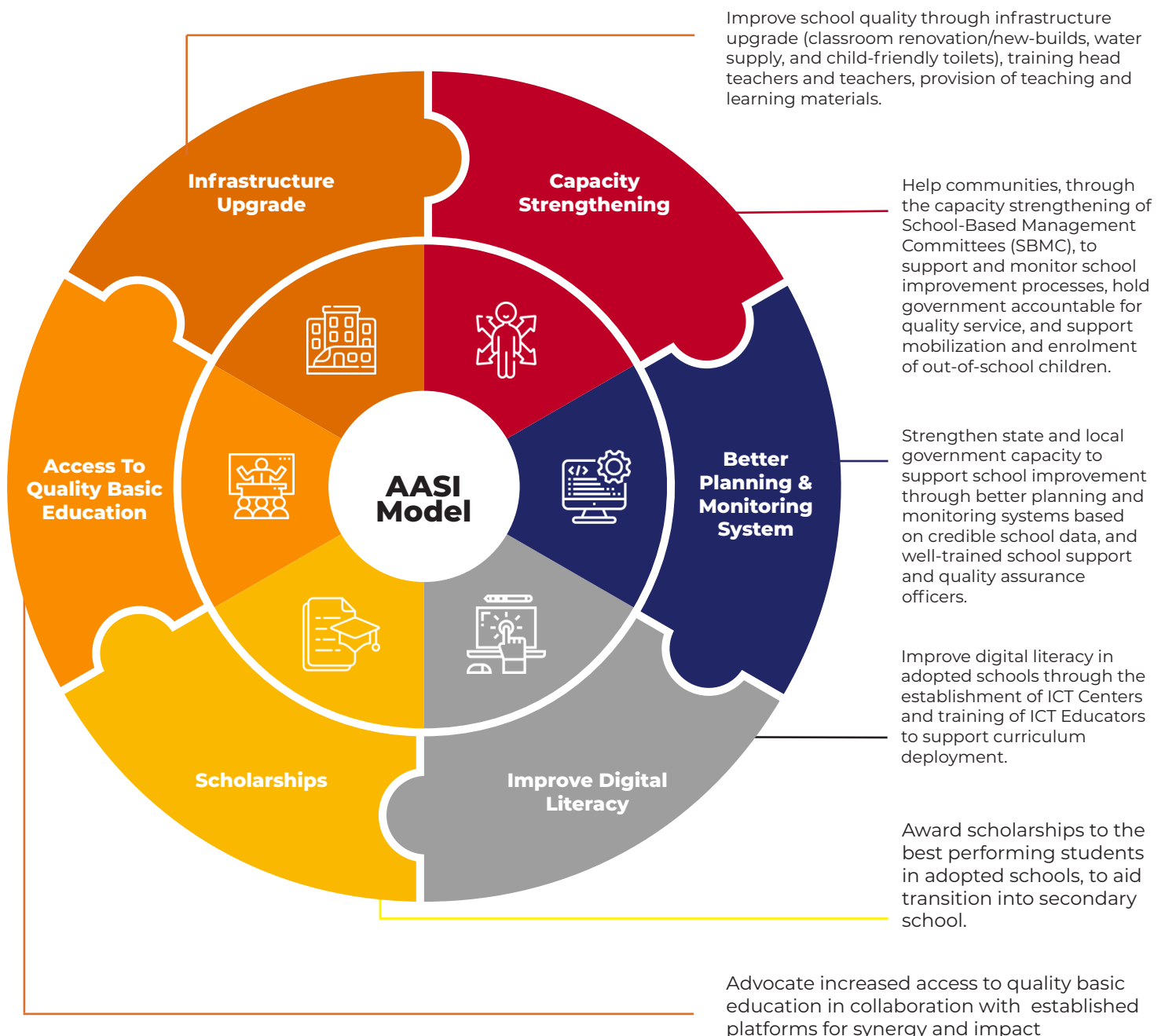


# Adopt-A-School Model

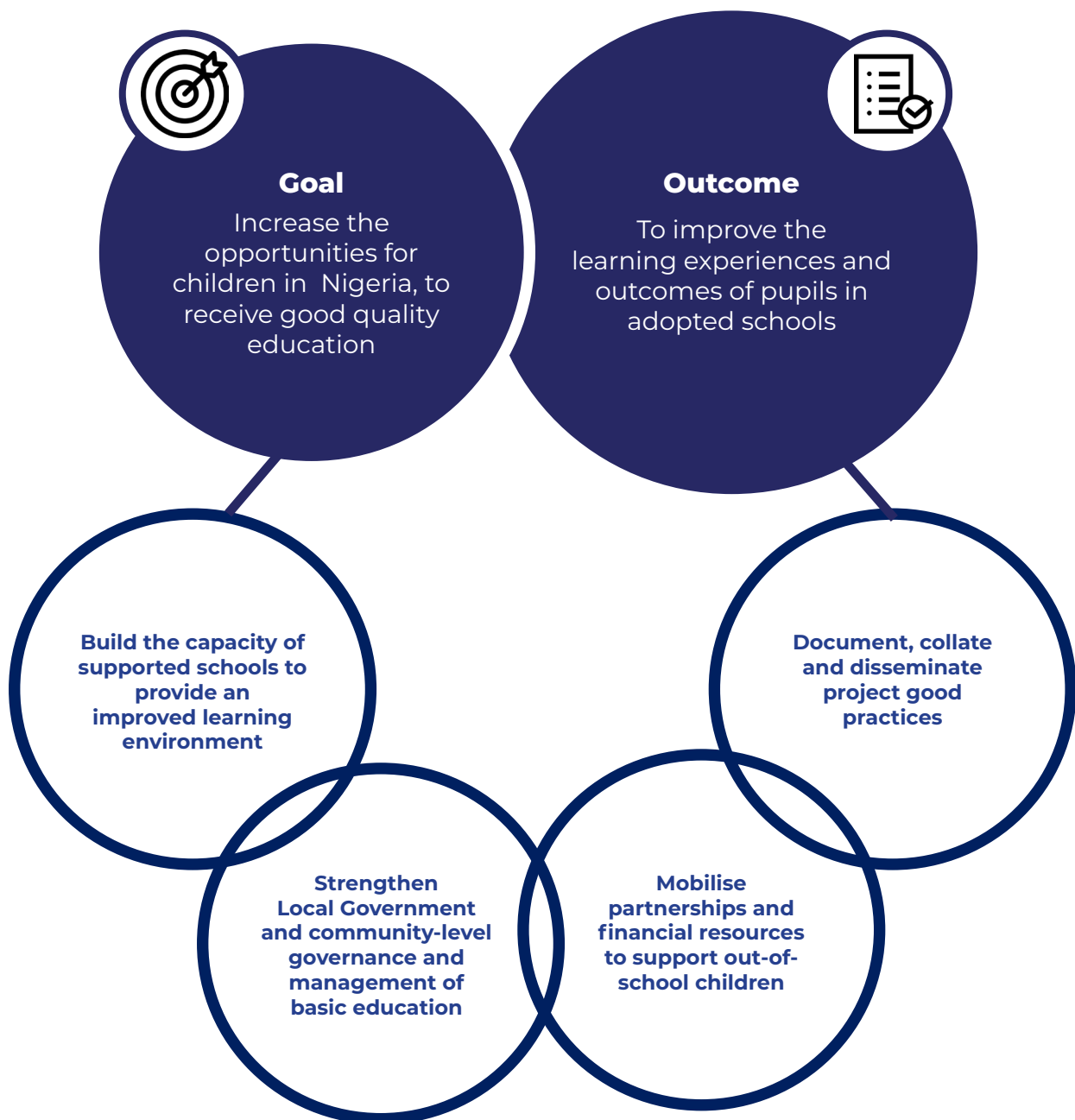
AASI advocates that improving the quality of basic education in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach. The theory of change asserts that sustainable school improvement is possible if implemented through a whole system approach where inter-connected factors complement each other. For long term impact of all children acquiring basic literacy and numeracy in primary school, and more children, especially girls and other marginalized groups, enrolling and completing primary education; we would require better quality schools providing improved learning environments, more children

attending these better quality schools, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds, and government agencies establishing effective school support systems and funding school improvement sustainably.

The AASI, therefore, seeks to adopt best practices and ideas to accelerate access and quality of basic education, supporting existing state government interventions to:



## The AASI Conceptual Framework



## Implementation Process

Phases	Selection	Stakeholder Engagement	Execution	Monitoring & Evaluation
<b>Key Activation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School selection in line with criteria (Appendix 1)</li> <li>- Obtain necessary government approvals Implementing partner selection</li> <li>- Conduct baseline assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage Community members</li> <li>- Engage agencies responsible for basic education.</li> <li>- Engage Development partners within the communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Deliver components of AASI in phased approach –</li> <li>- Infrastructure, teacher training, LGEA, SBMC, Scholarship, ICT &amp; ECCD</li> <li>- Continuous engagement of stakeholders using participatory approaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Baseline assessment</li> <li>- Consistent progress monitoring</li> <li>- Reporting and feedback sessions with stakeholders</li> <li>- End of project assessment</li> <li>- Impact evaluation (post project)</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Selected schools</li> <li>- Implementing partner selected</li> <li>- Secured approvals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meeting Reports and buy in secured</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved participation, increased access, conducive learning environment etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- M&amp;E reports</li> </ul>



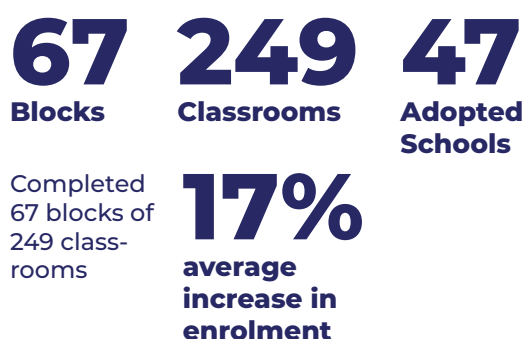
# Key Areas to Focus for School Improvement Achievement



## Infrastructure Improvement:

Classroom environment is one of the most important factors affecting student learning. Simply put, students learn better when they view the learning environment as positive and supportive. Oando Foundation improves the quality of learning infrastructure in its adopted schools through construction of new classrooms, renovation of existing structures, provision of age-appropriate furniture, digital learning centers, ensuring access to clean water and sanitation facilities. Working with SBMCs through the CBR approach, the Foundation completed 67 blocks of 249 classrooms (renovation and new build), in addition to other sanitation and hygiene projects across 47 adopted schools; benefitting teachers and pupils and attracting more children to school.

We have recorded a 17% average increase in enrolment following any infrastructure development work in schools.



## Community Engagement:

Our School Based Management Committee (SBMC) approach strengthens the capacity of school communities to understand their roles and responsibilities in education planning and delivery and empowers them to actively participate in the process for improved basic education access and quality. The Foundation has enhanced the capacity of over 1,731 School Based Management Committees (SBMCs), driving the needed communal support for improved learning achievement. We are consistently witnessing the steady transformation of SBMCs in most adopted schools from docile, ill-equipped school groups unable to champion effective change in their school's communities; to becoming drivers of change, springing hope for sustained community involvement in school improvement processes.





### Education Support for Out of School Children (OOSC):

We aimed to increase access to quality education for over 30,000 OOSC in Nigeria. Hence, we made concerted effort to target OOSC and cater to their unique needs. The Foundation's Walk-in Centers (WICs) serve as informal learning spaces within the school system for newly enrolled OOSC to learn basic literacy and numeracy skills through an intense and condensed curriculum, before transitioning to formal classes. The Foundation works with the SUBEB, LGEA, and school management to provide teachers who deploy an active learning approach that comprises songs, games, and group study activities to engage students and help them retain knowledge.

We provide teaching and learning materials including tex books in local languages, charts and writing materials to support learning among OOSC for a nine-month period. To date, the Foundation has enrolled over 60,000 OOSC into formal school. Of these, 16,345 have passed through the WICs with an 80% transition rate into formal classes, and on the path towards actualizing their right to quality basic education.

**30k+** OOSC received quality education

**60k+** OOSC enrolled into formal school.

**16,345** passed through the WICs

**80%** transition rate into formal classes



### Scholarships:

Financial exclusion from education is a major barrier prohibiting many children from accessing education. Oando Foundation scholarship programme is supporting continued education access for underserved children. The programme supports children who have excelled in their academics to transit and complete secondary school, whilst building a culture of excellence among children in Oando adopted schools. The award covers tuition where applicable and other expenses which includes transportation, study materials and uniforms.

To date, 1,153 children have received over \$555,000 scholarship funding, over 100 have completed secondary education, increasing their opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.

1,153 children have received over  
**\$555,0000**





### Teacher Training:

Teachers, of course, are the cornerstone of education. We are building a cadre of in-service teachers in all adopted schools who are learner focused, knowledgeable and competent, able to use participatory methodologies in their pedagogical practices.

The Foundation strengthens teachers' capacity in core subject knowledge (Math, English, Science and Tech) and effective classroom management techniques whilst providing teaching and learning materials (including teacher guides and lesson plans) to enhance the learning experience.

Head teachers and their assistants are also trained on effective school management and leadership, while Quality Assurance Officers at the at the state and local levels are trained to provide on-going mentoring and monitoring support for trained teachers, in line with statutory responsibilities. About 2,832 teachers have been trained nationwide – with measurable improvement in teaching and learning outcomes in these schools.

**2,832** Trained teachers nationwide



### Digital Literacy:

Though an important life skill in this century, millions of children in Nigeria have never used a computer. The digital programme is increasing access to ICT education in target public primary schools by providing students with Information Communication and Technology (ICT) facilities and empowering them with technology skills through creativity and learning. We complement this with strengthening the capacity of in-school ICT educators to transfer knowledge to the learners, entrench practical application of the national ICT curriculum, and provide ICT textbooks and software to support teaching and learning experiences. Through the programme, Oando Foundation set up 39 solar powered ICT centers across adopted schools, providing access to over 79,000+ pupils to practically experience digital learning and build requisite skills for survival in the 21st century. We have witnessed a 32% average increase in number of students now able to use the computer for a wide range of learning activities in core subjects (Mathematics and English). In addition, OF is maximizing linkages with other components of the AASI for improved outcomes. ICT Centers in adopted schools also serve as school data repository for local education officers, and teachers have access to various audio-visual teaching materials, including lesson plans and teacher guides uploaded on the computers for their self-study.

**39** Solar powered ICT centers across adopted schools, providing access to over 79,000+ pupils

**32%** Average increase in number of students now able to use the computer for a wide range of learning activities



### Education Quality Assurance:

Oando Foundation strengthens the capacity of LGEA Quality Assurance Officers to support basic education delivery in target schools. The LGEA component of the AASI is aimed at improving evidence-based planning and decision making across all government levels by building the capacity of relevant units at the state and local levels in effective use and application of Education Management Information Systems to support the quality of data collection in our public primary schools. It is based on the premise that accurate education data will lead to proper planning and achievement of desired outcome at the school and government level. 382 education managers and quality assurance officers have benefited from the programme, 78% improvement in education data management and usage across focal LGEAs.

A confluence of these interventions now reflects in the changes we are experiencing: increased enrolment, improved teaching and learning, involvement of communities in education deliver, and more importantly, a replicable model that can be scaled across other schools and communities.

**382** Education managers and quality assurance officers

**78%** improvement in education data management and usage across focal LGEAs.

*We focused on scouting for out-of-school children in our communities, and last year (2018), about 400 out-of-school children were mobilized and enrolled into school. They are all still in school.*

- Mrs Badiya Suleiman  
SBMC member at General Mohammed Buhari Primary School, Daura

*Many of the children here are seeing computers for the first time in their lives, thanks to Oando Foundation that provided this ICT centre.*

- Nasiru Bala, ICT Teacher at  
Mabera Magaji Primary School,  
Sokoto

*The ICT centre is very outstanding because we are in a technological age. Even now you need the computer to write JAMB so this is very useful for our pupils. The Governor has asked us for the cost implication of replicating similar ICT centres like the Oando's and we are working on it.*

- Mr Farouk Shehu, Permanent  
Secretary, Sokoto SUBEB

*As the guardian of He-long Danjuma . . . I'm meant to be paying his school fees but by giving him scholarship], Oando has lifted the burden off me. My pleasant surprise is that he has been performing very well continuously*

- Charles Danjuma, Shendam,  
Plateau State





# Evidence of School Improvement

OF has documented many achievements. Through our partnerships cutting across all levels of governance in the basic education sub-sector, more than 60,000 out of school children, particularly girls and vulnerable children, are on the path to acquiring literacy and numeracy skills that will improve their lives and impact positively on their communities. 2,832 school teachers have improved their subject knowledge and pedagogical practices and are passing on this knowledge to children in adopted schools in simple, engaging, and effective ways that build their cognitive and socio-emotional skills. Our teacher and learning materials (TLMs) further aid the transfer of knowledge and enrich the students' learning experiences. Steadily, we are changing behaviour towards education in the communities we serve by empowering our partners, SBMCs, and grassroots mobilizers with evidence-based messaging on the importance of basic education, and their role in ensuring increased enrolment, retention, and

transition within the school system. Our strategic partnership with key technical and funding organizations contributes to the overall quality of projects implemented, providing opportunities for increased awareness and project scale up.

*Oando Foundation's adopted schools are always one or two steps ahead of other schools because of their method of teaching. The teachers were trained in pedagogy, classroom management. They are more learned, educated and have modern techniques of teaching due to the training they have undergone.*

**- Ibrahim Isa**  
Oando Foundation Desk Officer  
State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB)  
Adamawa State

# Early results of the Foundation's AASI are summarized below:

**500K+**  
Children

**88**  
Communities

500,000+ children directly impacted across 88 target communities since its inception in 2011

**60,955**  
Out of School Children

**77%**  
Retained

60,955 out of school children enrolled, 77% retained; particularly girls and vulnerable children now on the path to acquiring literacy and numeracy skills that will improve their lives and impact positively on their communities.

**2,832**  
School Teachers

**210**  
Headteachers

2,832 school teachers have improved their core subject knowledge and pedagogical practices, while 210 headteachers trained in leadership and school administration have become much more effective in school management.

**1,731** SBMC Members  
Trained

1,731 SBMC members trained and are now more functional in discharging their primary roles and responsibilities.

**382** Education Officers  
Trained

382 Education Officers trained on evidence planning and education data management: with some state quality assurance departments fully embracing and replicating this intervention for maximum impact.

**1,153**  
Scholarships  
Awarded

**4,000**  
Indirect Beneficiaries

1,153 scholarships awarded to brilliant, underserved children to transit and complete secondary school, affecting over 4,000 indirect beneficiaries.

**29.9%-26.0%** Drop out reduction  
rate in North

'Drop out' rate for children reduced from 29.9% to 26.0% across adopted schools in Northern states while Southern schools dropped significantly from 15.1% in 2016 to 5.5% in 2018.

**15.1% - 5.5%** Drop out reduction  
rate in North

**37%** Average increase in enrolment

**82%+** Transitioned to secondary school

Maintained a 37% average increase in enrolment in the last 3 academic sessions (2017 – 2020) across target schools and over 82% transition to secondary school.



**54** Schools refurbished      **4** School perimeter fences

**67** Blocks of      **249** Classrooms

**170+** Sanitation & hygiene facilities

**4,000+** Units of school furniture      **200k+** Students in adopted schools

Refurbished 54 schools – infrastructure works include 67 blocks of 249 classrooms, 4 school perimeter fences, 170+ sanitation and hygiene facilities, and 4,000+ units of school furniture; improving the learning environment of 200,00+ students in adopted schools.

**39** Digital Literacy Centers      **32%** Average increase in number of students digital literacy

Established 39 Digital Literacy Centers and donated educational software to support deployment curriculum-based lessons in adopted schools. 70,000+ beneficiaries now have access to digital learning opportunities. 32% average increase in number of students now able to use the computer for a wide range of learning activities in core subjects (Mathematics and English). Teachers also have access to various audio-visual teaching materials, including lesson plans and teacher guides uploaded on the computers for their self-study.

**30K+** Teaching and learning materials donated

30,000+ teaching and learning materials donated across adopted schools to improve knowledge transfer.

**Increased Community Engagement**

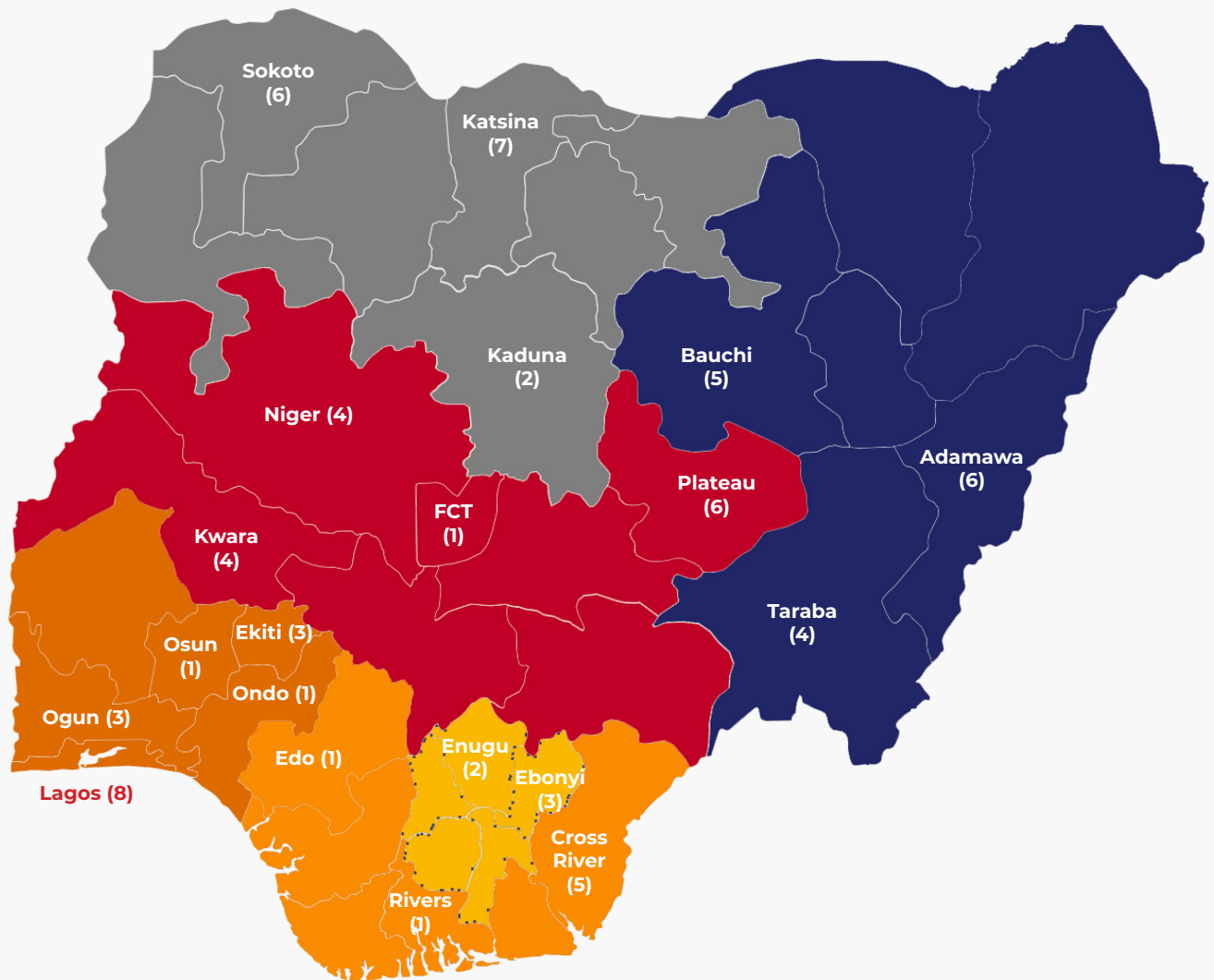
Increased community participation in school governance and development, working with key groups such as the School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs)

**Expansion of our Intervention Models**

Replication of our intervention models by Government Education Agencies – Community Based Renovation (CBR) approach for infrastructure projects, Teacher Development Programme (TDP), and Quality Assurance Capacity Development models are being partly replicated by Sokoto, Plateau, Katsina, and Lagos state governments.

# Our Reach

**88 adopted schools across  
23 states and the FCT**



North-Central	15	North-East	15	North-West	15
South-East	5	South-South	18	South-West	17

# Key Lessons

Through the years, we have evolved, adapted, and learnt from our mistakes. Below are some of our key lessons-

## **Education policies and systems are only as effective as the quality of human resource:**

Sustainability and quality of school improvement rely upon the people and institutions within the system. Building inclusive partnership and capacity of community members, teachers and individuals within the school enable programme efficiency and sustainability.

## **Scholarships remain a veritable tool in education support**

for underserved children into higher levels of education. This increases their opportunities for sustainable livelihood. Financial exclusion has remained the number one cause of pupil drop-out from school.

## **Optimizing Operational Efficiency:**

AASI programme was implemented in 88 schools across 23 states. Spreading our schools loosely created implementation challenges and increased operational cost. It is pertinent to cluster project sites for ease of management and depth of impact.

## **Long-term whole school improvement support could significantly impact pupil's performance and improve outcome:**

there are interplay of factors that affect pupil's performance in school. However, it takes an average of 3-5 years from the start of the programme to see significant result on pupil's performance.

**Empowered host communities are not only helping to mobilize resources** for schools, but they are also monitoring all existing and ongoing projects in the school, including those provided by Oando Foundation.

Empowering communities to take ownership and deepen participation of public schools in their communities is a veritable way of improving and sustaining school projects.

## **Whole-School improvement strategies require the contribution of multiple actors**

- the government, communities, private sector, development partners and every stakeholder contributing to public primary schools in Nigeria.

## **Government commitment through counterpart funding:**

Part of the AASI delivery strategy is the engagement of government partners to mutually agree and document their commitment towards supporting adopted schools in the state. Through this, we were able to attract additional support to adopted schools, to complement our interventions.

## **Successful school improvement models must engage key government actors**

and ensure their buy-in from the planning, through delivery and monitoring of the project. The government remains the institution with the primary responsibility for education delivery and possess the resource for scalability. Development assistance programme planning, to work at scale, will inevitably accept that we cannot enact reforms ourselves, but we can influence, catalyze, and support them.



# Challenges to Ponder

## **Diverse systemic issues requiring substantial resources to tackle:**

Substantial volumes of technical and financial resources are required to deal with the challenges of education access and delivery. Hence, whole-school improvement cannot be achieved in isolation.

The Foundation explored partnerships across sectors – government, private sector, and development partners to increase impact and ensure achievement of key targets.

## **Lack of continuity and limited historical knowledge in education agencies:**

The magnitude and variety of the changes that occur with a political change in administration sometimes impede continuity and delay project implementation. Most times, there is no handover to ensure a smooth transition, creating institutional knowledge loss. Incessant transfer of trained teachers could also create instability. Oando Foundation ensured the execution of memorandum of understanding with the SUBEB, to limit this practice for at least 3 years post teacher training.

## **Inadequate security around school properties**

– Recorded cases of the unauthorized use, misuse, and stealing of school properties and facilities.

These were more pronounced in schools without perimeter fences. However, engagement with SBMCs increased security of our investments in these schools, as they took responsibility for ensuring the security of facilities.

# Conclusion

The challenges in the public primary education system in Nigeria are multifaceted. There is an urgent need for increased allocation of public resources to the education sector.

Synergy among all stakeholders – government, private sector, civil society is critical for mutual accountability, optimizing economies of scale, and avoiding duplication of efforts across all levels. The unique role organized private sector can play through strategic partnerships that leverage technical expertise and resource mobilization opportunities must be harnessed.

We are convinced through evidence that whole school improvement approaches are more effective and should be deployed against arbitrary unconnected schools' interventions.

# About Oando Foundation

Oando Foundation is an independent charity established to support the Nigerian Government in achieving its Universal Basic Education goal; with a vision to create sustainable and equitable educational systems in communities that empower every child through its signature project the Adopt-A-School Initiative (AASI).

AASI deploys a holistic approach of integrated school improvement, addressing critical supply and demand factors that affect learning, teaching, management, parental/community participation and responsiveness to children's needs, providing proof of concept for programme replication and scale up. It comprises Infrastructural Improvement, Teacher Capacity Development, Digital Literacy, Early Childcare Development, Grants and scholarships, and institutional strengthening of education managers, targeting 88 public primary school communities across Nigeria



For more information on how Oando Foundation is impacting basic education in Nigeria, please visit [www.oandofoundation.org](http://www.oandofoundation.org)