

REPORT

ON A 2-DAY

SCOPING MISSION

TO NIGER STATE

AT RISK CHILDREN - PROGRAMME



If you limit yourself, you limit your horizon

– Maryam Uwais, 2022

DATE: 23rd – 24th March 2022

INTRODUCTION

The At-Risk Children Programme (ARC-P) was born out of the concern that many children including the Almajiri were being transported from one State to the other during covid. The expectation was that they will all go back to school, but the challenge is that they will be unable to connect with the teachings in class since they have never seen the four walls of a classroom or had any basic education, thereby going back to the streets. So, ARC-P came up with the idea to carrying out Basic Literacy and Numeracy which would prepare them for a formal education, giving them the basic knowledge on how to read, write and get familiar with numbers.



Meeting with the First Lady of Niger State, H.E Amina Abubakar Bello and Team

As the ARC-P team carry out scoping visits to the States, we realize that, the older children are not interested in Basic Literacy and Numeracy or going back to school but have different interests. The more we engage the more we realize that the problem is even much bigger; in some States there are many hawkers

on the street, issues of drug abuse, child labour, trauma, mental health and other vulnerabilities. So we designed a programme that provides a multi-dimensional, broad spectrum approach to the crisis of vulnerable children and youth. Even though there are diverse individuals and groups working to address these issues, the need for coordination with minimum standards, learning and sharing, thereby ensuring impact at scale, appears to be lacking. The ARC-P seeks to provide central coordination of resources, strategies and monitoring to drive a targeted, efficient and cost-effective solution to the distressing phenomenon. The Goal of ARC-P is to reduce the vulnerability of children, providing them with a life of dignity, thereby boosting individual and National productivity, as well as security.

The Trip Activities includes:

1. Engagement with the First Lady, SSG and other stakeholders
2. Visit to Programme office site & Ultra-Modern Training Centre
3. Visit and engagement with relevant stakeholders at the Tsangaya Education Centre – Makarantan Mallam Ismaila
4. Engagement at Integrated Quranic Education Centre (IQE), Kpakungu, Minna
5. Courtesy call on His Royal Highness, the Emir of Minna Dr. Umar Farouq Bahago
6. Courtesy call on His Excellency, The Executive Governor of Niger State

The ARC-P team was in Minna, Niger State as part of its scoping mission and stakeholder engagement strategy. The ARC-P recognizing that the mandate for children, youth, primary healthcare and primary education is squarely within the mandate of the State Government, has made this initial visit to mainly engage with the key stakeholders in the State, to understand the status of the vulnerable children and youth, and to identify the existing facilities, programmes and initiatives, so that we are able to leverage on them, support and add value.

The team also met with the State Governor, His Excellency, Alhaji Abubakar Sani Bello, who has expressed his interest in the Programme and encouraged the team to engage the SSG for further deliberations and collaboration.



Courtesy call on the Executive Governor of Niger State, H.E Alhaji Abubakar Sani Bello

Engagement with the First Lady and Team

The First Lady of Niger State Her Excellency Amina Abubakar Bello and her team expressed their interest in the Programme and met with the ARC-P team at the Government House for a discussion along action trackers which the Special Adviser, Hajiya Maryam Uwais explained in detail as she gave the overview and progress of the programme at the National and State levels.



Engagement with the First Lady of Niger State and Team

The State team had the following questions about the Programme which were cleared up by the ARC-P team:

- ***How is the structure and source of the funding as this will influence sustainability?***

Hajiya Maryam Uwais explained that the Programme is structured under the National Poverty Reduction with Growth Strategy (NPRGS) which has a steering committee that is chaired by the Vice President of the Federal Republic and has membership of State Governors and relevant Ministries such as Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health etc. She went on to say that there is a budget that have been allocated to projects under the Technical Working Group of the NPRGS with a National Trust as against State Trust and ARC-P is one of those projects. In addition, there have been funding and other support from the Ministry of Finance; Private Sectors; UBEC-who supports on Basic Literacy and Numeracy Training; SDGs office-who supports on Primary Health Care, Training of

Caregivers and youth; UNICEF supports on Child Pedagogy and so on. She also mentioned that the ARC-P National team maintains the Management Information System for data storage and analyses, that the States provides the land and the Hubs for carrying out the training. For a transparent and accountable means of managing the funds from the Private Sectors, the ARC-P is working with FBN Quest who has signed a Trust Deed with the Ministry of Finance and has opened an account for the purpose.



- ***Mode of operationalizing for the State implementation unit, will they come up with programmes or work with programmes from the Federal?***

The Senior Special Assistant to the President on Nutrition, Mrs. Abimbola Adesina in her address, emphasized that a Stakeholders Engagement which involves the ARC-P Team from the Federal, State ARC-P Implementation Team, Selected Youth Facilitators by the State, Caregivers and gatekeepers and other relevant stakeholders will be held at an agreed date in the State, where the stakeholders will be able to

define the activities, eligibility criteria for beneficiaries and roles assignment. After the Stakeholders Engagement, the Skills Needs Assessment in the State will be done then a Capacity Training/Workshop for the selected Youth Facilitators will be done.



Visit to the palace of the Emir of Minna Dr. Umar Farouq Bahago

- ***How will a Youth Facilitator manage up to 50 children and how do they make sure that the children use those skills and make a living out of them?***

In response, Mrs. Abimbola mentioned that, the need for accountability and use of skill is part of what led to the Needs Assessment, as this helps to identify the skills that are economically viable in the State. For example, in Kaduna State, the report of the Needs Assessment in that State shows that a certain company needs skilled workers to increase production. So, what ARC-P wants to achieve is to train the children and youths in that skill so that will be able to fit into that system, so there is already a market for that skill. Also there is a Poultry and Feed production

company in Gombe, they have good equipment but unused and in need of manpower, youths can be trained in this skill and assigned to this company, so that is the idea of the Needs Assessment. Also there is the Management Information System which allows for cluster monitoring of the beneficiaries, they will be clustered in cooperatives where each of them will be an accountability partner to the other especially the Youth Facilitators. We haven't had the experience where a youth facilitator manages 50 children alone, they group themselves, form time tables and decide how many children come to the community hub per day from Monday to Friday for their trainings.



- ***How is the Monitoring Framework and what is the baseline comparison?***

The Policy Innovation Centre has been institutionalized in the last NESD summit, they are doing the baseline comparison for the ARC-P, they are going into Gombe as our pilot State and formulating the baseline so that we are able to monitor and get reports across the pillars. Also, there is the

TrackWithUS (TWU) which is a reporting mobile application that will be install on the devices that will be given to every Youth Facilitator who will in turn use this application to submit monthly reports based on the relevant indicators that are critical to addressing child poverty.



*Engagement with relevant stakeholders at the Tsangaya Education Centre – Makarantan
Mallam Ismaila*



Visit to the Programme office site & Ultra-Modern Training Centre, Minna



Engagement at Integrated Quranic Education Centre (IQE), Kpakungu, Minna

CONCLUSION

It is evident that the State is keen on working with the Federal Government to actualize the Programme in the State, and the Federal Team will be liaising with State Secretary to the Government (SSG) to draw up the Programme implementation plan and next steps in the State. The First Lady has suggested that, preferably, the incentivization package should not be monetary but rather non-monetary benefits that targets and addresses personal or basic needs of the beneficiaries. In the State, there are three major areas of concern, being one of the top states in Nigeria with a high record of out of school children:

1. With the high rate of insecurity in the State, they would be looking at building resilience for security among communities that are vulnerable because many schools have been shut down and farmers cannot go to their farms due to the high rate of insecurity in some of the communities. Every community should have early warning systems were if any attack is noticed or suspected, the community should be able to communicate with appropriate security agencies who will have ample time to intervene and address the situation promptly.
2. In the last three years, over 50 thousand herds of cattle have been rustled in Niger State, leaving the travelers (Fulanis) who came into the State with the cattle stranded, having no former education or Islamic education. So the State is looking for avenues that can support them like a compensation arrangement to help them recover from the shock.
3. Lastly, Niger State has no less than 17 thousand young graduates from various discipline who are unemployment. So, the State is finding ways to engage them so they can be occupied and have a source of income.