



MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF SCHOOL INSECURITY IN NIGERIA:

A Comprehensive Study on
Educational Vulnerabilities and
Security Challenges



ABOUT THE STUDY

Mapping the Landscape of School Insecurity in Nigeria: A Comprehensive Study on Educational Vulnerabilities and Security Challenges in Nigeria investigates the state of kidnapping in Nigeria since the Chibok Abductions in 2014 with particular focus on its impact on the school environment and students, especially the girl child. Based on available data, the study's outcome spotlights the regions within Nigeria with the highest level of vulnerability with top notch infographics that make intervention by key stakeholders easy to identify. It further analyses the steps so far taken by governments at the states and federal level as well as international organizations, including recommendations for best practice.

ABOUT DO TAKE ACTION

The Power of One: We believe in the potential of individual actions at the community and institutional level to address the wicked problems affecting our world. That is why we work to inspire and empower people to take action and drive positive change. We believe that individual and collective action at scale at the institutional and community levels holds the true power to build the Africa of our dreams, so we are building a critical mass of 1 billion+ people taking action to drive sustainable development in Africa, one action and community at a time.

Who We Are

We are a non-profit startup on a mission to build a critical mass of 1 billion Africans taking personal and collective action for sustainable development, one action and community at a time. To deliver on our mission, we inspire, empower, and amplify action for sustainable development. As an organization, our thematic focus is designed to inspire actions fashioned to address issues in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Some of our core sustainable development goals of interest are: Goal 4: Ensure Inclusive and equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All; Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing; Goal 8: Decent work for All; Goal 10: Reduce Inequality; and Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals.

Since Inception, we have inspired over 3,000+ Grassroots Development Champions, Empowered 800+ Actions for Sustainable Development in Nigeria and across Africa, Reached 94,000 beneficiaries and Impacted over 400 Communities

A better future is possible, despite the endless list of problems confronting Africa. However, to achieve this future, a critical mass of people will need to take action to drive sustainable development in their locality, one action at a time.

We believe individual and collective action at the grassroots level holds the true power to build the Africa of our dreams. We know the journey to liberation isn't a journey for one, so we are building a critical mass of 1 billion+ people taking action to drive sustainable development in Africa, one action and community at a time.

What We Do

We design and manage projects, programs and campaigns that drive sustainable development using evidence-based project planning techniques and proven program design strategies, we develop and manage programs that address unique issues affecting communities.

We Inspire Action for sustainable development across our issues.

We recruit individuals through targeted outreaches and campaigns to become grassroots development champions and take action on projects, programs, and campaigns that address key issues in their communities or spheres of influence.



RESEARCH TEAM



Precious Ebere

Precious Ebere is an award-winning advocate, consultant, and co-founder of DO Take Action. She has written many articles and journals and has several years' experience in leadership and project management. She holds a Masters Degree in Public Policy from the University of Cardiff.

Precious Ebere is a Community Development Specialist, an Educational Policy Consultant, and an EDTech Professional with expertise in education, technology, public leadership, and youth engagement.



Austin Maxwell

Austin Maxwell is the Programs Lead at DO Take Action and has a wealth of experience in project management, research and report writing and is a WASH expert. He holds a BSc in from the Nnamdi Azikiwe University



Kehinde Fadumo

Kehinde Fadumo is the Programs Manager for Access to Education and Equity at DO Take Action. He holds a Masters Degree in Managerial Psychology from the University of Ibadan and is well experienced in the area of community engagement, He has participated in numerous government funded projects and sessions with particular focus on development of education in Nigeria.

Acronyms

AGILE	Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment
AGILE	The Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment
ASSEP	Accelerated Senior Secondary Education Programme
BESDA	Better Education Service Delivery for All
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CDRR	Community Disaster Risk Reduction
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DO	Do Take Action
EPRP	Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
GDC	Grassroots Development Champions
GEP	Girls Education Project
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICIR	International Centre for Investigating Reporting
JAMB	Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board
LEA	Local Education Authority
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NEMIS	National Education Management Information System
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NHGSFP	National Home Grown School Feeding Programme
NPSSVFS	National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence Free Schools in Nigeria
NSCDC	Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corp
SSD	Safe Schools Declaration
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children Education Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Study.....	
About Do Take Action.....	
The Research Team.....	
Acronyms.....	
1.0 Introduction.....	
2.0 Historical Context.....	
3.0 Methodology.....	
4.0 Types of Educational Vulnerability.....	
4.1 Physical Security.....	
4.2 Cybersecurity.....	
4.3 Social Vulnerabilities.....	
4.4 Infrastructure Vulnerabilities.....	
5.0 Security Challenges Facing Nigerian Schools.....	
5.1 Terrorism and Insurgency.....	
5.2 Kidnappings and Abductions.....	
5.3 Armed Conflicts and Communal Violence.....	
5.4 Corruption and Mismanagement.....	
6.0 Impact on Education.....	
6.1 Case Studies.....	
7.0 Response Mechanisms.....	
7.1 Government Initiatives.....	
7.2 International NGO Response.....	
7.3 Community Engagement.....	
7.4 Capacity Building.....	
7.5 How other countries solved their challenges.....	
8.0 Recommendations.....	
8.1 Call to action.....	
9.0 Conclusion.....	
10.0 Reference.....	

1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to the Annual School Census report conducted in 2019 by the Nigeria Education Management Information System (NEMIS) of the Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria has over 250,000 public and private primary and secondary schools including Islamic and nomadic schools. The summary of this is that the vast scale of Nigeria's education sector underlines the enormous challenge of securing every school child and school environment from organized armed attack.

As universally agreed, education is one of the cornerstones of societal development and nation-building and it is a fundamental human right guaranteed by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) and the Universal Basic Education Act (2004) which provides for compulsory, free universal basic education for all children of primary and junior secondary school age.

The National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria (NPSSVFSN) drafted in 2021 by the Federal Government of Nigeria also agreed that Schools are important to nation building and that the school represents a space where learners are comprehensively educated and developed. The document stated further that this development can be guaranteed only if teaching and learning takes place in a safe and secure environment.

However, in Nigeria today, schools face numerous security challenges impeding their ability to provide a safe and conducive learning environment. These security challenges have created an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, leading to widespread school closures and a significant decline in student enrolment especially in the North-East and North-West Region of Nigeria.

Moreover, the psychological trauma inflicted on the victims, including survivors and their families, has had lasting effects on the pursuit of education.

It is, therefore, necessary to stress that for children to have full access to basic education and for the optimum realization of the objectives of basic education to be achieved, both students and teachers should perceive the school environment as being safe and secure for teaching and learning to take place (EO Ihekoronye & C. Opara 2021). This study aims to analyze the various vulnerabilities and security threats plaguing schools across Nigeria.

2.0 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The ability to obtain a basic education is currently being jeopardized for millions of children worldwide particularly in Nigeria, by lack of safety experienced in or around schools. Children can be attacked on their way to or from school, be deterred from attending school by real or perceived threats and are increasingly being attacked within schools themselves by bandits, terrorists and other extremist groups looking to recruit, abduct, indoctrinate, intimidate or use the school infrastructure itself for covert purposes.

In recent years, educational institutions in Nigeria have faced numerous security challenges, impeding their ability to provide a safe and conducive learning environment. The absence of well-coordinated systems to support safety and security practices in schools across Nigeria has brought about the prevalence of human-induced violence against teachers and learners while at school. Undoubtedly, this has implications for the educational, health and social wellbeing of society at large.

In the early hours of April 14, 2014, suspected members of the proscribed terrorist group, Boko stormed the Government Secondary School, Chibok and abducted 276 girls preparing to write their final Secondary School Examinations sparking global condemnations. Since then, over 77 attacks have been launched on various schools across the country with devastating repercussions. Over 1.3million children have been displaced as a result of the activities of the terrorists. (UNICEF Safe Schools Cheat Sheet (February 2022)

In addition to this, 1,730 school children were kidnapped including 800 girls. Some have regained their freedom either by escaping or after ransom was paid. The not so lucky ones have died in captivity or have been forcefully married off to the bandits and terrorists.

A UNICEF Safe School Data compiled in February, 2024 revealed that a total of 723 schools have been shut down in 9 states because teachers and learners no longer feel secure in their schools as a result of the high level of destruction occasioned by the activities of the terrorist groups

Economic disparities are some of the underlying causes of the security difficulties. For example, families with lower incomes often struggle to afford school fees, uniforms, and supplies leading to situations where their children are unable to attend school or drop out when they do. This scenario usually occurs in the rural areas with higher poverty rates especially in the conflict riddled northeast and northwest where poverty rates are at an all time high of over 75% according to statistics made available by the World Bank and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The consequent low access to education increases the vulnerability of these children to vices and criminality.

The nature of the majority of the attacks is usually discreet and the schools that are caught in the web of insecurity are largely located in economically disadvantaged areas where basic security protection is absent. The absence of security protection makes schools in these areas more vulnerable to persistent attacks.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

The report utilises two methods to collate and analyse data. Media monitoring is the first technique, and it involves analysing the content of newspaper reports. The report uses this method to identify media reports of kidnappings of school children in Nigeria looking at reports from 2014 till date. The method involved collecting and analysing newspaper materials published around April 2014 when 276 Chibok girls were snatched from the Government Secondary School Chibok till date. Several news and social media platforms were selected for this purpose they include: The Punch, Vanguard, The Guardian, etc

The second part of the methodology was the use of existing research conducted by notable international bodies like The UN Women, World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO Etc. This was to identify the issues that promote the vulnerabilities of schools in Nigeria to security breaches.

4.0 TYPES OF EDUCATIONAL VULNERABILITIES

To understand the context of the discussion, we need to take a cursory look at the underlying issues that expose schools to violent and non-violent threats. They are discussed below:

4.1 Physical Security

Some of the major security challenges posed to schools include the exposure of their infrastructures to defects as a result of a lack of maintenance by school administrators and the government.

The majority of public schools in Nigeria have suffered long years of neglect evidenced by aging infrastructure that may have developed structural issues, such as weak foundations, and deteriorating walls or roofs, which could compromise the safety of students and teachers in the school environment. This is not helped by the fact that successive administrations have allocated limited funds to the maintenance and renovations of these structures or the funds are outrightly diverted into private hands.

In most cases, administrators don't pay attention to the designs of classrooms leading to poor designs and a lack of provision for people with disabilities and proper exits, making evacuation difficult in emergencies like fire outbreaks. Seamless evacuation during crises is made impossible when emergency supplies like first aid kits, fire extinguishers etc are unavailable.

Schools without security walls or with broken fences and gates are vulnerable to unauthorized access while inadequate control over who enters the premises can lead to security breaches and threats. In addition to these, the lack of proper surveillance systems or cameras reduces the ability of security operatives to monitor and respond to suspicious activities.

The absence of emergency preparedness mechanisms or its insufficiency can hinder evacuation efforts during crises and ineffective or outdated communication systems may delay response times during emergencies just like what happened during the Chibok case where the government and the school administrators exhibited poor emergency response and communication skills.

Another form of physical vulnerability is a school's proximity to high-crime areas especially in the vast land mass of the northeast bordering neighbouring countries such as Chad and Niger Republics where terrorist groups like Boko Haram have built camps causing security threats to schools in those areas. The NPSSVFN recommended that governments at the state and local level should work with local communities to ensure that the safest, most secure, and most accessible location is selected for all newly constructed schools and that, where possible, the new school is near a town.

4.2 Cybersecurity

The escalating threat of cyberattacks targeting educational institutions in Nigeria has emerged as a critical issue, posing significant risks to both students and staff. Cybercriminals are increasingly exploiting the rise in online activities, and no sector of Nigerian society, including education, is immune to these threats. The nature and impact of these cyber threats on schools are multifaceted and profound.

Educational institutions, by the nature of their operations, store vast amounts of sensitive information, encompassing student records, financial data, academic reports, and research findings. The potential for data breaches in these institutions is considerable, leading to unauthorized access to this information. Such breaches can result in identity theft, financial fraud, and other forms of data misuse. Nigerian educational institutions have not been spared from these incidents, with the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) database being a notable example of a significant compromise.

Phishing attacks represent another prevalent form of cyber threat targeting educational institutions. Cybercriminals, often referred to as “unethical hackers,” utilize deceptive emails that appear to originate from legitimate sources, such as school administration or faculty members.

These emails are designed to trick recipients into divulging sensitive information, such as login credentials or financial details. Successful phishing attacks can compromise an institution's network, leading to further security breaches and extensive damage.

Ransomware is a particularly destructive threat wherein cybercriminals encrypt an institution's data and demand ransom for decryption. The consequences of successful ransomware attacks include disrupted operations, compromised sensitive information, and significant financial losses. Educational institutions are frequent targets due to their reliance on data and their perceived vulnerability.

A critical factor contributing to the susceptibility of Nigerian educational institutions to cyberattacks is the often inadequate cybersecurity measures in place. Many institutions struggle with outdated software, lack of regular security updates, weak password policies, and insufficient cybersecurity awareness among staff and students. These vulnerabilities considerably heighten the risk of cyberattacks.

The impact of these cyberattacks extends beyond the immediate breach of data. They disrupt the educational environment, interrupt classes, affect research projects, and damage the institution's reputation. Such disruptions can erode the trust of students and parents in the institution's ability to safeguard their information, which can have long-term detrimental effects on the institution's standing and effectiveness.

4.3 Social Vulnerabilities

In Nigerian schools, just like in many educational institutions worldwide, several social vulnerabilities significantly impact the psychological well-being of students and staff. These vulnerabilities include bullying, harassment, and discrimination, each of which manifests in various forms:

Bullying: Bullying in Nigerian schools can take on multiple forms, including physical, verbal, and increasingly, cyberbullying. It often targets students who are perceived as different due to factors such as appearance, academic performance, or socio-economic background.

The effects of bullying can be severe, leading to increased anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation among victims. In some cases, bullying is systemic and overlooked by school authorities, perpetuating a toxic environment.

Harassment: Harassment in Nigerian schools encompasses various behaviours such as sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and intimidation. Students and sometimes staff members may experience harassment based on gender, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. This type of mistreatment can create a hostile atmosphere that undermines the sense of safety and well-being crucial for learning and working effectively within the school community.

Discrimination: Discrimination in Nigerian schools often reflects societal prejudices, affecting both students and staff. It can manifest through unequal treatment, exclusion from activities, or biased disciplinary actions. When discriminations are based on ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, or disability, it can lead to feelings of marginalization and reduced self-esteem among those targeted.

These social vulnerabilities not only harm individuals directly but also create a negative school climate that impacts the entire school community. They undermine efforts to create inclusive and supportive learning environments essential for academic success and personal growth.

4.4 Infrastructure Vulnerabilities

Inadequate infrastructure in educational institutions presents numerous challenges that can significantly hinder the learning process and overall educational outcomes. Some key challenges posed by inadequate infrastructure are discussed below:

Overcrowded classrooms pose a major infrastructural vulnerability that can lead to reduced individual attention for students, making it difficult for teachers to cater to the diverse needs of learners. It can also create a noisy and distracting environment, which affects concentration and learning. This situation often results in lower academic performance, increased disciplinary issues, and a lack of engagement among students. It also makes it harder for teachers to implement effective teaching strategies.

Nigeria has just 1.1million classrooms according to the NEMIS survey conducted by the Federal Ministry of Education in 2019 which is largely inadequate for conducive learning because about 315,000 of these classrooms are in deplorable condition as contained in the same survey. In some cases, classrooms contain over 100 students exceeding the national policy of 35 and 40 students for primary and secondary schools respectively.

When sanitation facilities such as toilets and clean water supply are in poor conditions, the health of students and staff are exposed to risks which can lead to increased absenteeism due to illnesses, especially among younger children in addition to a higher risk of disease transmission within the school community. It also affects the dignity and comfort of students, particularly girls, which may discourage their attendance, especially during menstruation.

Dilapidated structures, inadequate lighting, poor ventilation, and unsafe structures create an environment that is not conducive to learning or teaching. It can also compromise the safety and security of students and staff. We have seen reports of distressed schools collapsing with various degrees of damage in Ogun (2023), Lagos (2019) and Anambra (2024) and efforts should be made by administrators to mitigate against factors that make this happen because students may feel demotivated and unsafe, which can affect their overall well-being and willingness to attend school regularly. Teachers on the other hand may struggle to create a positive learning atmosphere under such conditions.

Lastly, in the modern digital age, lack of access to computers, internet connectivity, and educational software puts students at a disadvantage. They may not develop essential digital literacy skills needed for higher education and future careers. Educational outcomes suffer as students miss out on opportunities for interactive and collaborative learning experiences. The digital divide between urban and rural areas or affluent and low-income communities widens as a result and inequality is perpetuated.

5.0 SECURITY CHALLENGES FACING NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

5.1 Terrorism and Insurgency

One of the major challenges faced by educational institutions in Nigeria is the unwanted presence of the Boko Haram terrorist group whose sole ideology is the elimination of Western education. Their activities have resulted in the death of hundreds of thousands of people including women and children in addition to the large-scale destruction of schools and displacement of millions of school children.

Since the first reported incidence of their violent attacks on schools in 2014, other terrorist groups have risen to contribute to heightening cases of insecurity in Nigerian schools with dangerous repercussions for educational outcomes. The group has carried out massacres including the killing by the fire of 59 schoolboys of Federal Government College, Buni Yadi in Yobe State in February 2014 and the burning down of 24 school buildings as well as mass abductions including the well-documented case of 276 abducted Chibok schoolgirls in April 2014 that sparked widespread condemnations.

More than 50 cases of terrorists invading schools have been reported leading to multiple deaths as a result of indiscriminatory shooting, suicide bombings and burning of school buildings.

5.2 Kidnappings and Abductions

In the past 10 years, kidnappings and abductions targeting students and staff have been on the increase, leading to widespread fear and insecurity within the education system. Cases of kidnapping have been rampant since the first case of the aforementioned Chibok girls' kidnapping. Since then, over 1800 school children have been snatched from their school premises by non-state armed groups, including bandits, mere kidnappers, terrorists and pastoralists in about 77 attacks. Below is a timeline of abductions in Nigerian schools since 2014

2014: In April 2014, over 276 female students, between the ages of 16 and 18, were kidnapped by Boko Haram from the Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, in Borno State. Some of the schoolgirls reportedly escaped in the process of being transported, while others, on several occasions, were reduced by the military. Meanwhile, over 100 of these children are still missing to this day.

2018: The second attack was reported four years later in Yobe State on February 19, 2018. About 110 students were kidnapped after Boko Haram invaded the Government Girls Science Technical College (GGSTC) in Dapchi. While being held hostage, some of the girls died, and others were later rescued, leaving Leah Sharibu, a Christian child who had not been rescued.

2020: On December 11, 2020, more than 303 students of Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, Katsina, were kidnapped by gunmen. Also, on December 19, another 80 Islamic school students in Dandume, Kastina, were kidnapped. These children were later rescued by the security operatives.

2021: Gunmen raided the Government Science College Kagara, Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, on February 17, capturing 27 students, and teachers in the school.

Some days later, on February 26, there were about 317 schoolgirls from the Government Girls Science Secondary School, Jangebe, in Jangebe, Zamfara State.

The following month, on March 11, 39 students were kidnapped by gunmen in the Federal College of Forestry Mechanization, Afaka, Igabi LGA, Kaduna State.

Another attack took place on May 30 at an Islamic school in Niger State, with armed men abducting about 100 students.

The next month, on June 17, over 96 students and eight teachers were abducted by bandits at Federal Government College, Birnin Yauri, Kebbi State.

Finally, in July, bandits kidnapped over 153 students of Bethel Baptist High School in Damishi town of Chikun local government area in Kaduna.

2024: At the beginning of the year, January 30, gunmen abducted six pupils and three teachers of a private school in Emure, headquarters of Emure Local Government Area of Ekiti State.

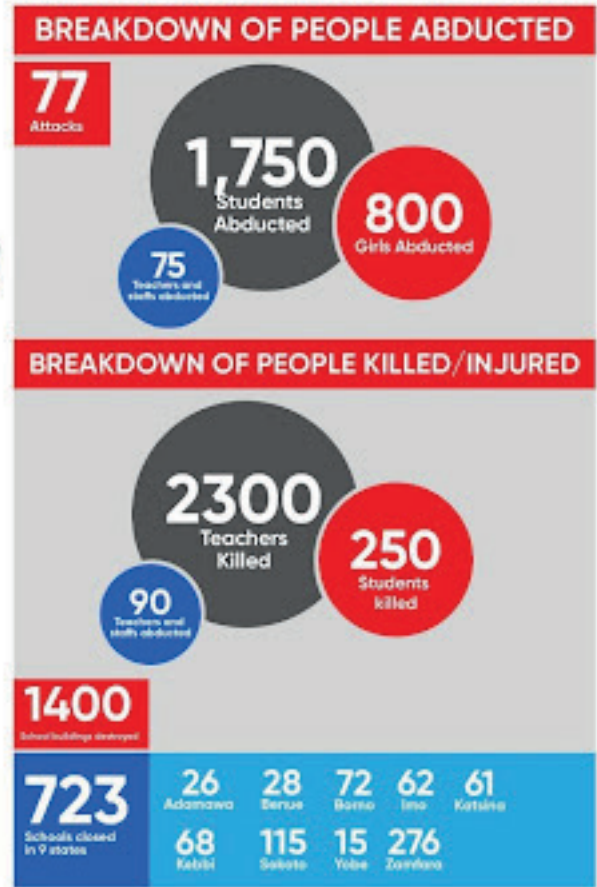
Also, on March 8, gunmen abducted about 287 children in Kaduna State from the Local Education Authority (LEA) Primary and Junior Secondary School, Kuriga, in Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State. Some days later, another 15 students were kidnapped from a school in Gada, Sokoto.

Source: International Centre for Investigating Reporting (ICIR) 2024

SCHOOL KIDNAPPINGS IN NIGERIA 2014-2024



Source: UNICEF, Media Reports



5.3 Communal Conflict and Violence:

According to John Thompson Okpa et al (2023), the prevalence of communal conflict has grossly hampered rural development in Nigeria and engendered endemic poverty of multidimensional proportions.

It has also reversed the gains of several government interventions and consequently impoverished rural dwellers, causing spiraling volatility in the different geopolitical zones. The reality is that community conflict is on the rise, and its effect on development has been quite worrisome.

On the strength of the qualitative data sourced, it has been discovered that communal conflict often activates an atmosphere of violence which can lead to fear among students, teachers and parents leading to parents to keep their children at home or teachers to abandon their official duties.

During these conflicts, families are often forced to flee their homes to IDP camps or across borders as refugees. This displacement disrupts students' education as they lose access to schools and educational resources/records making enrolment in new locations difficult.

5.4 Corruption and Mismanagement:

Corruption and mismanagement of funds is one of the major challenges that contribute to the worsening security vulnerabilities within educational institutions in Nigeria. When funds that are meant for the protection of students and staff within the school environment are embezzled, security outcomes are compromised.

For example, there have been media reports of school administrators diverting funds that could have been used for the installation of CCTV cameras, hiring security personnel or improving infrastructure for personal gains. When the funds are not outrightly embezzled, they are spent on substandard or ineffective solutions due to inflated prices, kickbacks or contracts awarded to incompetent or unqualified vendors.

In a 2019 survey carried out by Transparency International, it was estimated that Nigeria loses a whopping 66% of its total budget on Education to corruption. To worsen the matter, anti-corruption agencies turn a blind eye to these wrongdoings. When corruption is prevalent, institutional mechanisms for oversight and accountability are weakened resulting in a culture where security concerns are ignored creating room for vulnerabilities leading to massive disruption of educational outcomes.

6.0 Impact on Education

The impact of the security challenges has been devastating with the frequent attacks on schools leading to massive disruption of the academic calendar forcing schools to close temporarily or operate inconsistently. As a result of the constant attacks, a climate of fear has heightened within the school environment causing great disadvantage to students' learning continuity and their educational outcomes.

The result is a reduction in school attendance, increased dropout rates and reluctance to engage in educational activities. In addition to the impact on the students' learning outcomes, the attacks often result in the destruction of school buildings, facilities and resources thereby undermining the physical infrastructure required for effective teaching and learning leading to the erosion of public trust in the education system.

Since parents and communities no longer have trust in the ability of schools to provide a safe and secure environment for their children, they have resorted to alternative forms of educating their wards or keeping them at home leading to low enrolment rates.

In the northeastern part of the country where insecurity is prevalent, teachers and educational staff displaced from their homes face difficulty accessing schools and increased risk to their safety and well-being. Available evidence suggests that this is the reason for the shortage of qualified teachers and the low access to quality education in that part of the country

Economically, the impact is enormous as states and federal government's allocation to education focus more on security measures and improvement of educational infrastructure is neglected as a result.

The cumulative impact of these attacks is a long-term consequence on the educational system as a whole. UNICEF discovered that Nigeria has over 18.3 million children out of school with over 65% of them emanating from the northern region thereby widening the educational disparity in the country and a reduction in the overall literacy rate. Socio-economic development is negatively affected as a result.

Metrics	2014	2018
Primary School Enrolment	12,586,400	9,456,730
Out of School Children	8,765,333	16,335,340
No of Primary school teachers	567,921	480,112
No of Primary schools	64,312	61,921

The cumulative effect of the attacks can be seen in the steady decline in the enrolment rates as can be seen in the above table. In fact, in 2016 primary school enrolment rates dropped to an all time low of 495,295 pupils in the North-Western zone of the country according to the 2020 Educational Digest of the Federal Ministry of Education. The number of primary school teachers nationally also dropped by 15.5% and thousands of schools were closed down either permanently or temporarily.

6.1 Case Studies and Examples of School Security Incidents and their impact on Educational Activities

Case Study 1: Chibok School Kidnapping

Incident: On April 14, 2014, Boko Haram militants abducted 276 female students from the Government Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State. This incident gained international attention and sparked the global #BringBackOurGirls campaign.

Impact:

Student Trauma: Many of the kidnapped girls were subjected to forced marriages, sexual slavery, and indoctrination. This has led to severe psychological trauma and long-term emotional scars for the girls and their relatives.

School Closures: In the immediate aftermath of the attack, 85 schools in Borno State were closed down thereby disrupting the education of about 120,000 students according to reports monitored by Vanguard Newspapers. The closure became necessary due to fears of further attacks.

Decline in Enrollment: The fear of similar attacks led to a significant drop in school enrollment, particularly among girls. Parents were reluctant to send their children to school, fearing for their safety. To put it into perspective, Borno State recorded an enrolment rate of 26% in the following year as against Lagos State which recorded 97% enrolment rate.

Educational Setback: The disruption caused by the kidnapping led to a significant setback in the educational attainment of the affected girls. Many of the girls missed crucial years of schooling, and their future academic prospects were severely compromised.

Case Study 2: Dapchi School Kidnapping

Incident: On February 19, 2018, Boko Haram militants abducted 110 schoolgirls from the Government Girls' Science and Technical College in Dapchi, Yobe State. Most of the girls were released a month later, but five died in captivity, and one, Leah Sharibu, was held back for refusing to renounce her Christian faith.

Impact:

Psychological Effects: The abduction left a lasting psychological impact on the released girls and their families, leading to fear, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress.

Educational Disruption: The school was temporarily closed following the abduction, disrupting the education of all students enrolled there. In fact, this incident among others can be attributed to Yobe State's alarming out of school children statistics of 62.9%.

Decreased Confidence in Security: The incident further eroded the confidence of parents and students in the security of educational institutions in the region, leading to decreased school attendance and decline of about 70% in school enrolment according to statistics made available by National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)

Policy Changes: The incident prompted the Nigerian government to enhance security measures in schools, including deploying security personnel and engaging international partners like UNICEF, World Bank and USAID for assistance.

Case Study 3: Kankara School Abduction

Incident: On December 11, 2020, armed bandits kidnapped over 300 boys from the Government Science Secondary School in Kankara, Katsina State. The boys were released after six days following negotiations.

Impact:

Increased Anxiety: The abduction caused widespread anxiety and fear among students and parents in the area. Many parents withdrew their children from boarding schools.

Interruption of Academic Calendar: The school was closed temporarily, and academic activities were suspended, affecting the students' education and progress.

Resource Allocation: The incident led to a significant allocation of resources towards security rather than educational development. Funds that could have been used for educational improvements were diverted to enhance security measures.

Government Response: In response to the abduction, the Nigerian government launched Operation Safe Schools, aimed at protecting educational institutions from such attacks in the future and also drafted the National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence Free Schools in Nigeria in 2021.

Case Study 4: Attack on College of Agriculture, Gujba

Incident: On September 29, 2013, Boko Haram militants attacked the College of Agriculture in Gujba, Yobe State, killing 44 students and teachers.

Impact:

Loss of Lives: The attack resulted in a tragic loss of lives, leaving families and the community devastated contributing to spiraling to IDP figures in Yobe State. Fear and Trauma: Surviving students and staff were left with deep psychological trauma, leading to a reluctance to return to school.

School Closure: The college was closed indefinitely, and students were forced to relocate to other institutions, causing significant disruption to their education.

Economic Impact: The attack affected the local economy, as many families lost their breadwinners, and the college, a significant employer, was shut down.

Case Study 5: Frequent Bandit Attacks in Zamfara State

Incident: In recent years, schools in Zamfara State have been frequently targeted by armed bandits, leading to multiple abductions and attacks on students and staff.

Impact:

Chronic Insecurity: The persistent threat of attacks has created an environment of chronic insecurity, severely affecting educational activities. Almost a million people from Zamfara State were internally displaced according to media reports.

Decline in School Attendance: Many students have stopped attending school due to the fear of abductions and violence. This has resulted in a significant decline in literacy and educational attainment in the state as about 62% of school age children in the state are out of school.

Educational Quality: The frequent disruptions have led to a decline in the quality of education, as teachers are also reluctant to work under such dangerous circumstances.

Government Interventions: The state government has been compelled to implement various security measures, including relocating vulnerable schools and increasing security personnel, to ensure the safety of students and staff.

These case studies highlight the severe impacts of insecurity on education in Nigeria. The incidents have not only disrupted the academic lives of students but also created long-term psychological trauma and economic hardships for families and communities. To address these challenges, it is crucial for international organizations, the Nigerian government, and local communities to collaborate on comprehensive and sustainable solutions that ensure the safety and continuity of education for all students in Nigeria.

7.0 Response Mechanism

7.1 Government Response

Concerted efforts have been made by various stakeholders to address the impact of insecurity in the school environment and these responses have provided varying degrees of success. At DO Take Action, we believe that more needs to be done to restore the confidence of parents, students and teachers in the educational system. Governments at all levels, especially the Federal Government, have continued to ignore the UN recommended standard of allocating 25% of their budget to education. The amount of money allocated keeps going up while the value stays the same due to high inflation rates. The infographic below tells the story of education funding in Nigeria in the last five (5) budget seasons:



However, the government at the federal level has embarked upon some initiatives in collaborations with technical partners to alleviate the condition of the educational sector and they include:

- Adoption of the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 4 which dates that schools should be child-friendly, inclusive, nurturing, non-violent and safe

- Enactment of the Nigerian Child Rights Act 2003 which has been passed in 34 of the 36 States of Nigeria excluding Kano and Zamfara States

- The Senate of Nigeria passed the Terrorism Prevention Amendment Act in 2013 prescribing a 30-year jail term for kidnappers or colluders.

- In 2016, the Federal Government launched the Campaign to End Violence Against Children by 2030”

- On March 8, 2018, Nigeria endorsed the Global School Safety Declaration in Oslo, Norway. The Federal Government went ahead to launch the National Safe School Declaration Plan of Action for 2021-2023 to guide state-level domestication of the Safe Schools Declaration.

- Lastly, the National Policy for Safety Security and Violence-free Schools (NPSSVFS) and Minimum Standards was approved by the National Council on Education in August 2021.

Some other major interventions include to aimed at providing succor to victims and encourage the reintegration of school children back to the school environment are listed in the table below:

PROJECT	SPONSOR	YEAR	AMOUNT	IMPACT
BESDA – Better Education Service Delivery for All	The Federal Government of Nigeria/World Bank	2018	\$611m	The program aims to increase equitable access for out of school children, improve literacy rates and learning outcomes for the most disadvantaged schools – enrolment of 1m out of school children
Girls Education Programme 3 -Cash Transfer Programme	UNICEF	2012-2022	\$109m	Over 1.3 million girls have been enrolled in primary and integrated quranic schools through the instrumentality of a cash transfer program
National Home-Grown School Feeding Program – NHGSFP	The Federal Government of Nigeria	2016 -		The impact has been enormous in helping to drive up enrolment rates
ASSEP	North East Development Commission (NEDC)/Office of the Vice President of Nigeria	2024	1 Trillion	The project launched in February and is still in its early days
The Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment, (AGILE)	Federal Ministry of Education/World Bank	2023	\$700m	The AGILE Project is meant to improve secondary education opportunities in the implementing states by tackling these challenges, thus making education more appealing to adolescent girls, parents, communities, and institutions in Borno, Ekiti, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, and Plateau States

In the aftermath of the aforementioned Buni Yadi school massacre by Boko Haram, Safe School Initiative was launched by the Federal Government of Nigeria in May, 2014 to protect Nigeria children in schools from the insurgent attacks in form of kidnapping, hostage taking, rape and outright killing by the hoodlums.

It is pertinent to add that in May 2015, the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) was opened for endorsement by countries at an international conference held in Oslo, Norway. The Safe Schools Declaration was meant to provide countries with the impetus to express support for the protection of learners, teachers and learning environments from attack during times of armed conflict. The declaration commits to ensuring that all forms of educational pursuit continue during armed conflict and that countries implement concrete measures to deter the use of academic institutions by the military. Specifically, the declaration outlines recommendations to better prevent attacks on education, protect schools from military use and respond to and mitigate the impact of attacks when they do occur in conflict-affected areas. Nigeria is a signatory to the SSD.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) says The Federal Government's National Home-Grown School Feeding programme (NHGSFP) has significantly increased school enrolment across Nigeria.

According to the World Food Programme as at 2021, the initiative has served school meals to over 9 million students in 53,000 public primary schools, which makes it one of the largest school feeding programmes in Africa. As a result of the success, the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development with technical support from the World Food Programme announced the scale up of the School Feeding Programme to the next stage. In the 2024 budget approved by the National Assembly, N100b was allocated to revitalize the program, and it was estimated that over 20 million students will benefit from the process.

7.0 Response Mechanism

7.2 International NGOs Response

International organizations like UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, etc. have recognized that armed conflict and violence against children are a strong barrier to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 of the United Nations, which looks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,” and thus have activated mechanisms to ensure that these attacks are reduced to the barest minimum.

As contained in the UNICEF Safe School Cheat Sheet compiled in 2022, some of their responses include:

1. Engagement of high-level government and political actors on increased public financing for safe schools.
2. Strengthened coordination mechanism among education actors in emergencies.
3. Supported the development of costed, emergency responsive education sector plans in 33 of 36 states and FCT.
4. Supported states to implement risk-informed CDRR and Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP).
5. Supported the implementation of minimum standards for safe schools in 11 states, with plans to scale to all 36 states.
6. Built resilience of 30,480 teachers to respond to emergencies, including attacks on schools.
7. Strengthened capacity of school and community structures in psychosocial support.
8. Developed capacity of 793 school-based management committees to build community engagement on safe schools (11% of target of 7,500 SBMCs)
9. Trained communities on school safety, CDRR and developed School EPRP
10. Provided supplies (including temporary learning spaces) to schools
11. Provided alternate and homebased e-learning support to children (community learning hub, radio, and television) to ensure continuity of learning.

FUTURE PRIORITIES

1. High level advocacy for public investment and a coordinated response to school safety.
2. Engage states on multi-sectoral coordination, planning, budgeting, monitoring and set up of early warning systems for school safety.
3. Support school-based gender responsive risk identification & school emergency preparedness and implement minimum standards on safe schools
4. Build school response and resilience mechanisms, including the provision of psychosocial support.
5. Mobilize School management committees and school communities, including as partners on school safety,.
6. Ensure continuity of learning through low tech (community learning hubs, radio, and television) and high tech (digital) platforms.

Their sister United Nations agency, UNESCO, supports the prevention of school violence in and through education, with the aim of fostering safer learning environments for all learners. They do so by applying a whole-school approach and aim to promote the active engagement of the entire education sector as a whole. This approach brings together complementary actions, and calls for the engagement of various stakeholders both within and outside of the school setting.

UNESCO supports countries and education systems to end school violence in all its forms through a number of complementary approaches.

On the advocacy level, they established and commemorated the International Day against Violence and Bullying at School, including cyberbullying (which takes place on the first Thursday of November every year); and contributed to international partnerships and initiatives such as the Global Working Group to End school-related gender-based Violence (SRGBV), Safe to Learn and the World Anti-Bullying Forum, among others.

They have also provided capacity building and support mechanisms for the country's implementation of programmes to end school violence. For example, UNESCO has highlighted the key role of teachers in ending school violence and bullying and has equipped teachers to address SRGBV in West and Central Africa through training and teacher training manuals and lesson plans.

Monitoring and evaluation of education sector responses to school violence, through the provision of technical guidance on the development of indicators. For example, UNESCO is collaborating with partners to link indicators measuring Violence Against Children to those measuring school violence and gender-based violence.

Under the leadership of UNESCO and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), a global working group to end SRGBV was established in 2014, bringing together over 40 organizations committed to ending gender-based violence in and around schools.

As co-chair of the working group, UNESCO is committed to leveraging global advocacy and collaboration among partners on violence against children, violence in schools, violence against women and girls, and SRGBV in humanitarian contexts.

The World Bank, on its own part, conducted research in 2018 regarding insecurity in the school environment, and they discovered that Nigeria loses \$15b annually to violence against children. The report, which was titled Ending Violence in Schools: An Investment Case, concluded that violence in and around schools has a huge negative impact on educational outcomes, costing an estimated \$11 trillion in lifetime earnings globally.

They have identified that the major problem facing education in Nigeria is underfunding and have contributed over \$5 billion in spending to the Nigerian education sector, including the \$700 million committed to the aforementioned AGILE project. In the process, the number of girls in secondary schools has increased from about 900,000 to over 1.6 million, and over 250,000 eligible girls have received scholarships. Under the program, over 5,000 classrooms were renovated and there are plans to extend the program to reach 8.6million girls in Nigeria.

Another organization at the forefront of making interventions to better educational outcomes in Nigeria is the Malala Fund. Since 2014, Malala Fund has invested over \$6.1M in partner organizations and their programmes across Nigeria. They focus on advocating for amendments to education legislation, specifically for 12 years of safe, free, quality education under the Universal Basic Education Act. Her partners are also training girls and activists, leading data-driven advocacy campaigns and working with communities to change minds and raise awareness about the value of female education.

The women/girls focused arm of the United Nations, UN Women, promotes and coordinates efforts to advance the full realization of women's rights and opportunities, including girls and through advocacy, they have participated in conversations that led to the domestication of the Child Rights Acts in 34 states of Nigeria. Some of the other interventions captured on their website include:

- Launch of the Campaign to Support Girl-Child Education in Nigeria.
- Collaborating on World Bank supported Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE), whose goal is to improve secondary education opportunities among girls in 7 States: Kano, Kebbi, Kaduna, Katsina, Borno, Plateau and Ekiti. Specifically, the project is proposed to benefit about 6.7 million adolescents and 15.5 million direct beneficiaries will include families and communities in participating states
- Provision of “Second Chance Education” for 500 women and girls annually through the provision of computer and literacy skills for education and economic empowerment purposes.

DO TAKE ACTION on its own part, has done a lot at the community level to promote quality education by inspiring, empowering and mobilizing Grassroots Development Champions (GDCs) across Nigeria to contribute to improving the standard of education and promote quality education, therefore contributing immensely to SDG 4. DO Take has engendered an atmosphere of inclusion, encouraging Grassroot Development Champions (GDCs) to lead a campaign for a change in attitude towards violence against children. The GDCs are at the forefront of advocacy for a school environment where children are willing to go to school without fear of violent attacks and crimes.

So far, 2,500 GDCs have been registered on our various online and social media platforms and they have led the charge for a crime free school environment in Nigeria and the increment of educational outcomes in their communities. Here are some successful GDC stories:

1. Roseline Oluwaferan, one of our Grassroots Development Champions, stands as a beacon of hope and empowerment for teenagers. With unwavering determination to take action, she orchestrated a transformative event aimed at shaping the futures of 150 young boys and girls. Through her Teenage Purpose Project, she embarked on a journey to ignite the flames of ambition and guide these teenagers towards discovering their true calling.

2. Florence Kemi Ocheja, a dedicated educator and visionary, has taken up the mantle of inspiring and nurturing young minds, particularly young girls, through her SHE STEM project at Evergreen Excellence Academy.



The project's core objective is to empower the next generation, fostering an unshakable passion for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

In one captivating session, Florence engaged 13 bright young girls in a fascinating exploration of technology and innovation using something as simple as mini stamps. This novel approach not only made learning fun but also revealed the endless possibilities within the world of STEM.

3. Against this backdrop of the lack of access to quality education in her community, **Ado Damilola Kaosarat** decided to step up and proffer a solution. Ado Damilola Kaosarat is a 26-year-old Mass Communication graduate of National Open University based in Oyo state. Though self-employed, she enjoys catering for the welfare of people and being a source of encouragement to those in her sphere of influence.

After careful study and research, it was discovered that the causes of poor reading culture in Nigeria include a flawed education system, lack of well-equipped or functional libraries in schools and low patronage of school libraries, among others. Kaosarat learned that if she could empower students with textbooks and study materials, especially those in examination classes, it would go a long way to help those students develop a reading habit, and by extension, help them perform well in their examinations.

Kaosarat launched a Gift Books and TextBook project under DO-Take Action in schools, where she empowered underprivileged students with textbooks to encourage them to cultivate a good reading habit.

The project was conducted at Ibadan South West Local Government, Oke-Ado Area. It entailed the following;

1. A presentation on Purpose in Life, How to Set Short and Long Term Goals
2. A presentation on Career and The Importance of Choosing the Right Career Path
3. A presentation on Life After School to prepare the students ahead of the realities of life they will encounter right after graduating from school
4. Drafting of a suitable WAEC timetable to help the students assiduously prepare for their examination
5. Distribution of gift books and textbooks to underprivileged students who don't have the money to buy textbooks

In the course of the project, a minimum of 14 students were informed of the need to have a reading habit and prepare diligently for their examinations, especially for Senior WAEC. The students took the Improved Access to Quality Primary Education knowledge test and learned how to draw a daily reading place/study timetable.

4. Working as a social development advocate in rural communities around the FCT, **Bukayo Owojaiye** learnt of the healthcare challenge at the Durumi IDP camp and sought to take action under the DO-Relief Hub Campaign. At the core of the Relief Hub campaign, is a mission offering that seeks to inspire and organise opportunities for individuals and groups to provide community-centred philanthropic and rehabilitation support for victims of disasters, conflicts and underprivileged members of society. The support delivered is designed to help them lead an appreciable standard of living and so, it is measurable and trackable. From feeding missions to clothing missions to health outreaches to orphanage missions to sanitary/hygiene missions and even MSMEs & Trading Grants, these projects help in improving outcomes and secure livelihoods.

Driven by the passion to see families survive, feed and live healthy lives in Nigeria, Bukayo's big dream is to reach out to thousands of people affected by crisis and disaster and be able to cater for their immediate needs by providing them with immediate relief material to aid survival. And so, with support from the Relief Hub project under the DO-Take Action umbrella and in partnership with Ambassadors Word Outreach organization, SAM Empowerment Foundation, Adonia Foundation and Ishiba Foundation, Bukayo coordinated a health outreach to the IDP camp at Durumi, Abuja on October 20th 2018. Bukayo's action was the first relief hub project to be implemented.

The relief outreach to the IDP camp entailed the following actions;

1. Provision of relief material to aid survival.
2. Provision of medical checkup.
3. Delivered a 1-day educational training for children in the camp.
4. Shared the gospel of hope, joy, laughter and comfort via faith evangelism.

5. To solve the need in his community **Olusegun Oluruntoba**, a Do Grassroot Development Champion came up with the idea of training teenagers in his community on how to rear rabbits and generate income from it.

His proposition was that with the income generated by the business, they can invest it in their education, the business will also keep them busy and prevent them from being drawn into immoral vices that will threaten their future. His plan was to set young people on a path that will see them rise out of poverty.

To succeed on his mission he decided to execute a SKILL-UP CLIMB UP project a flagship program designed to empower impoverished communities with the skills and support they need to climb out of poverty.

Together with funding from GT Bank, we were able to achieve the following ;

1. Conducted a 5-day training workshop on rabbit farming and entrepreneurship that empowered over 300 youths with the skills they need to sustainably manage a backyard rabbit farm and kickstart their careers as Agric entrepreneurs.

2. Distribute 100 successfully mated live Rabbit does to 50 teenagers in Bakatari community high school, with 2 rabbits given to each teenager to enable them to start a career in rabbit farming and empower them with the finances they need to sponsor themselves through secondary and post-secondary education.

3. Set up of rabbit farms for each teenager.

Over 150 teens and families in Bakatari and its neighboring communities benefited both directly and indirectly from this project, setting them on a path towards completing their post-secondary education and helping them lead a productive life.

7.3 Community Engagement

Community engagement plays a very important role in ensuring the safety of schools by creating a collaborative environment where actors within the school environment collaborates with stakeholders in the community where schools are located to address and prevent potential threats. The roles of the different community stakeholders vary depending on their position in society. Here's how different groups contribute to school safety:

Parents: For instance, Parents have a universal role as the first line of defense when it comes to identifying behavioural changes or issues affecting their children. They play a critical role in fostering open communication with their children about safety concerns and encouraging them to report any suspicious activities or movements in their immediate environment. Additionally, parent-teacher associations (PTAs) in the local schools and state chapters can advocate for improved security measures and support school safety initiatives financially or through volunteerism.

Local Leaders: Local government officials, including supervisors, councillors, law enforcement leaders and traditional rulers, play a vital role in coordinating resources and policies aimed at enhancing school safety. They can allocate funding for security improvements, establish emergency response protocols, and collaborate with schools to conduct safety training sessions for staff and students.

They also have a role and responsibility to identify potential threats in their local communities.

Civil Society Organizations: The role of non-profit organizations, community groups, and advocacy organizations is a major one in promoting safety within the school system. Their role is crucial in terms of advocacy and the provision of resources such as safety workshops, mental health support services, and crisis intervention programs. These organizations also advocate for policies at the local, state, and national levels that prioritize school safety and address underlying issues such as bullying and youth violence.

Community Members: Beyond formal organizations, individual community members can contribute to school safety by being vigilant and reporting suspicious activities to authorities. They can also volunteer as mentors and tutors, fostering positive relationships with school administrators and promoting a supportive school environment.

At DO Take Action, we believe that building strong community partnerships encourages a collective approach to school safety and the constant engagement of parents, local leaders and community members enhances vigilance, promotes safety awareness and strengthens support networks within the school environment.

The importance of community involvement lies in the ability of citizens to create a comprehensive safety net around schools that addresses both physical security and the social and emotional well-being of students. In conclusion, community involvement fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among all stakeholders, reinforcing the idea that ensuring school safety is a collective effort. Community involvement can help with the implementation of effective strategies to prevent threats, respond to emergencies, and promote a positive school climate conducive to learning and growth.

7.4 Capacity Building

Improving the response towards tackling the vulnerabilities and insecurity threats in Nigerian schools involves the capacity building of education stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and security personnel. This is important for the effective prevention and response to security threats in the school environment.

Many stakeholders may not be fully aware of potential security threats or lack the necessary training to identify suspicious activities and take decisive action against them. Capacity building programs can help address their ignorance and educate them about different types of threats, including violence, cyber threats, and emergencies.

In the event of a security incident, the response time and effectiveness of stakeholders play a critical role in minimizing harm. Training sessions can teach them how to respond promptly, follow established protocols, and coordinate with emergency responders. Creating a safe environment will be enhanced because students and staff need to feel safe in their educational environment to focus on learning and teaching. Security agencies like the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), in partnership with NGOs/CSOs should be at the forefront of mobilizing resources to address the need for capacity building at the national and local level.

The programs will help stakeholders to understand risk factors specific to schools to enable proactive security measures. Teachers, administrators, and security personnel can learn how to conduct risk assessments, implement preventive strategies, and manage security risks appropriately while emphasizing the importance of clear communication channels, teamwork, and coordination with law enforcement or emergency services.

Continuous capacity building ensures that education stakeholders are updated on emerging threats and equipped with the knowledge to adapt their security protocols accordingly.

In conclusion, capacity building among education stakeholders is essential not only for enhancing their individual abilities but also for strengthening the overall security posture of educational institutions. By investing in training and skill development, schools can better protect students, staff, and visitors from potential security threats and create a conducive environment for learning and growth.

7.5 How other countries solved their challenges

One of the countries that has been recognized for significantly reducing the number of out-of-school children is Vietnam. Vietnam has faced issues related to kidnapped child brides, often involving cases where young girls are abducted and forced into marriage. Vietnam has made remarkable progress in improving access to education and reducing dropout rates through several key mechanisms. They have been able to reduce incidents of school kidnapping and in the process increase enrolment rates to 97% (according to UNESCO Institute of Statistics Data 2022) by adopting and implementing the following strategies.

1. Compulsory Education Laws: Vietnam implemented compulsory education laws requiring children to attend school up to a certain age, typically through primary and lower secondary education from the age of 6-14 years old. This legal requirement helps ensure that children are enrolled in school and stay in school. In addition to this, Vietnam has laws in place that prohibit child marriage and trafficking of women and children. The legal age for marriage is 18 for girls and 20 for boys.

These laws provide a basis for prosecuting those involved in kidnapping and forcing children into marriage and causing a disruption of their education. Authorities in their various towns especially in the northern part of the country where kidnapping of school age girls is prevalent have been increasingly vigilant in enforcing these laws, conducting raids and investigations to rescue abducted girls and arrest/prosecute perpetrators.

2. Poverty Alleviation and Support Programs: Vietnam introduced targeted poverty alleviation programs and social welfare initiatives to support families, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to keep their children in school. An example of this is the Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction Program (HEPR) with focus on the children and the vulnerable. Benefits include free health insurance, tuition exceptions, subsidies and interest free loans. In fact, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) praised them for being a perfect example of success in poverty reduction in a 2023 report titled “Poverty Reduction in Comparative Perspective”.

The government also invested heavily in building schools and improving educational infrastructure, particularly in rural and remote areas where access to schools was limited. This is in addition to the promulgation of laws mandating the government to allocate 20% of the total state budget for education and training.

3. Community Engagement and Awareness: Efforts were made to raise awareness about the importance of education and illegality of child marriage at the community level. This involved campaigns to encourage parents to send their children to school and to educate them about the long-term benefits of education.

4. Quality Improvement Initiatives: Aside from the aforementioned strategies, Vietnam also focused on improving the quality of education provided in schools to increase access. This included training teachers, updating curricula, and enhancing teaching methods to make learning more engaging and relevant. Authorities also conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of enrolment rates and dropout rates to help identify areas needing improvement and allow for adjustments in policies and interventions.

5. International Cooperation: Vietnam collaborates with international organizations including UN Agencies like UNESCO and UNICEF and neighboring countries to combat cross-border trafficking of women and children, including kidnapped child brides. In the last 8 years, the World Bank has released over \$500m to help fund educational initiatives in Vietnam.

Through these concerted efforts, Vietnam has made substantial strides in reducing the number of out-of-school children, ensuring more children have access to quality education, and thereby contributing to overall social and economic development

Other countries like Mexico and Colombia have also faced challenges related to school security, including incidents of kidnapping and threats, often linked to organized crime and armed conflict, respectively. While these issues are complex and ongoing, both countries have implemented various measures to address and mitigate these security concerns:

Mexico's response:

Increased Security Presence & Collaboration with Communities: In areas affected by organized crime, Mexican authorities have deployed increased security forces, including police and military personnel, to enhance security around schools and protect students. Engagement with local communities and stakeholders to build trust and cooperation has been crucial for gathering intelligence and ensuring timely responses to threats.

Education and Awareness: They have deployed the powerful tool of educating students, parents, and school staff about security protocols and measures to enhance preparedness and response in case of emergencies.

Legislative Measures: In recent years, Mexico has implemented strict legislative measures and enforced laws aimed at combating organized crime and enhancing penalties for crimes involving schools and students.

International Cooperation and Technological Solutions: Their authorities have collaborated with international partners and organizations like UN Agencies like UNODC to share best practices, intelligence, and resources to combat organized crime networks involved in school-related kidnappings. They have also adopted the use of technology such as surveillance systems, panic buttons, and communication tools to improve security infrastructure in schools.

Colombia:

Peace Process and Security Measures in Conflict-Affected Areas: Through implementing targeted security measures in areas still affected by armed conflict to protect schools and ensure safe access to education for children, Colombia has made significant strides. They have engaged in peace negotiations with armed groups, which has contributed to a decrease in overall violence and security threats in many regions, including those affecting schools. In 2023, Statista, an online data platform reported a steady decline in kidnapping rates in Colombia including school kidnapping.

Community Policing and Engagement: by enhancing community policing strategies to build trust and cooperation between law enforcement agencies and local communities, Colombia ensured great strides in preventing and responding to security threats.

Education and Victim Support/Rehabilitation: They educated students, teachers, and parents about safety protocols and measures to reduce vulnerabilities and increase preparedness and also provided support and rehabilitation services for victims of kidnappings and their families, including psychological support and assistance in reintegrating into daily life. The government partnered with Rock Star, Shakira through her Foundation Pies Descalzos (Bare Feet) to provide a befitting school for internally displaced people.

International Support: Collaborating with international organizations and neighboring countries to address transnational crime and enhance regional security cooperation.

The Nigerian Guardian newspaper compiled a report on the 10th year anniversary of the Safe Schools Initiative Launch in 2024 and recommended for Nigeria to follow the example of the two countries of Mexico and Colombia who use the technology of geotagging to trackdown the communication of the kidnapers. Through digital footprints retrieved from connected cell towers modern smartphones used by the kidnapers have built-in GPS capabilities that further enhances the accuracy of the location tracking.

It's important to note that these efforts are ongoing and vary in effectiveness across different regions and contexts within Mexico and Colombia. The challenges posed by organized crime and armed conflict require sustained efforts, innovative strategies, and collaboration at multiple levels to ensure the safety and security of schools and their communities.

8.0 Recommendations:

A comprehensive system that will enhance the safety of the teachers and learners including mechanisms to protect the girl child should be adopted with the collaboration of all stakeholders.

The government should constantly 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.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should collaborate at local, state and national levels to monitor the implementation process as well as identify gaps and suggest a way forward in policy implementation.

The general public have a responsibility to support schools to work toward more effective approaches that ensure all schools create safe, orderly learning environments and the schools should be empowered to create safe spaces for their students to receive adequate psychosocial support and speak up on personal issues. Individually, the schools must develop effective emergency preparedness and crisis prevention, intervention, and response plans coordinated with local first responders

The State Governments should endorse, support, and implement the Safe Schools Declaration in a gender-responsive way, taking into account the particular needs of boys and girls. They should also ensure that Safe Spaces in all places of learning are institutionalized to restore public confidence in the education system.

In addition to these recommendations, the implementation of the National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence Free Schools in Nigeria is very important in addressing the issue of insecurity in Nigerian schools. Some of the recommendations include:

- Ensure the continuation of education during conflict. States, with support from international organizations, donors, and civil society, should:
- Increase funding to prevent, mitigate, and respond to attacks on education in conflict-affected areas linked to national action plans, risk assessments, education continuity plans, and comprehensive safety and security plans, among others;
- “Build back better” after attacks on education and ensure funding not only to repair but to improve schools and make them safer and more inclusive to all students and educators;
- Strengthen bottom-up capacity and engagement in preparedness planning, monitoring and reporting mechanisms, risk assessments, and school safety and security by consulting parents, community leaders, traditional and religious leaders, teachers, and children themselves on how to ensure safe learning environments;
- Extend distance learning innovations that may have been implemented during COVID-19 to learners and teachers who are affected by attacks on education;
- Provide support for the safe and meaningful participation and consultation of children and youth in decisions about the protection of education and ensure that measures are informed by their perspectives;
- Scale up training programmes for teachers on conflict-sensitive and gender-responsive education, social inclusion, and how to support and care for students suffering from post-traumatic stress, specifically including girls suffering from psychological trauma and stigma from sexual violence;
- Provide non-discriminatory assistance for all survivors of attacks on education, including psychosocial support, regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, or other attributes, while taking into account survivors’ distinct needs and experiences based on gender and potential vulnerabilities such as disability and forced displacement;

In addition to these recommendations, the implementation of the National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence Free Schools in Nigeria is very important in addressing the issue of insecurity in Nigerian schools. Some of the recommendations include:

- Ensure the continuation of education during conflict. States, with support from international organizations, donors, and civil society, should:

- Increase funding to prevent, mitigate, and respond to attacks on education in conflict-affected areas linked to national action plans, risk assessments, education continuity plans, and comprehensive safety and security plans, among others;

- “Build back better” after attacks on education and ensure funding not only to repair but to improve schools and make them safer and more inclusive to all students and educators;

- Strengthen bottom-up capacity and engagement in preparedness planning, monitoring and reporting mechanisms, risk assessments, and school safety and security by consulting parents, community leaders, traditional and religious leaders, teachers, and children themselves on how to ensure safe learning environments;

- Extend distance learning innovations that may have been implemented during COVID-19 to learners and teachers who are affected by attacks on education;

- Provide support for the safe and meaningful participation and consultation of children and youth in decisions about the protection of education and ensure that measures are informed by their perspectives;

- Scale up training programmes for teachers on conflict-sensitive and gender-responsive education, social inclusion, and how to support and care for students suffering from post-traumatic stress, specifically including girls suffering from psychological trauma and stigma from sexual violence;

- Provide non-discriminatory assistance for all survivors of attacks on education, including psychosocial support, regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, or other attributes, while taking into account survivors’ distinct needs and experiences based on gender and potential vulnerabilities such as disability and forced displacement;

- Encourage international donors and the private sector to: devote more funding to education in emergencies; support holistic approaches to creating safe learning environments; and minimize conflict-related disruptions to education;
- Strengthen accountability for attacks on education. States, with support from international organizations, donors, and civil society, should:
 - Enact national legislation to implement the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines and strengthen prevention, response, and accountability for attacks on education;
 - Ensure accountability and redress for attacks on education, including by conducting investigations and fair trials of perpetrators of attacks on education;
 - Support criminal accountability measures at the state level or, where necessary, escalate to international mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), and support the establishment of internationalized or hybrid courts as needed; and
 - Request that existing and future human rights and accountability mechanisms, including commissions of inquiry, fact-finding missions, and investigations, more systematically consider attacks on education.
 - Enhance monitoring and reporting of attacks on education, coordination in implementing the Safe School Declaration, and exchange of good practice. States, with support from international organizations, donors and civil society, should:
 - Collect disaggregated data at the national level on attacks on education so that the impacts of such attacks can be better understood, and prevention and response measures can be developed and can take into account the unique needs of girls and boys;
 - Create government action plans for implementing the Safe Schools Declaration that ensure coordinated action and collective responsibility

-Support strong collaborations and peer-to-peer exchange of good practices to protect education through compact mechanisms, and enhance efforts to monitor and report on attacks on education and military use of schools.

8.1 Call to Action: Support and Fund DO Take Action to Address Insecurity in Nigerian Schools

International organizations like UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank have long recognized that armed conflict and violence against children are significant barriers to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. These organizations have initiated various mechanisms to mitigate these challenges, including:

1. Engaging high-level government and political actors to increase public financing for safe schools.
2. Strengthening coordination among education actors in emergencies.
3. Developing costed, emergency-responsive education sector plans in 33 of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).
4. Implementing risk-informed Community Disaster Risk Reduction (CDRR) and Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans (EPRP).
5. Supporting the implementation of minimum standards for safe schools in multiple states.
6. Building the resilience of teachers to respond to emergencies, including attacks on schools.
7. Strengthening the capacity of school and community structures in psychosocial support.
8. Providing alternate and home-based e-learning support to children to ensure continuity of learning.

Despite these efforts, more work is needed to ensure the safety and continuity of education in Nigeria. DO Take Action is committed to addressing these issues head-on, but we need your support to make a lasting impact. We propose the following interventions and request your partnership in funding and support to address insecurity in schools:

High-Level Advocacy: Advocate for increased public investment and a coordinated response to school safety at all governmental levels. Full scale implementation of the NPSSVFSN Policy.

Multi-Sectoral Coordination: Engage states in multi-sectoral coordination, planning, budgeting, monitoring, and setting up early warning systems for school safety.

School-Based Risk Identification: Support gender-responsive risk identification and school emergency preparedness, and implement minimum standards on safe schools.

Resilience Building: Build school response and resilience mechanisms, including the provision of psychosocial support for students, parents, and teachers.

Community Mobilization: Mobilize school management committees and communities as partners in ensuring school safety.

Continuity of Learning: Ensure continuity of learning through low-tech (community learning hubs, radio, and television) and high-tech (digital) platforms.

1. UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and UN Women have all demonstrated a commitment to addressing school violence and insecurity through various initiatives, including capacity building, advocacy, and funding. For instance:
2. UNESCO supports countries and education systems to end school violence through a whole-school approach and various international partnerships and initiatives.
3. UNICEF has engaged in high-level advocacy and provided emergency-responsive education sector plans and psychosocial support.

The World Bank has identified underfunding as a major problem and contributed significantly to the Nigerian education sector, including the \$700 million AGILE project.

4. UN Women has promoted the realization of women's and girls' rights and opportunities through various campaigns and initiatives.

By supporting DO Take Action, you will be contributing to a safer and more stable educational environment in Nigeria. Together, we can make a significant impact on the lives of millions of students, parents, and teachers, ensuring they have access to quality education in a secure setting.

Citizens are encouraged to heed the clarion call for supporting measures to create an enabling school environment conducive to learning and teaching. To take action, they should log on to www.dotakeaction.org and register as Grassroots Development Champions (GDC).



9.0 Conclusion

For the past 10 years, educational institutions in Nigeria have been under constant threats of large-scale kidnapping from bandits and terrorists. The cause of these insecurity incidents may be placed on the doorsteps of the school administrators, policy makers and the security agencies.

It was discovered that the nonchalant attitude of school administrators towards planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, supervising and monitoring of security activities in the schools constitute a major reason for insecurity in Nigerian schools. Some school administrators assume that their schools can never be faced with deadly security incidents and as a result they do not make time for regular evaluation of security situations in their schools let alone ensuring that their staff and students practice emergency security procedures of evacuation and lockdown in case of unforeseen and sudden eventualities. These findings agree with Jill (2000) who also noted that the careless attitude of the school administrators may partly be due to the lack of security training and the assumption that the overall security responsibility in schools is vested in the hands of state security agencies.

Another contributory cause of insecurity in schools in Nigeria is the lack of proper implementation of the many well articulated school security policies including the NPSSVFSN by the relevant government agencies. The absence of proper implementation of existing school security policy in schools means that schools are vulnerable to attacks with the students especially girls at the receiving end of the mayhem. This finding is in line with Garry (2000) who opined that without a clear official school security policy, school managers, teachers and students may not have a clear understanding of the objectives of school security; strategies to achieve them; resources required to execute the strategies as well as required standards of school security atmosphere in schools.

Lack of execution of school security operations by school security guards in schools is found to be a cause of insecurity in schools. Many schools do not have permanent security guards and are not willing to hire security guards at their own expense. This finding is in line with Garry (2000) who noted that some school security guards lack adequate training, are old, weak and incapable retirees. Some of them are lazy, corrupt, and physically handicapped. Thus it is not surprising that they are unable to perform their statutory security responsibilities satisfactorily. This agrees with Kenneth (2009) who noted that the most neglected school security operations include lack of regular patrols, improper guarding of school facilities and infrastructure, lack of regular scouting, inefficient crime investigation, poor reporting of security threats, and lack of intelligence gathering. In addition, school security guards do not involve themselves in arresting, detention and handing over criminals to the police for prosecution. Above all there is the lack of sustained joint collaboration between school security guards, state security agencies and local vigilante groups.

As a whole the findings indicated that lack of school security inspection by the Ministry of Education, Primary School Education Boards, Secondary Managements Boards and other relevant authorities causes schools to ignore security matters, thereby making schools to be porous and soft targets for bandits, kidnappers and other criminals.

The report underscores the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address the alarming vulnerabilities and pervasive insecurity in Nigerian schools emphasizing the disproportionate impact on the safety of the girl child. Vulnerable to various forms of violence, including harassment, assault, and abduction, girls face significant barriers to accessing education and fulfilling their potential. The findings reveal a troubling reality where students, educators, and communities face overwhelming threats to their safety and well-being, with incidents ranging from violence to kidnapping.

Urgent intervention is imperative, focusing on targeted measures to safeguard the well-being of female students.

These interventions should include enhanced security protocols, gender-sensitive policies, and community partnerships aimed at creating safer learning environments. Effective solutions must prioritize proactive security measures, community engagement, and government intervention to create safe learning environments conducive to education and growth. Additionally, addressing underlying societal issues such as gender inequality and cultural norms is essential for sustainable change.

Without swift and decisive action, the persistent insecurity in Nigerian schools will continue to undermine the fundamental right to education and jeopardize the future of generations to come.

10.0 References

Annual School Census (2021) conducted by the Nigeria Education Management Information System of the Federal Ministry of Education

Elizabeth O. Ihekoronye & Jovita C. Opara (2021) Safe School Initiative: A Necessary Tool for Promoting Safe and Secure Children's Access to Basic Education in Nigeria in the 21st Century

Garry, D.G. (2000). National study of delinquency prevention in schools. Quoted in: Dr Sani Dantani Manga (2019). Assessment of causes and forms of Insecurity in Educational Institutions in Kebbi State: Implications for School Administration

International Centre for Investigating Reporting (ICIR) - Timeline of Kidnapping in Nigerian Schools since 2014

<https://www.icirnigeria.org/timeline-over-1000-schoolchildren-kidnapped-in-10-years/>

John Thompson Okpa, Benjamin Okorie Ajah, Obinna J. Eze & Olisa Anthony Enweonwu (2023). Communal Conflict and Violence: Causes and Impact

The National Policy on Safety, Security and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria (NPSSVFSN) (2021)

UNICEF Safe Schools Cheat Sheet (February 2022)

World Bank Nigeria Press Release (September 2023): Nigeria to Expand Adolescent Girls' Education Program to Reach 8.6 Million Girls

World Bank Report (July 2021). Ending Violence in Schools: An Investment Case