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## **Is Sustainable Learning For All achievable? Emerging evidence from Nigeria**

### **SYMPOSIUM RATIONALE**

Rapid increases in enrolment in countries such as Nigeria have raised questions about whether the expansion has been at the cost of quality, whether equity in learning outcomes is improving, and how educational improvement programmes can meet the challenge of reaching all learners. But data to shed light on these questions has been limited and piecemeal. A unique knowledge base is now being generated as part of the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN), a partnership between UKaid and the Nigerian government that reaches over 5.7 million children. This knowledge base includes a panel survey of over 500 schools in six states, a series of qualitative studies, and practitioner-based research. Work to improve the educational management information system in ESSPIN states also means that increasingly accurate, comprehensive and linked-up information is available on school infrastructure, pupils and teachers.

This symposium provides new evidence from this growing knowledge base on the expansion of enrolments, the barriers to achieving meaningful learning for all in Nigeria, which groups of students are worst affected, and which interventions are improving the situation. The papers examine changes in school quality, teaching and learning outcomes, in the context of ESSPIN's attempts to reach all learners with a massive scale-up of inclusive school improvement interventions. They explore both general trends across the states and specific changes happening within ESSPIN-supported school communities, including the differences in education outcomes by gender, wealth and location, and attempts to address these with inclusive practices in schools, classrooms and school-based management committees.

## SYMPOSIUM PAPERS

### Paper 1 – Improving school quality at scale

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### Paper 2 – Deepening classroom practice in low-resource, large-scale contexts

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### Paper 3 – Whose learning needs to be prioritised? Inclusive education in Nigeria

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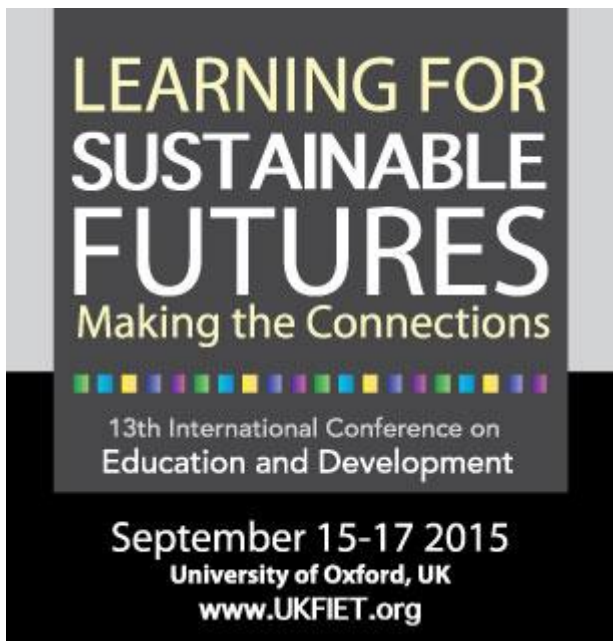
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## **Paper 1- Improving school quality at scale**

### **1 ABSTRACT**

ESSPIN aims both to widen access and improve learning outcomes for primary school children in six states of Nigeria. At the school level, it provides and supports the use of teaching materials, trains head teachers, and facilitates community participation through school-based management committees (SBMCs). Following early evidence of success, partner states developed plans to foster school improvement in all schools and committed more of their own funding to do so. The programme has been scaled up massively, reaching 6 million children, a quarter of Nigeria's enrolled population and 2.5% of the global total, through an annual investment of £150 per school.

This paper presents evidence from school surveys conducted in 2012 and 2014. ESSPIN-supported schools perform better than comparable schools in a wide range of indicators: they are better managed, have more competent teachers, and pupils are learning more in English and mathematics. However, state-wide learning outcomes remain low and unequal, with limited evidence of improvement. Enrolment has increased rapidly in some states, especially in ESSPIN-supported schools and local government areas. The profile of learners is also likely to have changed as ESSPIN's efforts to widen access through action by head teachers and SBMCs have resulted in larger numbers of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds entering ESSPIN schools. The paper considers how ESSPIN states have adapted their programming to meet the challenges of increased scale and inclusive access with equitable outcomes for more children.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

Basic education in Nigeria is in a state of crisis. 10.5 million primary-age children are reported to be out-of-school, out of a global total of 57 million (the majority of them located in the conflict stricken northern states), while the 23.1 million who are in school are learning very little (UNESCO GMR 2012). The quality of schools and the competencies of their teachers are extremely low

(discussed more in Thomson and Osuntusa 2015). Numerous studies show that there has been no improvement in learning outcomes for over a decade and a half (Osuntusa et al., 2013).

The Education Sector Support Programme (ESSPIN) aims both to widen access and improve learning outcomes for primary school children in six states of Nigeria. Begun in 2008 and funded by the UK and Nigerian governments, it works through a range of activities at the national, state, local and school levels. At the school level, it provides and supports the use of teaching materials, trains head teachers, and facilitates community participation through school-based management committees (SBMCs). Following early evidence of success, partner states were supported to develop plans to foster school improvement in all schools and committed more of their own funding to do so. The programme has been scaled up massively, reaching 6 million children, a quarter of Nigeria's enrolled population and 2.5% of the global total, through an annual investment of £150 per school.

Rapid increases in enrolment in countries such as Nigeria have raised questions about whether the expansion has been at the cost of quality, whether equity in learning outcomes is improving, and how educational improvement programmes can meet the challenge of reaching all learners. This paper presents evidence from independently conducted school surveys, the Composite Surveys of 2012 and 2014, the purpose of which was to understand how well ESSPIN was achieving its goals and more broadly how schools in the six states have been changing over time.

The paper goes on to explore the tensions and relationships between educational expansion and school improvement. As the programme goes to scale, engaging with more schools, teachers and pupils, is the relationship between numbers and achievement necessarily one of conflict? How can the challenges of going to scale be managed? Further, what lessons have been learned from the expansion process that can strengthen the drive for quality, equity and inclusivity? How have the ESSPIN States adapted their programming to meet the challenges of increased scale and inclusive access with equitable outcomes for more children?

### **3 ESSPIN'S SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME**

The main aim of ESSPIN is to address distressingly low levels of student achievement in Nigeria. Early studies revealed that only 8% of Grade 2 pupils in one State managed to attain the required curriculum standard in English language (Holbrook 2010), while in two other States 70% of Grade 3 pupils could not read a single word of a simple narrative text in the local Hausa language (Larcum et al., 2013, Sanni 2015).

ESSPIN's school improvement programme (SIP) is a 'whole-school' approach that insists on the need for multiple aspects of school functioning to be addressed at once rather than through piecemeal and one-off interventions (see e.g. Economist Intelligence Unit 2012). Programme staff argued that school improvement "is not a simple task of developing and implementing a list of contributing factors thrown up by school improvement and effectiveness research, but that school improvement is a complex process, demanding an integrated approach which is sensitive to the local context" (Kay et al 2014). The programme works with federal, state, and local governments to adopt an integrated and sustainable reform programme focused on improving school performance (Sanni, 2015). In particular, its ultimate aim is to improve learning outcomes for all children, and it aims to achieve this through work on five 'pillars' of school functioning: effective head teachers, competent teachers, inclusive practices, school development planning, and school based management committees (Figure 1). The School Improvement Programme comprises these

five pillars underpinned by cross-cutting capacity development work with state education agencies and civil society organisations.

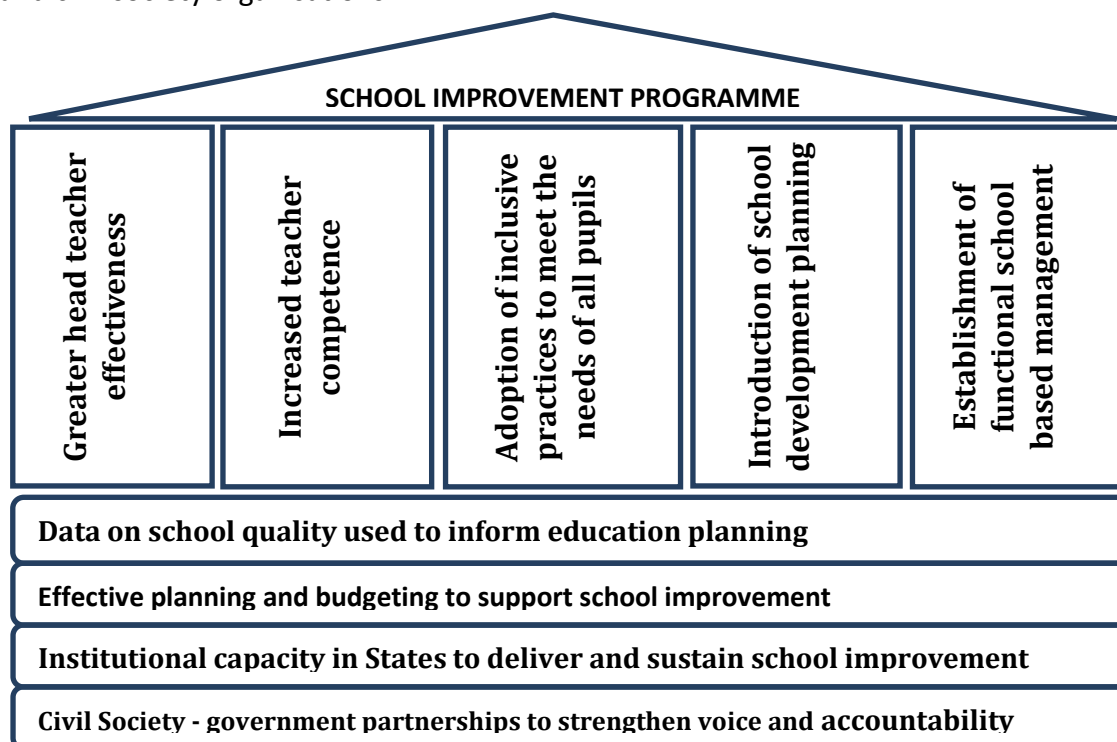


Figure 1. ESSPIN’s School Improvement Programme

Although directly addressing these issues through school level interventions are necessary and essential, on their own school level interventions were not considered sufficient to bring about change. School level issues have resulted from fragmented institutional arrangements for managing basic education at different tiers of government, leading to lack of accountability and duplication of efforts (Humphreys and Crawford 2014) and the reality of corruption, poor track record of budget execution, and weak financial monitoring and reporting (Santcross et al. 2009). Complementary and parallel improvements are arguably needed in the management, oversight and service delivery systems and processes which are being used by the three levels of government (federal, state and local). ESSPIN aimed to engage with government and civil society organisations to strengthen these in addition to its school level interventions.

The SIP was first piloted in 2,000 schools in 2009/10 and 2010/11. By 2014, it had been scaled up to over 10,000 schools, although faster in some states than others, with the responsibility for the shape, structure, implementation and funding of school improvement increasingly transferred to the partner States. Interventions reached 59% of schools in the six states in 2013/14, and another 9% had received it at some point in the previous years. In three of the States, including Kano with over 5,500 schools, it has been rolled out to all schools.

Table 1 Scale of SIP expansion by State by Phase (public primary schools), September 2014

State	No. of pilot schools	% of all schools	No. of Phase 2 schools	% of all schools
Enugu	91	6%	496	33%
Jigawa	198	9%	1,002	59%
Kaduna	165	4%	1,027	23%

State	No. of pilot schools	% of all schools	No. of Phase 2 schools	% of all schools
Kano	312	5%	5,494	100%
Kwara	1,448	100%	1,486	100%
Lagos	100	8%	1,004	100%
Programme	2,314	14%	10,509	54%

The principle underpinning the expansion was that school improvement should be and should be *seen to be* the routine work of the State Ministries and Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB), not that of a project or programme. State governments themselves have driven the pace of roll out, selected schools to participate, and provided the officers who run the programme on the ground, as well as providing funding through their own budgetary processes for core activities (including training and support visits).

The pace of the expansion has varied between States, for a range of reasons, including the strength of political will to drive reform at the most senior level; the degree enthusiasm for engaging with the reform process at Director and Education Secretary level and the availability of additional State funding above that of provided by the Federal Government (an identical amount despite the State's population).

No two States had the same scale up plan. Only Jigawa and Lagos remained closest to the original model, which had envisaged a slow and steady expansion of numbers of schools, starting with work on all "pillars" within a couple of clusters of schools in all Local Governments. This patchwork was then steadily filled in, fairly rapidly in Lagos and more slowly in Jigawa. Some States, most notably Kano State, developed their own interpretation of the initial SIP. Kano began by working on all pillars in three local governments (out of 44), a total of just over 300 schools. It then failed to expand at all for two years. In 2013/14 it went to scale, rolling out to all 5,500 schools at once, focusing on the teacher and modified Head teacher pillars. In 2014/15 it returned to the same schools to work on improving the functionality of the SBMCs.

ESSPIN staff argue that this differentiated model causes inherent difficulties in terms of support to implementation as training and support materials have to be significantly adapted for each State, but that the problems are outweighed by the sense of ownership felt by the majority of the States. The programme aims to make the SIP part of the day-to-day business of the State, so that State officers engage with the complexities of school improvement, including responding to evidence on poor functioning of schools that emerged from early baseline studies. A key assumption underpinning ESSPIN's theory of change was that evidence of impact from the pilot schools, proving that the SIP approach worked, would convince State governments to invest their own resources in scale up. At the end of the pilot phase, reinforced by the positive findings of the first Composite Survey, this assumption held good and States by and large committed to expansion. (see Figure 2)

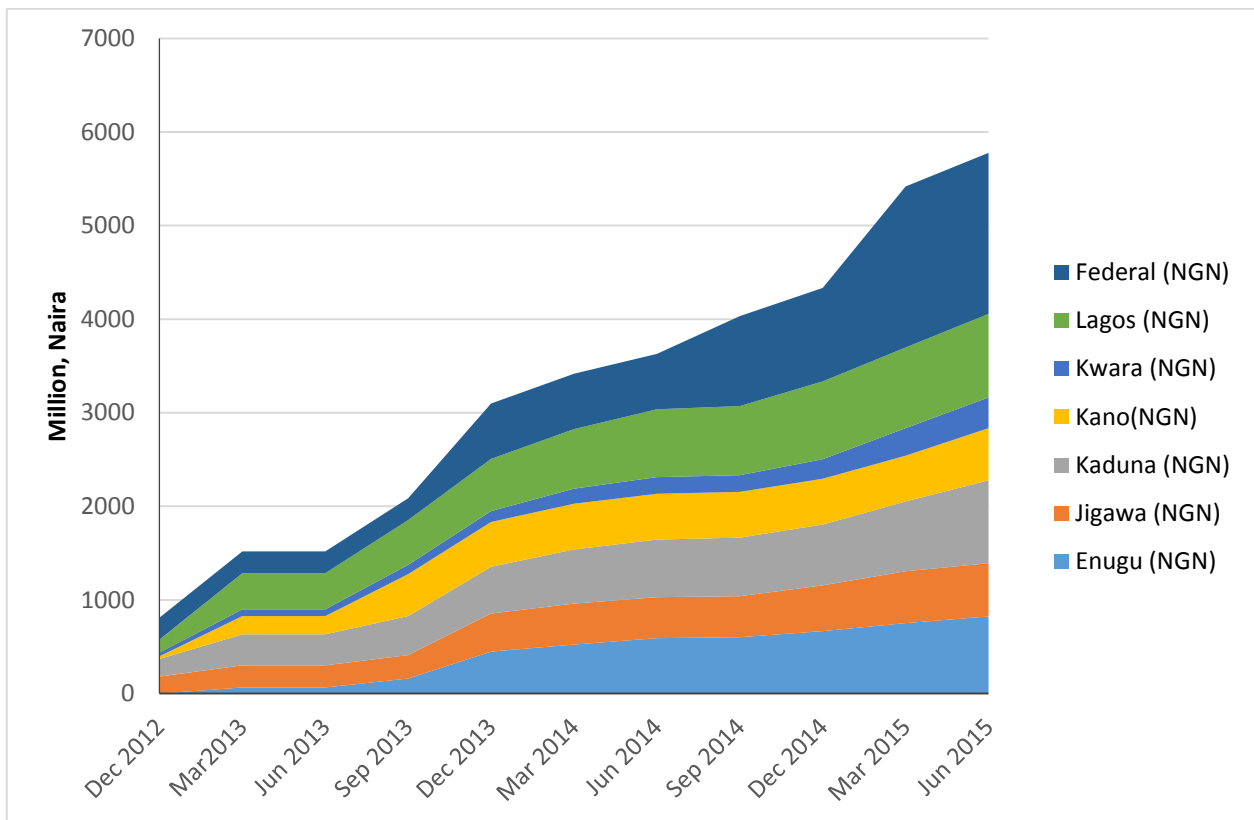


Figure 2: Cumulative Financial Resources Leveraged from States and Federal to support School Improvement (Million, Naira)

During the post-pilot phase, ESSPIN ceded decision-making to the States (whilst offering ongoing technical advice and limited financial support) who have responded by taking overall responsibility. Kano officials, as we have seen, articulated clearly the direction they wished their partnership with ESSPIN to take. They modified and have driven forward a customised programme in which they have invested considerable State funds. They have shown initiative and commitment to finding their own solutions to problems which once seemed intractable.

## 4 FINDINGS FROM THE ESSPIN SCHOOL SURVEYS

### 4.1 Methodology

As part of ESSPIN’s monitoring and evaluation, a school survey was conducted in the six states where ESSPIN works – Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kwara and Lagos, in 2012 and 2014. The survey uses a stratified sample design, selecting schools within differing amounts of ESSPIN intervention in each state, using the annual school census as a sampling frame. With the application of sampling weights, the survey can be used to produce representative estimates for the six states as a whole, as well as allowing comparison between schools that have received differing levels of ESSPIN intervention. The survey included interviews with head teachers, teachers, and school-based management committee chairs, lesson observations, and tests of teachers and children in English and mathematics. It is used to report on indicators of how head teachers are managing the school, how teachers behave in the classroom and how well they know basic English and mathematics, and how much children in grades 2 and 4 are learning.

Table 2. Instruments used in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of the school survey (2014)

Instrument	Outcome / output / impact indicators
Structured interview with head teacher	Number of lesson observations during past two weeks; number of professional development meetings this school year; teacher attendance book; actions by head teacher to promote teacher attendance and improve pupil attendance; written evidence of school self-evaluation process for school year; School Development Plan (SDP) for school year available; activities relating to strengthening teaching and learning in the SDP; activities relating to improving access in the SDP; evidence of activities in the SDP being carried out; up-to-date cashbook.
Structured interview with SBMC chairperson and members	Number of SBMC meetings this school year; SBMC awareness-raising activities; steps taken by SBMC to address exclusion; SBMC networking with community-based organisations (CBOs), traditional or religious institutions, other SBMCs, and LGEAs; SBMC has a women's committee and a children's committee, and how often these committees meet; SBMC has contributed resources to the school; visits by the SBMC to the school this school year; number of SBMC meetings attended by at least one woman and by at least one child; issues raised by female and child members; action taken on issues raised by female and child members; whether children's committee had a trained facilitator; action for commonly excluded groups; SBMC raised issue of children's exclusion.
Structured interview with teacher	Knowledge of English and maths curriculum benchmarks; whether they know the school opening time.
Lesson observation	Number of forms of classroom organisation used; number of teaching aids used; number of times teacher praised or reprimanded children; participation of children from different zones of the classroom; participation of boys and girls in the lesson.
Teacher tests conducted at the end of the survey in testing centres	Teacher test scores in English literacy and numeracy.
Pupil tests	Pupil test scores in English literacy and numeracy at grades 2 and 4.
General observation	Length of morning break; number of classes where pupils and teachers are in class within half an hour of starting time.

#### 4.2 Do ESSPIN schools work better than other schools?

Across a wide range of indicators, schools which have benefited from ESSPIN's SIP are doing better than those without, and the differences are in most cases statistically significant. Head teachers observe lessons more and hold professional development meetings more with teachers; they have better processes in place for planning school development; they can point to plans for ensuring access for disadvantaged children; and the schools have more functional school based management committees.



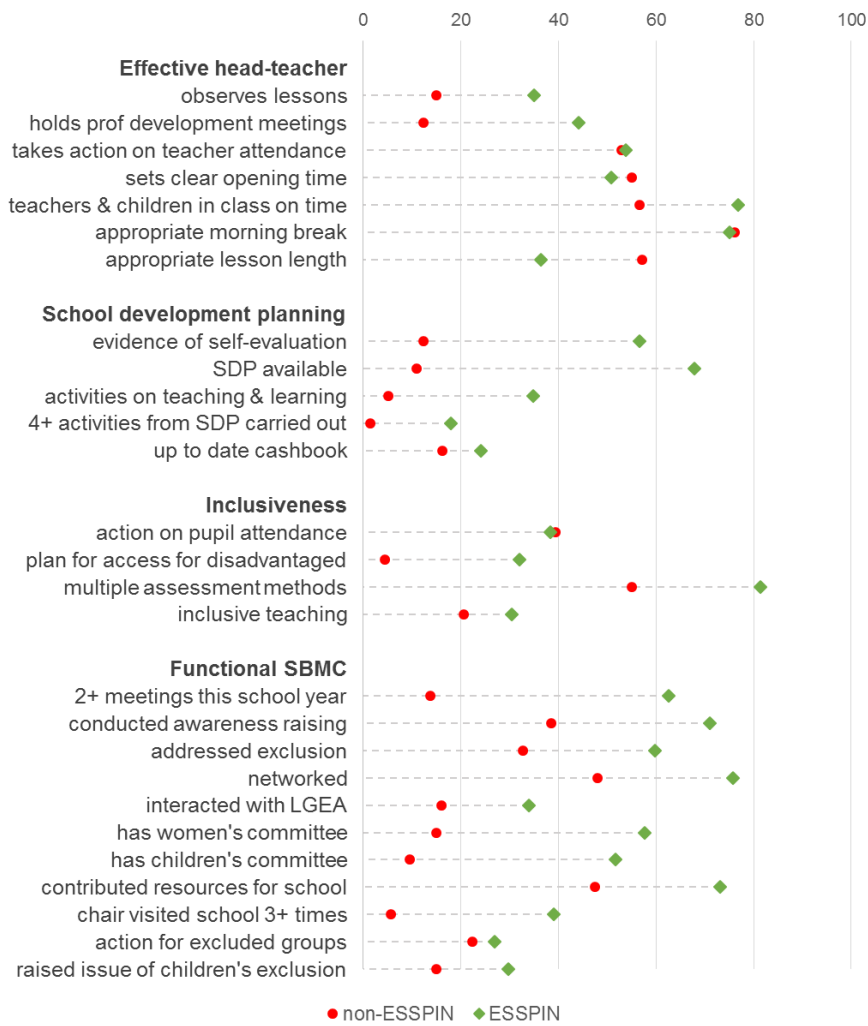


Figure 3. Aspects of school functioning in ESSPIN and other schools in the six states

Teachers who have received ESSPIN training are much more likely to recognise curriculum benchmarks in English and mathematics. They praise more in class, assign more individual or group tasks (as opposed to talking to the class as a whole all of the time), and have higher scores in English and mathematics tests.

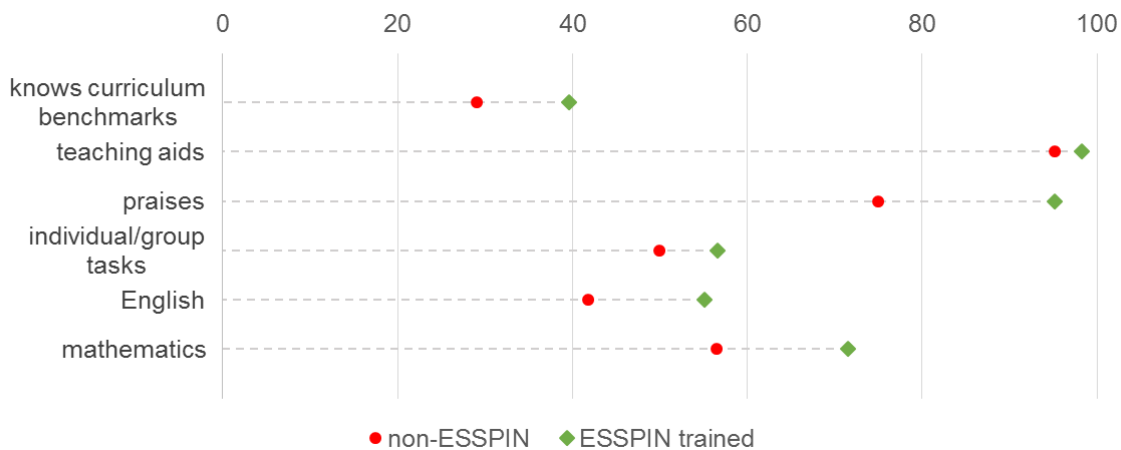


Figure 4. Comparison of knowledge of curriculum benchmarks, adequate use of praise during a lesson observation, setting individual and group tasks, and scores in English and mathematics tests, for teachers who have been trained by ESSPIN compared to those who are not in ESSPIN schools, in 2014

Using these indicators, a set of overall standards were developed for the purposes of evaluating ESSPIN, covering teacher competence, head teacher effectiveness, school development planning, inclusiveness, SBMC functionality, and overall quality. In each of these, the schools benefiting from ESSPIN's SIP are much more likely to have met the standard than the other schools in the six states (Table 3). Children in grades 2 and 4 also have much higher scores in English and mathematics tests than children in the other schools.

Table 3. Results in overall indicators in 2014, in schools benefiting from ESSPIN's SIP and other schools

% meeting overall standard	ESSPIN SIP	Other schools
Competent teachers	73	62*
Effective head teacher	34	14*
School development planning	20	3*
Inclusive school	25	8*
SBMC functions	67	17*
SBMC inclusive of women	48	2*
SBMC inclusive of children	18	2*
Good quality school	27	3*
Average % scores in children's tests		
Literacy grade 2	41	26*
Literacy grade 4	40	25*
Numeracy grade 2	47	34*
Numeracy grade 4	39	30*

\* means that the results are statistically significantly different in SIP schools than in other schools ( $p < .05$ ). Results shown for teacher competence are specifically for teachers who have been trained by ESSPIN.

The teacher tests included items pitched at different primary school grades and focusing on different areas: foundational skills for teaching literacy; writing; reading; grammar; number concepts; calculation; and other numeracy skills. Many of the English literacy test items appeared to present particular difficulties for the teachers, while relatively high proportions were able to answer the mathematics questions. Results across all types of item were stronger for ESSPIN-trained teachers compared to teachers in non-ESSPIN schools, although the difference was only large enough to be statistically significant for foundational literacy skills, grammar, and number concepts.

There is a steep drop in test scores as the test progresses from lower grade to higher grade items. Around 80% of teachers can answer grade 1 level English questions correctly, but only 20% can answer grade 5 level questions correctly. In mathematics, the declining gradient of scores with the grade level of test items is less steep, but it is still evident: teachers score 72% in grade 1 but only 33% in grade 5 level items. Moreover, these patterns vary dramatically by state (

). Only in Lagos and Enugu is there a relative consistency across grade levels in English, with teachers scoring over 40% even in grade 5 level items. In Jigawa teachers scored on average 34% in grade 2 English items, and only 9% in grade 5 English. In mathematics, most teachers across the six states can answer questions up to grade 4 level, but there is a marked drop-off when it comes to the hardest grade 5 level items, especially in Jigawa, Kaduna and Kano.

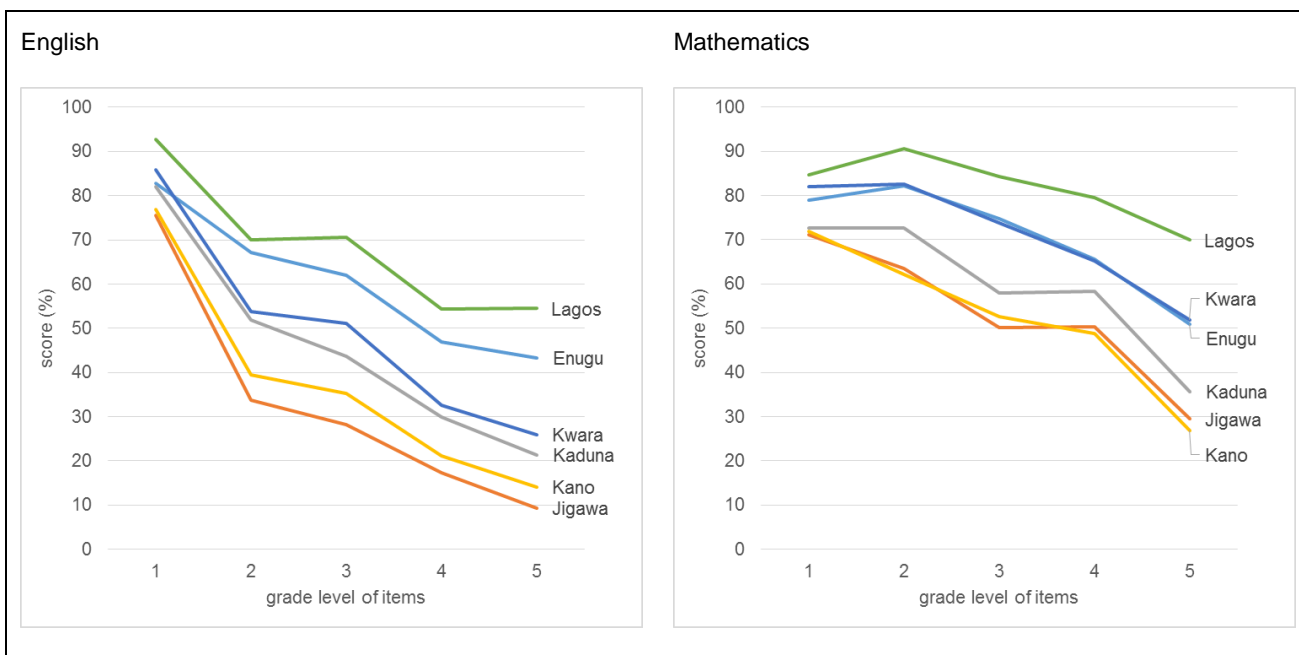


Figure 5. Teacher test scores by grade level and state

### 4.3 Does the SIP result in improvements in school quality and learning outcomes?

ESSPIN SIP schools are doing better than other schools, but this is not sufficient to establish that ESSPIN is the cause of the superior performance. The schools selected for ESSPIN may not have been typical of schools in the six states. There are substantial differences in a number of characteristics between schools that received more and schools that received less ESSPIN intervention, in Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano and Lagos. Selected schools include a wide range of school types, but overall, larger, urban, and longer-established schools are represented in larger proportions than would be expected if the schools had been chosen at random. School selection for ESSPIN was directed locally, by state and local governments, and is likely to have reflected varying criteria including accessibility, size, and probability of impact.

In addition, take up of ESSPIN has been much more rapid in states that had better-functioning schools to start with (particularly Kwara and Lagos), so that estimates for the six states as a whole reflect the concentration of ESSPIN schools in these states as well as any effect of the ESSPIN intervention.

We adopt two different strategies to control for pre-existing differences in the schools that were selected for ESSPIN and those that were not. First, we adopt a 'difference in difference' methodology, which compares the change between 2012 and 2014 in each indicator in ESSPIN schools to the change between 2012 and 2014 in non-ESSPIN schools. By focusing on the change over time rather than the current situation, the hope is to control out confounding factors (e.g. a higher proportion of ESSPIN schools being urban) that would affect the initial quality of ESSPIN schools. The results of difference in differences analysis is supportive of ESSPIN having had an impact between 2012 and 2014. Teacher competence, head teacher effectiveness, school development planning, school inclusiveness, SBMC functioning, and overall school quality have all been increasing faster in ESSPIN schools than in non-ESSPIN schools. The same is true for children's literacy in grade 2 and 4, although not for numeracy in grade 2 and 4.

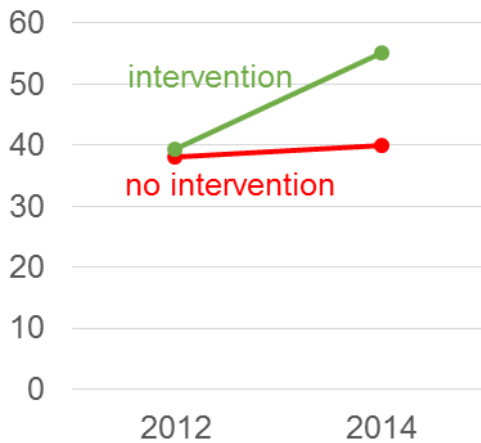


Figure 6. Overall school quality score (%) in intervention and non-intervention schools, in 2012 and 2014

The findings from the difference in differences analysis are consistent with an ESSPIN effect, although a few caveats are needed. The SIP started in 2009, while the first round of the survey was in 2012, so does not represent a true baseline. Determining an appropriate intervention variable is therefore complicated; we used the intensity of ESSPIN intervention during 2011/12 and 2012/13, reasoning that (allowing for a lag of around one year between intervention and outcome) it is intervention during this period that could plausibly be responsible for school improvement during 2012-2014. Secondly, difference in difference estimates rely on the assumption of ‘parallel trends’ – that without the intervention, both sets of schools would have continued along a similar path of improvement or worsening.

In order to have greater confidence we therefore also used a number of statistical methods to control for potentially confounding school characteristics, using information from the school census. We use both ordinary least squares regression – estimating the correlation of learning outcomes with ESSPIN intervention, conditional on school characteristics – and propensity score matching – where control (non-intervention) schools are assigned weights according to their similarity to intervention schools.

We find significant differences between ESSPIN and control schools after using several techniques to control for state and school characteristics (Table 4). Controlling for the characteristics of schools tends to reduce the estimated effect but does not eliminate it—although it becomes non-significant in some cases, particularly for numeracy. Our preferred specification controls for state, school characteristics, pupil wealth (for grade 4 students only), and changes in the pupil–teacher ratio (row 9 in Table 4). This specification can only be calculated for the four states which retain a control group: Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna and Kano. In those states, we find that pupils in ESSPIN schools have literacy scores approximately six to seven percentage points higher than those in control schools. The difference is not significant for grade 2 numeracy, but for grade 4 numeracy we find a difference of around two percentage points in favour of ESSPIN schools. Both the difference in difference analysis and the analysis of the 2014 results with statistical controls for confounding variables are consistent with a causal impact of ESSPIN.

Table 4. Estimates of the effect of ESSPIN intervention on learning outcomes in 2014

Model	L2		L4		N2		N4	
(1) Control for state	7.27	*	9.49	*	5.66	*	6.74	*
(2) Control for state and school characteristics	4.22	*	5.29	*	1.72		3.28	*
(3) Matched (near-neighbour matching)	3.40	*	4.07	*	1.62		4.12	*
(4) Matched (propensity score matching)	2.48		4.52		2.09		1.26	
(5) Matched and controlled for state	5.22	*	5.6	*	2.63		1.47	
(6) Matched and controlled for school characteristics	3.03	*	5.63	*	3.05	*	2.17	*
(7) Matched, controlled for state and school characteristics	6.96	*	6.12	*	1.19		2.23	*
(8) Matched, controlled for state, school characteristics, and changes in enrolment between 2009/10 and 2013/14	6.98	*	6.01	*	1.18		2.03	
(9) Matched, controlled for state, school characteristics, and changes in pupil–teacher ratio between 2009/10 and 2013/14	7.2	*	6.26	*	1.00		2.19	*

Note. Numbers shown are the coefficients on the ESSPIN intervention variable in a regression model with the test score as the dependent variable. These therefore represent the average in test scores between ESSPIN and control schools, controlling for location and other characteristics. When controlling for state we only include Enugu, Jigawa, Kaduna and Kano, as the other two states do not have a control group for comparison. \* indicates a positive coefficient in the regression ( $p < .05$ ).

Additional analysis examined the change between 2012 and 2014. It controlled for schools' results in 2012 and for other characteristics of the schools such as their location and infrastructure. The results seem to show a worsening in ESSPIN schools over time, however we need to be wary of the analysis based on changes over time. The comparison is inherently noisy as we assess a different random sample of 16 pupils within each school in 2014 than we were assessed in 2012. In addition, Bolton's 2013 review showed that national reforms take considerably more than one year for interventions to feed through into a measurable effect on learning outcomes.

In summary, there is evidence that schools that have received ESSPIN intervention are better in 2014 and that this cannot be explained by pre-existing differences in location and other school characteristics. There is also evidence that schools that received ESSPIN intervention improved faster during 2012–2014, but when it comes to learning outcomes, this evidence is not robust to controls for pre-existing school characteristics. This pattern of results is consistent with a causal effect of ESSPIN on better learning outcomes, but suggests that the effects may be varied between states and over time.

#### 4.4 Scale up and state-wide improvement

Across the six states as a whole, the proportion of good quality schools has increased from 4 to 10 per cent (Table 5). Behind this figure lie, in particular, improvements in our measures of school development planning and SBMC functionality. In other measures, however, schools have not changed significantly. Relatively modest improvements in school functioning across the six states as a whole are likely to reflect the limited scale up of ESSPIN by the time of the survey. In 2012/13, ESSPIN reached only one in six schools across the six states as a whole. It remains to be seen whether the more recent scale up of ESSPIN can spread the improvement across the states as a whole and lead to larger proportions of schools meeting standards for each aspect of school functioning.

As ESSPIN scaled up, its model for delivering school support changed. During the pilot phase, state school improvement teams (SSITs) trained directly by ESSPIN staff were responsible for supporting and training head teachers and teachers. As the programme expanded, the school support officers (SSOs) – a second, larger group of existing state employees working at the local government

educational authority (LGEA) level – were trained by the SSITs and ESSPIN. Responsibility for working directly with head teachers and teachers shifted to the SSOs, who are less qualified and have received less training than the SSITs.

Table 5. Proportion of schools across the six states as a whole meeting standards in 2012 and 2014

Indicator (%)	2012	2014
Competent teachers	70	66
Effective head teacher	14	20
School development planning	4	7*
Inclusive school	19	13
SBMC functions	22	31*
SBMC inclusive of women	15	16
SBMC inclusive of children	6	6
Good quality school	4	10*
Literacy grade 2	30	30
Literacy grade 4	34	29*
Numeracy grade 2	48	38*
Numeracy grade 4	36	32*

In learning outcomes, pupils across the six states appear to be learning less in 2014 than they were in 2012. The deterioration in learning outcomes is found both in non-ESSPIN schools and schools that received ESSPIN intervention (except for grade 2 literacy), but the change is smaller in the intervention schools (see Figure 7). Although we cannot totally rule out measurement error as a source of the apparent worsening over time, the differences are quite consistent across different types of test items, suggesting a genuine worsening in children’s learning outcomes. The lack of clear improvement in ESSPIN schools may also reflect time lag between the intervention and impact on learning outcomes. Small scale education interventions in developing countries are sometimes found to have a measurable effect on learning outcomes within a time span of a few months, while for national reforms a lag of 5 to 10 years is expected (Bolton, 2013). The expectation for ESSPIN was a lag of around one year, but detailed analysis of the timing of intervention (see Cameron, 2015, section 4.2.1) suggests that the impact may have been greatest after 2 or 3 years.

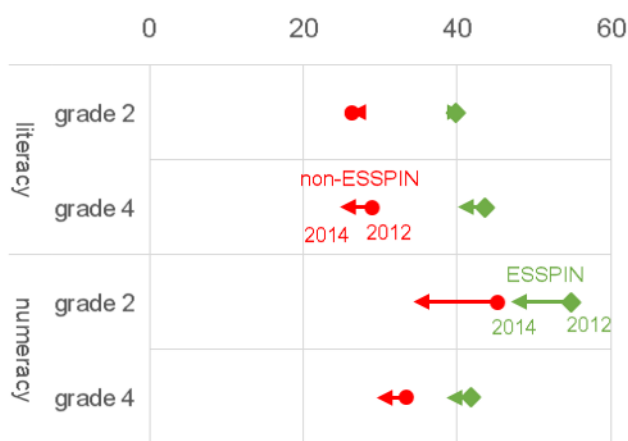


Figure 7. Average test results in ESSPIN and non-ESSPIN schools in 2012 and 2014 (%)

#### 4.5 An access-quality trade-off?

The large expansion of school enrolments in states where ESSPIN works may be part of the reason for the worsening in test results over time across the six states as a whole. We test whether schools where enrolments (or the pupil–teacher ratio) rose more quickly have had worse declines in learning outcomes, but do not find any evidence to support this hypothesis. Still, as access is widened, many of the additional children entering school may be first-generation learners or from families that are less able to support their learning. In 2014, learning outcomes differed starkly by wealth, particularly in English literacy, where grade 4 pupils from the richest quintile scored twice as highly as those from the poorest quintile (see Aboki et al., 2015). Has the profile of learners been changing over time, and if so has this made it harder for schools to improve learning outcomes? We do not have detailed background information on the half million additional learners who enrolled in the six states in 2012 and 2014, and so this remains a question for future research. Even though learning outcomes are still to improve, the survey showed that more learners are benefiting from being in better quality schools.

Table 6. Number of pupils enrolled in primary grades, by state

state	2009/10	2013/14	Change	
Enugu	234,000	179,000	-56,000	-23.7%*
Jigawa	410,000	486,000	+76,000	+18.5%
Kaduna	930,000	1,080,000	+150,000	+16.2%
Kano	1,715,000	2,026,000	+311,000	+18.1%
Kwara	183,000	179,000	-4000	-2.2%
Lagos	385,000	387,000	+2000	+0.4%

\* Enrolment shown is only for schools listed in both censuses. There were also many more schools in the 2013/14 census than in the 2009/10 census. Some schools may have been missed in the earlier census. Total enrolment increased by 38% in Enugu once these extra schools are added.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

The findings from the school surveys conducted as part of the evaluation of ESSPIN suggest that ESSPIN schools are performing better in a wide range of measures, including learning outcomes,

and that the difference in learning outcomes cannot be explained away by pre-existing differences in school characteristics. This suggests that ESSPIN's approach through the school improvement programme has been effective to date.

At the same time, improvements across the six states as a whole have been relatively limited, suggesting that the rapid scale up currently being implemented by ESSPIN is indeed called for. The number of children in good quality schools (according to our quality measure) has increased dramatically, yet remains a small proportion of overall enrolment in the six states. An important question that we cannot yet answer is whether the (somewhat varied) models of scale up adopted in the six states will enable the programme to maintain the same quality and similar levels of better school performance. By December 2014, plans were in place to scale up to all schools in Jigawa, Enugu and Kaduna, yet required budgets are still to be released. These plans have been severely tested as a result of the 2015 Elections which have brought in new administrations which take time to become functional.

Despite improvements in schools across the six states during 2012-2014, learning outcomes remain low. There are likely to be contextual factors including ongoing conflict in northern states, and changes in the numbers and profiles of pupils who are enrolled in government schools, preventing learning outcomes from improving. The most recent survey has also highlighted low levels of teacher subject knowledge in English and mathematics, suggesting that this may pose an additional constraint to improving learning outcomes even in schools that function relatively well in other respects.

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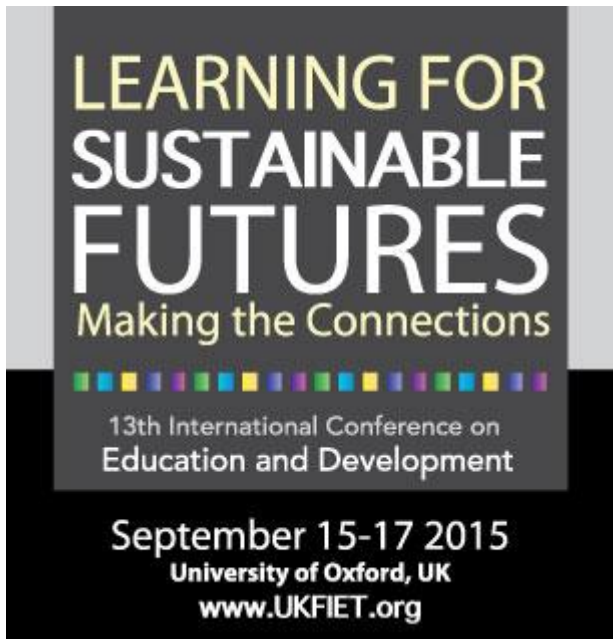
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## Paper 2 - Deepening Classroom Practice in Low-Resource, Large-Scale Contexts

### 1 ABSTRACT

Translating educational policies on access, quality and inclusivity into meaningful large-scale change in practice at the classroom level requires sustainable funding commitments by government. In 2008, ESSPIN piloted classroom improvement work in up to 10% of schools in six Nigerian states. By 2015, all six states had progressively scaled up teacher development and school leadership activities to begin reaching 100% of their schools. States fund the activities with their own budgets, support with their own staff, and manage within their own systems.

Yet, enabling states to support schools is not enough for sustainable improvement: there is a pressing need to deepen quality of classroom practice. This paper shares some successes regarding the depth of practice that can be achieved in large numbers of resource-poor classrooms, led and funded by their own governments. Using case studies, it argues that it is necessary to treat teachers and headteachers as individuals working in specific, different, contexts and that local and state governments must develop understanding of what good classroom practice means in their respective contexts.

In Nigeria, success has been achieved through improved quality, proximity and differentiation of support to schools and teachers, with a special focus on the need to steer school communities towards autonomous professional practice where schools plan their own improvement paths towards raising pupils' learning achievements with few or no additional resources.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

As Breakell et al. (2015) and Aboki et al. (2015) discuss, ESSPIN's work engages with the education system in six states and seeks to improve children's learning by influencing change at state and local government, community, school, and classroom level. ESSPIN seeks to improve classroom

practice, but also to improve understanding of what current practice is, what good practice looks like, how to work towards better classrooms, and how better classroom practice relates to everyone's institutional role. It is not as simple as giving out resources and teaching teachers how to teach.

All six states now fund teacher development and school leadership activities broadly based on ESSPIN's pilot model. All have rolled this work out to 100% of their schools. This success creates significant challenges to our work. First, if states provide the funding then state priorities have to be followed, even where these do not align with our priorities. Second, state funding follows its own timetabling and procedures, which are often unpredictable. Third, delivery and management by states relies on officers who are themselves learning how to deliver their roles and work effectively, which inevitably leads to inefficiencies. Fourth, all of these factors exist in different ways and to different extents in each of the 147 LGEAs (Local Government Educational Authorities) we work with. And fifth – the key challenge and the focus of this paper – changing the way children learn on a vast scale with little direct contact into classrooms and with a highly restricted per school spend is a different proposition entirely from a pilot project working closely with headteachers and teachers.

Our work on improving classroom practice is founded in the belief that the strongest improvements, and the only ones that can be sustainable, are developed, applied, and assessed at a local level. Change, if it is to be high quality and built to last, has to be context-specific, within the capacities and ideally responding to the demands of those who will deliver that change. Inviting, listening to, and responding to those demands at every level from State government to classrooms is the focus of our work. This paper identifies some challenges and shares some responses to them through case studies from ESSPIN's work in Nigerian states and schools.

Throughout the system, and especially at classroom level, capacity is low, and at first contact looks non-existent. Teachers are required to have academic qualifications: NCE (the Nigerian Certificate in Education) or a Bachelor of Education. College is widely seen as a stepping stone to university: those who have chosen teaching as a career do so as the last option. The least capable students in Nigeria study education because most students would rather work towards better paid and regarded careers, such as engineering or medicine. Most are prepared to teach secondary education and arrive in our primary schools without any competent headteacher to support them.



Figure 8: Challenging teaching environments in Kano and Kaduna.

For years, these 'accidental teachers' have been struggling to lecture pupils who are persistently alienated in the school setting as the 'teacher' is interested in teaching the subject rather than the pupils. Most lecturers preparing future teachers have not taught pupils in primary schools before, let alone dealt with situations even the most advanced teachers would find challenging, such as those shown in Figure 1 with over 200 pupils in a classroom, limited furniture, and no teaching and learning materials let alone textbooks or pupils' workbooks.

Given these challenges, much training assumes a traditional step-down format. However, as Figure 2 illustrates, workshop activities place an emphasis on discourse, not on the delivery of information; activities tend to present participants with an issue and ask how it can be solved in their contexts and with their levels of experience and engagement. Further, 'workshops' and 'training', while absorbing the bulk of states' expenditure on changing what teachers do in classrooms, do not actually have the most impact: that comes from visits to schools, which include meetings, discussions, and mutual explorations of how workshop content can be applied in specific school contexts. We do not aspire to making every classroom in our states the same: we aspire to individuals at every level making informed decisions about how to behave in their contexts.



Figure 9: Discursive workshop environment in Kaduna.

The driving intention behind the delivery and monitoring model is to develop a breadth and depth of understanding within state education systems, making the people within systems focused on classrooms and what happens inside them. The delivery system is therefore also the monitoring and management system: at the same time as giving teachers opportunities to change, ESSPIN seeks to enable head teachers and local and state governments to understand what teachers are doing, what can be done better, and what officers in different roles and at different levels can do about it.

To take Kano state as an example, as shown in Figure 3, ESSPIN's model seeks to enable the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) to change how nearly two and a half million children learn: nearly 70% of the number of primary school children in the whole of the UK are in this state alone.<sup>1</sup> New ways of teaching and learning are primarily delivered through ESSPIN's Learning Team, under the direction of SUBEB's Advisory Service Unit, training 50 members of the State School Improvement Team (SSIT), who in turn train 834 School Support Officers. These SSOs are responsible for an average of 7 schools each: they in turn train their headteachers and one to three teachers from each school.

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<sup>1</sup> Kano figures based on Kano State's State School Census Report 2013-14, not yet released. UK figure of 3,569,784 as of January 2015 based on Table 1a in the UK Department for Education's 'Schools, pupils, and their characteristics: January 2015', online since 11/6/15 at <<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2015>>, last accessed 23rd July 2015.

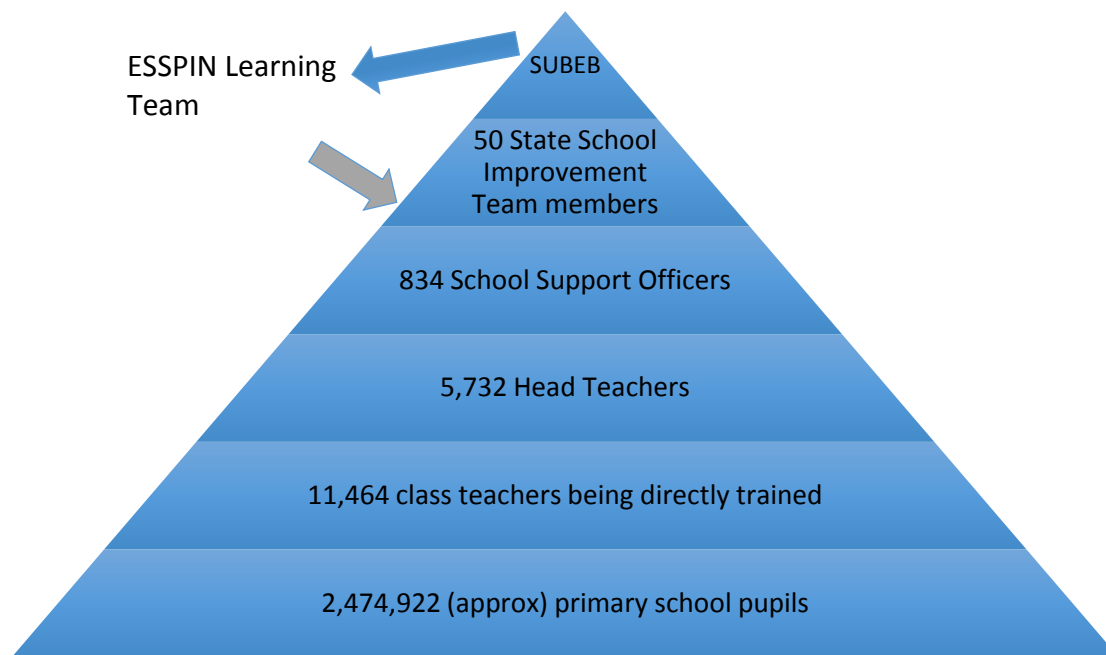


Figure 3: Structure of inputs to improve classroom quality.

Clearly, each stage of this process and how ESSPIN has worked to improve it could comprise a paper by itself; another paper sits in describing some of the differences between individuals and systems in the states and local governments we work with. However, before discussing the only stage that really matters in more detail – the foundation of teachers and pupils – two general points need to be made. First, it is important to note that this model appears to be top-down, but developing the efficient delivery of information and needs from the bottom upwards forms a major strand of ESSPIN's operation. Second, the connection from SUBEB to SSOs through SSIT masks a great deal of complexity within this single state management system, let alone those elsewhere. Briefly, SSOs sit within Local Government management systems which have been strengthened to look at classroom practice and understand how they can respond to it as part of their own roles and by using their own resources – primarily SSOs themselves – supported by the state's resources – primarily SSIT. What started as 'briefings' or 'information sharings' to 'carry along' Local Government management became, at the state's instigation, 'Technical Team Meetings', where LGEA officers from different departments and levels advise SUBEB on the challenges they face and how they can best be overcome in their different contexts.

### 3 CHANGING WHAT 'IMPROVEMENT' LOOKS LIKE

By contrast, in the past, in-service teacher training has been an activity focused on subject knowledge and pedagogical theory, to be planned and delivered centrally in large halls with about 800 participants, and focused on favoured people who happen to be on school payrolls, regardless of professional activity. Theories are not put into practice, or even demonstrated. No connection is made between the training and classroom support roles, such as headteachers and LGEA managers. It is one thing to have participants trained in the city and quite another to expect them to put the lessons into use in their schools. In their own classrooms, they are expected to apply these new theories without any management support in contexts where pupils sit on bare floor without books or tables to write on; to manage a combination of classes in one room due to lack of staff; to deal with a wide range of pupil abilities and needs in one class; to handle 200 pupils with no materials.

This institutional construct of what training means has in the past been heavily funded by federal and state governments, but has not delivered quality.<sup>2</sup> Measurements have focused on what is done at the centre rather than what impact it has had on classroom behaviours and learning. Teacher trainers are professors or PhD holders with little or no experience in primary education, who design training modules aspiring to their perceptions of educational excellence, mostly based on experiences gained through international interventions or reading, and whose academic contents would not be useful to participants even if, with their limited English language skills, they could understand them.

In an attempt to shift to context-based practical learning, at institutional as well as classroom level, change and progress has been slow and steady. Building trust in us and what we say, and only making people at each level bite what they are able to chew, has been essential. A basic leadership programme, based on the findings of surveys and school visits, was designed for headteachers. Spread over two years, this adopted the principle of 'little and often' and is delivered alongside significant strengthening of institutional support so that head teachers are not asked to change in a vacuum. Each term, workshops for headteachers set them school-based tasks to carry out with SSOs' support. Themes have included evaluating the school, planning to improve learning, leading teaching and learning, using lesson observations, and leading the development of teachers' professional skills.

All headteachers are also included in literacy and numeracy programmes designed for class teachers. These build content knowledge and explore effective methods of delivery, not through theories and lectures but through working with teachers on how to deliver and adapt practical activities contained in lesson plans by using the same methodologies when delivering those activities to them.

This does not sound like rocket science and it is not. But it is effective teaching of how to offer children a chance to learn. By delivering to headteachers alongside teachers, by working through rather than around local government officers, and by giving local and state government systems the space to manage the planning, spaces, resources, people, and finances for such activity, ESSPIN recognises the limitations to depth that can be achieved in large-scale work. It gives states the space to decide for themselves how to use their limited resources. Consequently, changes to how individuals behave inside classrooms are sustainable.

#### **4 THE FIRST STEP: IDENTIFYING NEEDS**

It may sound as if nothing new ever happens: that ESSPIN is satisfied with teachers who appear to be interested and government officers who take part in training. But we are, in fact, always searching for ways to move learning forwards: to deepen the quality of classroom practice, and the understanding of what effective classroom practice looks like. This work used to be done by ESSPIN consultants and staff going to schools and discussing what we saw and what can be done about it with SSITs, local governments, and states.

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<sup>2</sup> For expectations of teacher training work and reports on past training cycles, see Nigeria's Universal Basic Education Committee 'Guidelines' for and 'Reports' on Teacher Development Programme funds, released annually from 2010 to the present.

It is still led by ESSPIN, but has an increasing number of strands. A combination of different people in each state, drawing from a range of levels and roles, devised their own 'advanced standards' for teachers and head teachers. States thus set the agenda for future training content. In effect, they commissioned ESSPIN to devise and deliver the changes they felt their schools needed. And they continue to monitor the results of that work, holding us – as their development partner – to account for the advice we have given, the expenditure of their funds, and the changes that have resulted.

Some work is not about changing what happens in a classroom at all, but about changing how teachers are talked about, how they are watched, and what kind of opportunities they are given to improve. For every three days of training headteachers receive, SSOs receive four; for every two days of classroom teacher training, SSOs receive three. These extra days, along with extensive induction training, are focused on how to train; how to support; how to observe and advise; how to talk to other professionals in a way that helps them to improve.

Training content goes further than helping people to respond to generic issues that we have identified: it continually evolves based on research and reports. Ongoing field research, both by ESSPIN staff and reported to ESSPIN by state officers, has identified specific problems to which solutions have been tailored and delivered through the process described above. This means that ESSPIN is not focused on delivering a 'package', but on continually working to improve and develop practice at every level of the school system based on what is actually taking place.

As one example, members of the Learning Team visited schools in Kaduna with School Support Officers. There, they participated in school visit activities: joining headteachers and SSOs in conducting lesson observations and providing feedback to the teachers and headteachers. It became clear that, while many improvements were being made, there was a fundamental lack of understanding of how to use supportive relationships as part of an improvement process.

It was a reawakening call to realise that clarifying, agreeing, and documenting responsibilities is not enough to ensure that people carry out their roles effectively. The discursive support that is critical to the success of this model was not being implemented effectively, reflecting the ingrained traditional approach of delivering information rather than developing independent skills. In John Abbot's terms, teachers need to treat students like free-range chickens rather than chickens in battery cages.<sup>3</sup> The officers we are working with have been in battery cages for most of their lives, waiting for someone, somewhere to spell out what to do and when to do it: ESSPIN needs to work with them as carefully and as respectfully of their needs and challenges as we do with teachers and children.

The schools seen on this visited had received training and regular support visits, but there was little indication of a positive impact beyond the basic application of ideas from workshops. The easy conclusion is that support was not being delivered in the right way, but such a judgement requires more analysis of what the 'right' method of support is. When watched in action, many school **support** visits were in reality school **slip-up** visits, focused on identifying mistakes rather than working together towards solutions. It is interesting to note that the word 'support' is used a lot by both SSOs and SSITs without them thinking about what it means in terms of their own behaviours.

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<sup>3</sup> John Abbott, 'Battery Hens or Free Range Chickens What Kind of Education for What Kind of World?' (The 21st Century Learning Initiative, 1999) online at <<http://www.21learn.org/archive/battery-hens-or-free-range-chickens-what-kind-of-education-for-what-kind-of-world/>>, last accessed 12th August 2015.

This is not to say that no progress had been made. Relationships and mutual respect between SSOs and school staff have improved over time, and the strong status division between them has been mostly eroded away. SSOs are familiar with their schools and discuss when and what they will observe with headteachers rather than dictating it. The same impulse towards discussion and agreement can be seen between headteachers and teachers, mostly focused around lesson observations. This shift towards schools as communities of learning is leading to stronger understanding of good practice and a shared language (based around states' standards and criteria for effective teaching and leadership). This is working towards improved classroom practice.

However, the effects of a low initial skill base, large scale of operation, and limited resources available for implementation can still be clearly seen. SSOs and headteachers struggle to give specific examples of how teachers could change their behaviour to attain higher standards. Similarly, professional development meetings tend to discuss staff welfare and communication rather than classroom practices. Lesson observations are not focused on specific aspects of practice, and rarely result in meaningful targets describing how teachers can deepen pupils' learning.

This told us a clear story about a lack of technical understanding. At LGEA and school level, people are able to use the right terminology – 'support', 'learning', 'child-centred teaching' – but not able to break them down into specific behaviours or continua of delivery level. Visiting schools and seeing what is really happening inside them thus showed us that we needed to significantly strengthen very specific aspects of teachers' interactions with children, and wider understanding of those interactions and how to describe them. Responding to challenges such as these requires more than a deliverable package of activities: it demands a range of tools which can respond to issues when they arise, be adapted to different contexts, and be reshaped when new issues emerge.

## **5 THE SECOND STEP: DEVELOPING FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE TOOLS**

When they hear the phrase 'better teaching', most members of state systems have in their heads pictures of western or Japanese spaces focused around technology with well-dressed students working from sets of identical, tailor-made resources. The idea that learning under a tree using sand, stones, and 200 children could be better than the learning of five pupils on iPads sounds like madness. So we made DVDs, showing teachers in normal schools in Kano and Lagos delivering lesson plans based on the classrooms, children, and resources they had available. Training and other professional activity such as teacher meetings, feedback on lesson observations, and the making of resources are also included on the DVDs to illustrate the behaviours that are essential to the success and sustainability of this work, and yet completely new to most facilitators and participants within it.

Indeed, lack of understanding about effective classroom practice is not just an issue at school level. Field research showed us that the SSITs who lead improvement in states themselves often struggle to put into practice the workshop activities they deliver training on, and struggle to empathise with teachers' experiences because they are so distanced from the classroom. The Learning Team developed a workshop to address this challenge. SSIT members are given a chance to themselves prepare for and deliver activities from the lesson plans in schools, and discover that the role of a teacher is much harder than it looks. They then have the chance to reflect on their



experiences, and to prepare for and deliver lessons again. Identifying their own marked improvement, and the factors that enabled them to improve, puts them in a stronger position to talk to teachers about how to work in classrooms and gives them a real understanding of the challenges teachers encounter in their professional lives. As far as possible, and based on the success of this work, delivering activities in real classroom contexts is becoming a part of many workshops training SSIT members on teaching skills.

In 2013, ESSPIN carried out research to identify what teachers struggled with when using the lesson plans printed for them. Among many challenges, this same question of understanding what effective teaching activity looks like came up repeatedly. In response, future lesson plans (some of which are still in the process of production) were redesigned. As shown in Figure 4, photographs were incorporated into every lesson of every day, focusing on what teachers and students should be physically doing at particular stages of lessons.

**Literacy lesson plans**  
Primary 4,  
term 2, weeks 16—20  
Folk tales, fables and storyboards

**Numeracy lesson plans**  
Primary 5,  
term 1, weeks 1—5  
Shape and solving word problems through calculation

Lesson title

**Week 2:**  
Addition

**Day 2:**  
Adding with renaming

Large 2D shapes/  
3D shapes/Calculations

**Learning outcomes**

**By the end of the lesson, most pupils will be able to:**

- Recognise the properties of 3D shapes.
- Use the vertical method to add two- and three-digit numbers.

**Preparation**

**Before the lesson:**

- Have ready the **large 2D shapes** from yesterday and a set of **3D shapes** (a cube, cuboid, sphere, cylinder and square-based pyramid).
- Write the **calculations** from the main activity, shown right, on the chalkboard.
- Read **How? What am I?**, as shown below.

**How? What am I?**

- Write the names of some shapes on the chalkboard.
- Show the pupils some shapes and ask them to name them.
- Choose a shape but don't let the pupils see it. Ask, 'What am I?'
- Give clues to help them answer, eg: 'I am a 2D shape, I have six edges.'
- Or, 'I am a 3D shape. I have no edges, no corners and one curved face.'

Figure 4: Heavily illustrated lesson plans to guide teacher behaviour.

A similar challenge has been identified of teachers not knowing what pupils' achievement looks like beyond passing examinations. Assessment booklets are therefore being produced to record examples of pupil work showing different kinds of success and attainment.

The issue of ineffective support is also being addressed by the Learning Team. They have developed an eight-day programme tailored to address these specific issues of understanding what support looks like in practice at all levels. This does not follow a traditional workshop structure: across the eight days, participants attend schools and cluster meetings, receive and deliver training, and share feedback. The activity helps SSIT and SSOs to have firsthand knowledge about how support should be provided, and focuses them on the delivery of support as a specific professional skill expressed through identifiable behaviours rather than as an abstract value.

Similar work is being developed and delivered to address the issues that we see and are told about at classroom level: activities tailored to address issues of school discipline and violence and to consider the crucial challenge of working with large classes, an issue with increasing relevance as enrollment increases far beyond any increase in school building or teacher recruitment.

As more and more schools in the states we work with complete the basic training package, they move on to Continuous School Improvement (CSI). This is intended to ensure that states see school improvement and the deepening of quality at classroom level as a lifelong and continuous process, not as a one-shot activity. Integrating it into our programme work aims to ensure sustainable and systematic funding of needs- and support-based school improvement work.

CSI is a more flexible process than the Leadership and Literacy / Numeracy workshops discussed above. It includes a Professional Theme Day to introduce new concepts to SSOs. These are based on the needs states identify for their schools through their advanced criteria, or through the reports we are helping them to develop. CSI thus shows states how they can build a responsive training system, meeting schools' real needs and giving the state managers of education systems real power, as they can set the priorities for headteacher and teacher behaviour, term by term, by determining the content of these theme days.

Later in the term, headteachers come together with their SSOs and LGEA managers for a Team Day. As well as sharing the new concepts for the term, Team Days give all participants an opportunity to share successes and challenges and to start to discuss their own priorities and professional opinions.

Towards the end of terms, SSOs hold Feedback Days with smaller groups of headteachers. The forum provides the participants with an opportunity to interact in a non-threatening environment. Headteachers are encouraged to identify common issues in their clusters and proffer solutions to them. The forum enables the head teachers to help one another through sharing of experiences, planning exchange visits, responding to various questions in relation to the theme, organising cluster training using identified strong teachers and many other interventions.

The headteachers are mainly in control of this day because they are the ones with the best knowledge of their schools and with firsthand information about what teachers and pupils are able to do and what challenges they face. The members of government and of the SSIT who attend are present only as observers: the intention is to give headteachers room to explore solutions to their problems without any fears of making mistakes, and to ensure that their managers and supporters can hear what challenges are faced in the real world. SSIT and SSOs may once in a while suggest ideas but cannot enforce them on participants. Information shared back with ESSPIN from feedback days, along with data from SSO reports and state managers' own ideas, form the bases for the Learning Team's ongoing development of content for Professional Theme days.

None of this represents an ideal process. 'Accidental teachers' are not being taken out of the classroom and retrained, or being taught the basic English and Maths that our surveys have found them to lack. We are not going into each classroom throughout our six states to show every teacher how to work in their specific context. But we are finding ways to find out what prevents teachers from teaching in different contexts, and exploring different pathways we can use to show those people who want to develop what is possible in their workplace. We are exploring opportunities through which different people can get excited about their job and the impact it can have on what children learn. We are, in short, seeking to bring the spotlight on to what children learn, and how they can learn better given the contexts in which they are placed. Classroom quality is being deepened, slowly but surely, by providing structures and contexts for informed discussions between professionals at different levels and the measured feeding in of content appropriate to different local situations.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

Briefly, then, a theme emerging from the first two papers in this symposium is that there is clearly a long way to go. Quality in classrooms is neither high nor consistent. State and local government officers and teachers and headteachers still struggle to understand what good teaching looks like, and to feel that they can do something to improve teaching and learning in their schools. Teachers feel overwhelmed, impotent, and frozen. Children enter and leave school with little change in their emotional or socio-economic well-being.

But change is happening, in a genuine and sustainable way. Supported by ESSPIN's developing methodologies and understanding of relationships, states, some local governments, and some schools are starting to devise their own ways of making interactions between teachers and pupils more meaningful: of giving children a reason to come to school. The progress made to date, and the ongoing work in each state to deepen classroom practice, has been achieved by recognising the limitations and opportunities that exist in different contexts, and creating opportunities that enable professionals to improve teaching practice as part of their functions and responsibilities. Where changes have taken place, they have resulted from flexible and responsive support which recognises that one size does not fit all, that is as much about looking and listening as it is about presenting, and that engages with the real challenges and opportunities that exist in different low-resource, large-scale contexts.

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## **Paper 3- Whose learning needs to be prioritised? Inclusive education in Nigeria**

### **1 ABSTRACT**

ESSPIN's work and research at school and community levels across six Nigerian states provides insights into the relationships between expansion, quality, equity and inclusion. Detailed information on school and pupil characteristics allows for reporting on inequalities in education outcomes, contrasting programme-supported and all schools in those states. Pupils' gender, poverty, location, age and language group are analysed and related to teacher, headteacher and school characteristics; as are inclusive policies and practices in classrooms, schools and school-based management committees (SBMCs).

This paper draws from a community-based qualitative study on interventions by SBMCs to improve access for all learners to improving quality schools. The study showed that between 2011 and 2014, SBMCs brought more marginalised children into schools. It also reports on analysis of a 2014 school survey to provide disaggregated results for different types of learners.

Wealth differences are stark with pupils from the richest 20% of households doing twice as well as those from the poorest 20% of households. Yet, this difference is less pronounced in ESSPIN-supported schools, where poor children's learning outcomes are significantly raised. School location is an important determinant of pupil learning: test scores are increasingly low, the more remote the school. There is no evidence of gender, language and over-age differences in pupil test scores.

This paper identifies which groups of children are marginalised in terms of differences in education outcomes and how these gaps can be reduced, particularly through community engagement, teacher education, school leadership and systems strengthening.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 THE PROBLEM

Many Nigerian children remain out of school in spite of considerable government investments in access initiatives since the 1970s. Nigeria has the highest population of out-of-school children (OOSC) in the world, estimated at 18% of the world's 58 million. The estimated primary school aged population is 30 million, including 14.5 million girls (34% of which are out of school) and 15.1 million boys (29% of which are out of school). Most out of school children live in rural areas and come from poor households. Issues of gender, disability, child protection and increasingly conflict, throw up further barriers to the education of the poorest children. If Nigeria's education system is to work, it must orient itself to the circumstances of these excluded and marginalised children, overcoming the barriers they face to taking part in learning.

Since its inception in 2009, the Education Sector Support Programme In Nigeria (ESSPIN) has worked with many partners and developed diverse approaches to boost the educational participation of the most excluded children. Different strategies have been piloted at different levels in the six ESSPIN-supported states, to test which approaches are most relevant to a wide diversity of local and state-level capacities and attitudes. From the start, it was recognised that mass education has to be of a decent quality, or else it does not serve the interests of children—either currently in school or newly-enrolled—nor of society. Therefore a flexible approach of offering different models and entry points for working on inclusion was used, with emphasis on maximum adaptability and local ownership of approaches which have worked elsewhere.

Related papers<sup>4</sup> focus on the evidence about raising school quality at scale, and ensuring quality in teaching and learning. This paper describes the inclusion interventions which were developed through ESSPIN as part of the explicit objective of moving forwards simultaneously on access, equity and quality. First the rationale for and characteristics of each approach to inclusion are outlined, the cumulative results from local and state education authorities reports and annual policy level self-assessments in each programme state are summarised, and linkages drawn to findings on inclusion from the 2014 Composite Survey of educational change in the six target states.

#### **What's keeping children out of school?**

Marginalisation in the Nigerian context has many faces, often overlapping for an individual child, and is expressed in many different ways in such a large and diverse country<sup>5</sup>. Examples include poverty, gender, disability, geography (remoteness), minority ethnic, language or religious groups, albinism and nomadism. Being marginalised significantly increases the chances of never enrolling in school, limiting the chances for these children to participate in community, social and economic life, both as children and adults. In general, basic education has provided a 'one size fits all' approach to schooling (whether public, community, mission, Islamic or private), where teaching is not differentiated to support a diverse range of learners; communities and teachers are not set up to help children facing difficulties come to school; and corporal punishment, conflict and sexual harassment present further barriers. In parts of the North, conflict and violence have heightened

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<sup>4</sup> Breakell, L. and S. Cameron, 2015, Improving school quality at scale, UKFIET; Thomson, S. and A. Osuntusa, Deepening classroom practice in low-resource, large-scale contexts, 2015. UKFIET.

<sup>5</sup> Nigeria is the size of the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands combined. It has both the largest population (174 million estimated) and the largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa, and is comprised of upwards of 500 ethno-linguistic groups. (Wikipedia and UN websites).

parents' concerns about secular education, and widespread family poverty has prevented many parents from bearing the opportunity costs and direct expenses of keeping children in school.

This paper brings together new evidence from State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB), local government Social Mobilisation Officer and School Based Management Committee reports, plus the second Composite Survey, to unpack which of these dimensions of exclusion have a material effect on Nigerian children's educational opportunities and attainment, and which can be mitigated through school improvement interventions. A statement of the approach adopted (2.2) is followed by a description of interventions (3) and data systems (4), and evidence of impact (5). Ultimately, pointers towards 'whose learning needs to be prioritised?' become evident (6).

## **2.2 AN APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

A number of barriers to educational participation have been identified above. As a result, strengthening the capacity of the education system to proactively address them has been a key strategy to make progress towards education for all (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Nigeria recognises that the principle of inclusion should guide all education policies and practices, starting from the position that education is a basic human right and the foundation for a more just and equal society.<sup>6</sup> ESSPIN supports reforms to meet the learning needs of all children through integrated interventions at policy, school and community levels. A good quality school, and a good quality teacher, by definition address the differentiated learning needs of the entire range of children in the community: there is no quality without inclusion, and no inclusion without quality.

State, civil society and community approaches to boosting access with ESSPIN support have focused not just on entry to school, but on offering different types of schooling to communities with diverse needs; mobilising support to keep children coming to school regularly; engaging communities actively in education management so that their priorities are listened to; and improving teaching practice to respond to children's learning needs. In this regard, Ainscow's characterisation of 'presence, participation and achievement'<sup>7</sup> has guided inclusive education in programme focal states.

This inclusive education approach<sup>8</sup> focuses on creating an inclusive education system through school, community, civil society and local government level activities that address access, equity and quality issues in a balanced and integrated way. One critical starting point is considering the needs of the most marginalized, otherwise those most excluded children will always remain unserved by the education system. Opportunities for improving the access to and equity of children in schools are explored along three interconnected dimensions (Figure 1):

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<sup>6</sup>Chair's Statement, The Oslo Declaration, Education for Development Summit – July 2015

<sup>7</sup>Ainscow, M (2004) Developing inclusive education systems: what are the levers for change? University of Manchester

<sup>8</sup> ESSPIN Inclusive Education Approach paper, June 2013



Figure 1: Interconnected dimensions of inclusion

In practical terms, this translates into many different work streams relating to the policy environment, states, local government, civil society, schools and communities to promote inclusion. Several are outlined in Section 3 below, followed by an exploration of the critical role played by data, monitoring and evaluation to support the process of making Nigerian basic education more inclusive (Section 4). Section 5 presents evidence on those dimensions of marginalisation and exclusion which were found to be most significant, including those which appear most responsive to positive change through a school improvement model plus policy environment approach. The significance of these findings is assessed in the conclusion, Section 6.

### 3. ESSPIN INTERVENTIONS TO BOOST INCLUSION

#### 3.1 POLICY LEVEL: advocating inclusive policies

In ESSPIN-supported States inclusion and gender equity are being implemented as an integral part of basic education sector planning rather than a separate or secondary concern. Four States now have in place an inclusive education policy with actions targeting disadvantaged children and marginalised groups. Policies developed by State Ministries of Education involve clear strategies for changing into an inclusive education system. They encourage, support and reach out to all children and minimize exclusionary pressures through a set of specific activities to respond to diverse needs.

States are trying to create a holistic education system, where information flow and support is encouraged among professionals at different levels. This is in response to evidence and advocacy from civil society organisations whose capacity has been developed to identify, collate and give voice to issues in communities.

Out-of-school children surveys conducted in three states aimed to fill the gaps in the lack of statistics and information on children who are out of school and to identify the reasons why. Budget plans are being shaped to allocate resources more efficiently and effectively according to need. States have also initiated capacity development plans for education support staff, especially at the LGEA (local government education authority) level, to ensure proper implementation of policies with regard to all learners. The indicators used to measure progress are:

- 1) The State has a clear policy on inclusive education that outlaws all forms of discrimination and promotes learning friendly education;
  - 2) Support for civil society to give voice to excluded groups in the planning and budgeting processes;
- Data on out-of-school children collected and made available at State and LGEA levels;

- 3) Expenditure on access and equity activities in schools is predictable and based on the medium term sector strategy (MTSS); and
- 4) LGEA Desk Officers receive information and respond to community access and equity issues.

The graph below shows the results of evidence-based, externally-moderated ‘self-assessments’ in the ESSPIN-supported states by year. A qualitative A to D rating scale has been converted to numerical scores 0 to 8 for data handling purposes in Figure 2, below. Each state is on a steady upwards trajectory for inclusive education policies:

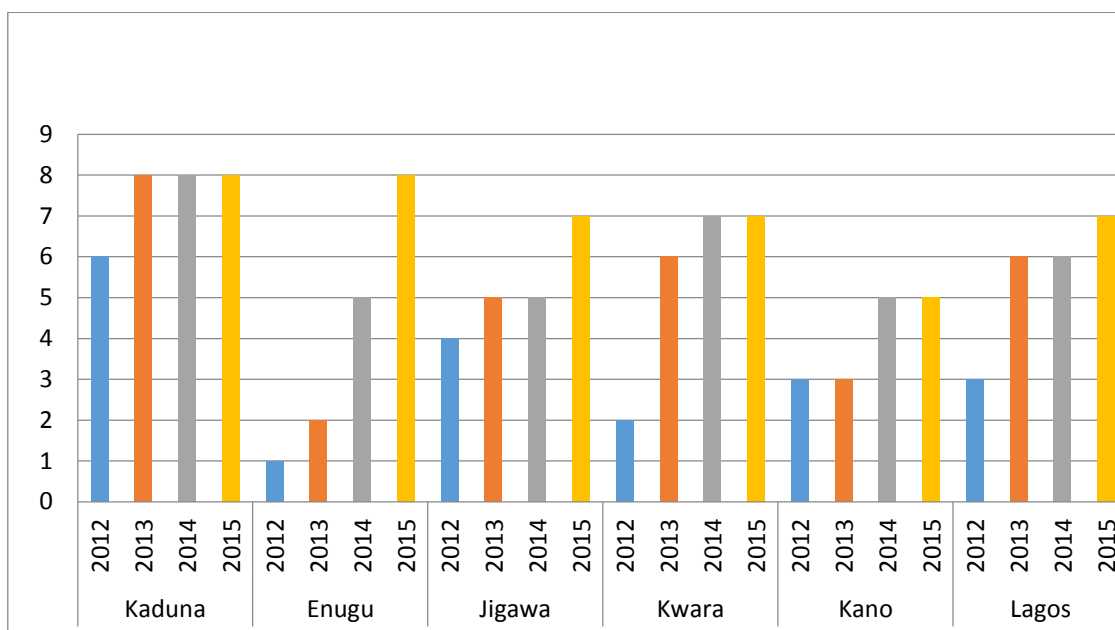


Figure 2: Self-Assessment Results on Inclusive Education at the Policy Level in 6 ESSPIN States

### 3.2 INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS: promoting and sharing inclusive practices in schools

Professional development training, including in-school and -classroom support activities for head teachers and teachers, are embedding increasingly inclusive education principles and practice, responsive to the diversity of children and the surrounding communities. School improvement teams have improved school practices so that children can actively participate in their own learning, and teachers monitor and support all children’s learning and development.

Teachers are receiving support to examine their attitudes and practice opportunities to include a diverse range of children. More work is being done with training institutes and school leadership bodies to support such change in order to increase sustainability. This means having clear policies, curricula and assessment frameworks which promote children’s enrolment and inclusive teaching.

### 3.3 COMMUNITIES SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: strengthening School Based Management Committee (SBMC) and community action for inclusive education

A major focus of developing inclusive education in states has been strengthening community participation in school governance through SBMC development. ESSPIN supported states to domesticate<sup>9</sup> federal SBMC guidelines (2006) in each state through a state and community level visioning process, and then supported government to partner with civil society, developing their

<sup>9</sup> ie, adapt to local laws, culture and context.



capacity to work together to activate, train, mentor and monitor SBMCs in states over time according to the state specific policies. The programme supported states to pilot the SBMC development model initially in 1,151 schools. Having established the concept, between 2010 and 2015 a total of 10,442 SBMCs have been supported, with states increasingly using their own funds to scale the model up, and independently contracting civil society organisations (CSOs) to support the process.<sup>10</sup> The CSOs and Social Mobilisation Officers of SUBEB work together in an innovative partnership to build collaboration between civil society and government, drawing on CSOs' independent voice and government partners' authority and resources. Most SBMCs have 16 members, 30-40% of whom are women. 167,000 SBMC members are being reached in these six states, covering 2,088,000<sup>11</sup> school children, 1,002,000 of whom are girls<sup>12</sup>.

CSOs with good community trust were selected through an independent and thorough due diligence process to work in partnership with government, and are key to developing SBMCs. Capacity development for the CSOs and their government partners is 'stepped down' to SBMCs through a programme of training and follow-up mentoring support, and capacity development areas include change management, advocacy, child protection, communication and conflict resolution, resource mobilisation, gender and inclusive education. Special emphasis is given to the participation of women and children in SBMCs, as initial research<sup>13</sup> (2009) highlighted women's and children's participation in school decision-making to be highly constrained. This support to SBMCs has resulted in communities playing a strong supporting role on inclusive education and inclusive school governance, making sure that all children, including those commonly excluded, are in school and learning, and that women's and children's voices are heard on issues of school improvement. SBMCs have been particularly active in mobilising resources to provide direct support to marginalised children to attend and stay in school, in developing inclusive school development plans, and in advocating to government for resources needed to improve schools for all children.

### 3.4 TARGETED STATE-SPECIFIC INTERVENTIONS

#### **Promoting Girl's Education: through capacity development at policy, school and community levels**

In Kaduna, Jigawa, Kano and Kwara States data from a qualitative study<sup>14,15</sup> showed that there is higher enrolment and less absenteeism in school following inclusive education capacity building:

At Kajuru Town LGEA School in Kaduna State "There are now as many girls as boys attending".

In Albasu LGEA of Kano State, CGPs report: "There is also an increase in the number of girls coming to schools – as a result of the intervention of traditional leaders, some schools which had no girl pupils now have half of some classes made up of girls. Teachers who were not attending have now returned to school because they know that the traditional leader is

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<sup>10</sup> All figures on SBMC scale and performance are from ESSPIN's summary of SUBEB SBMC data, July 2014

<sup>11</sup> Based on an average 200 children per school

<sup>12</sup> Average Annual School Census primary school enrolment rate of 48% girls in ESSPIN states (2012)

<sup>13</sup> Poulsen H (2009)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.esspin.org/resources/report/334>

coming and that he will be reporting directly to the LG Chairman – head teachers are now afraid! This is most pronounced in Albasu LGA".

**Playing to Stay in School:** Promoting sports for girls is an innovative approach taken by the Girls Education Initiative (GEI) in Jigawa to foster universal access to education. Very few northern Nigeria primary schools encourage girls to take part in sports. This led ESSPIN to hold discussions with schools, education officials and community leaders. Sports that have been deemed appropriate for primary school girls in Jigawa are now being played in three LGAs in the state. The activities are low cost and accessible and give girls a chance to shine outside of the classroom.

The assumption driving the girls' sports initiative is that sports for all children will make schools more friendly and stimulating learning environments which will positively impact on improving access, retention and transition of girls in schools. In the Jigawa GEI mid-term review (2014) almost all girls interviewed (96%) thought that the newly-introduced sporting activities in their schools were encouraging more girls to come and stay in school.

### **Nomadic education<sup>16</sup>**

An inclusive education intervention targeted over 15,000 disadvantaged children of nomadic communities in temporary schools. Enrolment of girls and boys was roughly equal in all schools visited, with good attendance by both sexes, except for gaps for livestock rearing. Communities joining the programme chose to establish more permanent schools and leave the women and children behind with their farmland and some cattle during the nomadic cycle, so the children could be enrolled, retained and complete basic primary education. The intervention adopted an integrated approach to community mobilization, teacher training, use of ESSPIN's IQTE (see below) condensed curriculum, mobilizing community teachers as volunteers and networking with community-based organisations and government agencies to sustain the intervention. 75% of the supported schools have now been authorised by state agencies for nomadic education, which are posting teachers to them, taking responsibility for textbooks and monitoring, and planning to bring nomadic volunteer teachers onto the payroll. There was great enthusiasm from all stakeholders for more improvements to expand the upgrade approach. The intervention also sparked latent demand for preschool classes and adult literacy. Community commitment in the form of substantial land donations has been recorded in several places. 90 schools in the programme were included in the Annual School Census (ASC) for the first time, making them eligible for investment in school infrastructure and teaching quality.

### **Islamic, Quranic and Tsangaya Education (IQTE) intervention<sup>17</sup>**

Community demand for an acceptable alternative to public secular education in the predominantly Islamic north of Nigeria has been met by introducing integrated education options for IQTE schools. These address the broader learning needs of their intake without disrupting the pupils' religious studies. The first intervention was aimed at *almajirai*<sup>18</sup> children from Tsangaya<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.esspin.org/resources/report/359>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.esspin.org/resources/experience-papers>

<sup>18</sup> The *almajirai* are boys and youths from primary-school age to their early twenties who have come to the cities and villages in northern Nigeria ostensibly to study the Quran. Unlike the students of local Quranic and modern Islamic (Islamiyya) schools, the *almajirai* do not usually stay with their parents, many of whom reside in rural areas. Traditionally they live with their Quranic teacher, who provides limited supervision and care. In recent times the term *almajirai* has become pejoratively associated in public discourse with hawking, begging and street gangs.

schools, who have no access to the standard curriculum of Hausa, English, maths, science and social science. The second intervention was designed to provide this government-mandated curriculum to primary-age girls in un-integrated Islamiyya schools which did not teach these subjects. Both interventions had a two-fold focus: one, mobilising the malams (religious scholars and proprietors of IQTE schools) to allow children in these schools to study secular subjects in an acceptable way; two, developing an effective teacher recruitment and training programme to enable local community teachers selected by their malams to teach a condensed six-year primary curriculum in four years (for details see ESSPIN IQTE Experience document).

The popularity of the IQTE intervention, now reaching 23,000 children, can be seen at three levels: the programme's acceptance among the malams; regular student attendance and transition to junior secondary school; and, formal adoption and institutionalisation of the models by state governments.

### **Support to children with albinism**

ESSPIN has partnered with the Nigerian Albino Foundation which aims to providing equal access to albino children. The intervention has involved reaching out directly and supporting the enrolment, retention and learning for 174 albino girls and 158 albino boys. Simultaneously awareness campaigns, radio talks, media engagement and workshops have been organized reaching a wider audience targeting over 5,000 education stakeholders, parents and community members to create an inclusive supportive structure for children with albinism, and a more secure and positive social environment for them in general.

Having outlined a range of different measures and levels of intervention, the focus now shifts to monitoring and evaluation data on inclusive education (Section 4), and survey evidence on gender and inclusion (Section 5).

## **4. MONITORING CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENTS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

### **4.1 Indicative data on SBMC impacts on enrolment**

In 2013 state governments introduced a new system of monitoring and reporting on SBMC development. SUBEB Social Mobilisation Officers (SMOs) from the Department of Social Mobilisation (the institutional home of SBMCs) use SMO reporting templates to judge how well SBMCs are performing the roles and responsibilities agreed and set out in state-specific SBMC policy guidelines, and to assess where additional support may be needed. The SMO reports also collect data of how many children (disaggregated) have enrolled in school as a result of SBMC action, and estimate the number of children in a community still out of school. Indicative data from Kwara,<sup>20</sup> where SBMCs conducted a retrospective review of enrolment, indicates that between 2011 and 2014, 880 schools which had experienced the SBMC capacity development process enrolled 20,262 out-of-school children, of whom 49% were girls, 26% had been unable to pay costs associated with school, and 327 children had disabilities. If projected onto the other ESSPIN states, 150,000 out of school children are estimated to have been enrolled through SBMC action.

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<sup>19</sup> *Tsangaya* is a traditional form of Quranic religious education where originally the teacher moves with his pupils in the belief that an itinerant life is essential for them to fully concentrate on their study. The itinerant children attending *tsangaya* education are sometimes called *almajirais*.

<sup>20</sup> Data from ESSPIN's summary of SUBEB SBMC data, April 2014

**Improving school access and retention for marginalised children:** From SMO records, 3,345 SBMCs have helped develop inclusive school communities, bringing in the poorest children, disabled children, girls and ethnic minorities, and working with schools to improve all children’s learning and retention.

SBMCs are finding<sup>21</sup> ways to assist less privileged pupils, mainly from poorer families and minority ethnic groups. At Hayim Banke LGEA School in Kaduna State, a spokesperson for the SBMC reported:

“Through the SBMC we have achieved a lot and the school is now in good shape. Based on our understanding of our role, we succeeded in bringing 22 out-of-school children back and provided school uniform for them.”

Accounts from SBMC members during a 2014 SBMC functionality study<sup>22</sup> were backed up by regular reporting from CSOs and SMOs of SBMCs bringing girls and disabled children back into school—measures which have now found support at the federal level. More recent enrolment campaigns have also focused successfully on girls’ education and on disabled children’s education. To further support children with disability, an approach has been developed at school level where activities and plans are identified based on experience and research with teachers, parents and students.<sup>23</sup>

In Lagos, advocacy by CSOs and LGEA staff, based on the needs of disabled children which they had witnessed through mentoring SBMCs, led to a major policy forum and commitments at state level to generate a specific inclusive education policy. This offers an example of how civil society/government partnership (CGP) advocacy can generate solutions to issues that SBMCs and communities are not sure how to tackle on their own.

#### **4.2 DATA ON CSO CAPACITY TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: Annual CSO Self-Assessment**

CSOs working with states on SBMC development have conducted an annual self-assessment facilitated by ESSPIN since 2012. There is now four years of data showing the progress of CSOs against the indicator “Quality of CSO Action for Quality, Inclusive Education”. The organisations assess physical evidence against sub-indicators of partnership with government; capacity to mobilise communities on inclusive school improvement; capacity to conduct evidence-based advocacy on issues arising from the community; and capacity to bring about change in education policy and practice as a result of their advocacy.

Figure 3, below, shows the annual progress on this indicator against defined performance criteria by each state from 2012-2014, based on the average of CSO scores out of a maximum of 20. In the first year (2012) for example Enugu scored on average across all indicators 4.5 which translated to an overall ‘D’. By 2013 the Enugu CSOs had managed to improve in all areas scoring an average of 15.25 across all indicators which translated as an overall ‘B’. By 2014 the Enugu CSOs all scored the full 20 marks available, as did all other states. This result reflects the extent to which over the years CSOs have consistently made substantial progress on advocating on behalf of marginalized children’s needs to be met and addressed by key stakeholders. In 2015 (not shown) there is a discontinuity, due to revision of the performance criteria for ESSPIN’s 2-year extension,

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.esspin.org/resources/report/335>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.esspin.org/resources/report/424>

<sup>23</sup> ESSPIN’s Strategy for Children with Disability, March 2015

additional capacity areas being added, and a 'raising of the bar' for CSO performance (strengthening and consolidation).

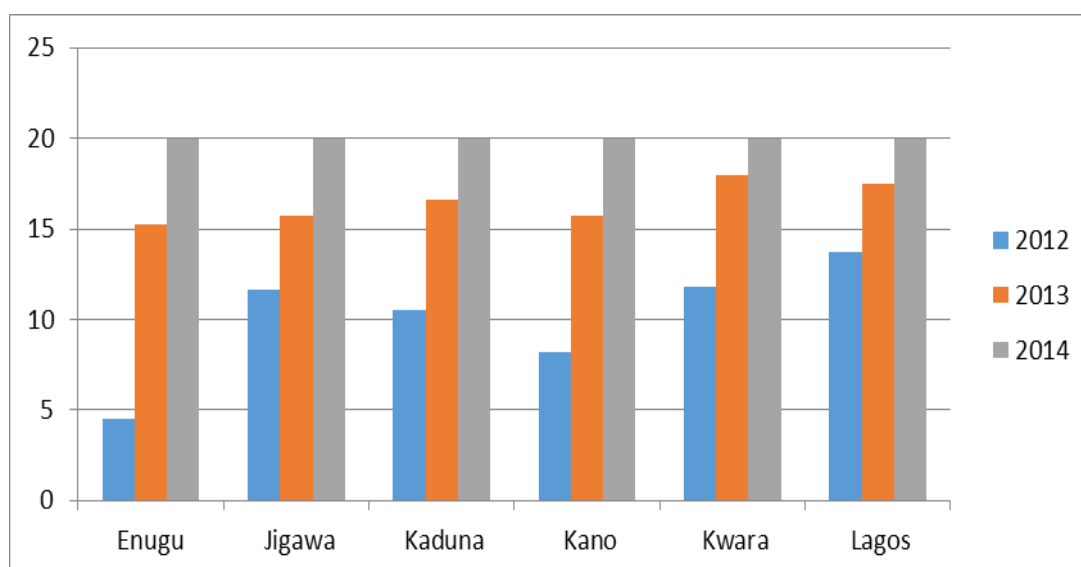


Figure 3: Quality of CSO Action for Quality, Inclusive Education

Enhancing the capacity of states, local government, civil society, communities and schools in Nigeria to support inclusion, access, equity and quality is necessary, but insufficient to demonstrate that children's educational opportunities are actually being improved. In Section 5, evidence is assessed to show whether more children, especially those most disadvantaged, are attending school regularly and learning more when they are there.

## 5. EVIDENCE AND LEARNING ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: Cross-state survey data on gender and inclusion

ESSPIN's Composite Surveys (CS), conducted in 2012 (CS1) and 2014 (CS2), covered a wide range of indicators at the teacher, head-teacher, school-based management committee (SBMC), and pupil levels. This section explores how inclusive practices in schools and SBMCs in ESSPIN states are changing over time and whether schools which receive ESSPIN's interventions are working better than those which do not; and whether there are differences in education outcomes by gender and background.

### Sample

The effective sample size for the survey from each state is listed in Table 1. The intended sample for CS2 consisted of 735 schools.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Overall, complete test data was gathered in CS2 for 95% of the maximum possible number of students, a similar proportion to CS1. Interviews were gathered and lesson observations conducted for 80% and 78%, respectively, of the maximum possible number of teachers. This figure was relatively low due to there being fewer than 6 teachers in a large number of schools.

Table 1 Sample coverage in CS2

	Schools		Teachers			Pupil tests			
	Intended sample	Actual	Interview	Less. obs	Tests	L2	L4	N2	N4
<b>Enugu</b>	105	105	532	519	494	388	395	384	382
<b>Jigawa</b>	105	103	430	425	415	393	399	396	398
<b>Kaduna</b>	140	140	638	625	586	539	521	538	517
<b>Kano</b>	175	170	773	764	645	667	635	669	632
<b>Kwara</b>	105	105	545	538	483	394	393	397	391
<b>Lagos</b>	105	105	569	545	526	415	410	413	409
<b>Total</b>	735	728	3,487	3,416	3,150	2,796	2,753	2,797	2,729

**Note: Throughout this report, L2 refers to the grade 2 literacy test, L4 to the grade 4 literacy test, N2 to the grade 2 numeracy test, and N4 to the grade 4 numeracy test.**

## Results

**School inclusiveness:** Overall, school inclusiveness in schools surveyed during CS1 was better than in CS2, taken across all schools in the six programme states. However, schools which received ESSPIN intervention were significantly more inclusive than control schools, especially in terms of activities to improve access for disadvantaged children, and use of different assessment methods.

**Head teachers' actions to improve pupil attendance:** Overall, the average number of actions taken by head teachers to improve pupil attendance was lower in CS2 schools, compared to CS1 across all schools in the six programme states. We did not find significant differences between ESSPIN and non-ESSPIN schools in terms of the number of actions they said they had taken to improve pupil attendance.

**Spatial and gender inclusiveness in classrooms:** Spatial inclusiveness is the extent to which teachers include children sitting in all parts of the classroom during a lesson. Overall, teachers in CS2 were, on average, less spatially inclusive than those in CS1; but in CS2, teachers who have had ESSPIN training are more spatially inclusive than those who have not. Gender inclusiveness is measured as the extent to which boys and girls participate in the lesson in equal numbers. There was no evidence of any change over time in gender inclusiveness, but there was suggestive evidence that teachers in ESSPIN schools are more inclusive of girls than teachers in other schools.

**SBMC functionality:** SBMC functionality improved between CS1 and CS2 schools, across all schools in the six programme states. Across a wide range of criteria of SBMC functionality, ESSPIN schools performed better than non-ESSPIN schools. The average ESSPIN school met around five of the nine criteria, while control schools met around two, and overall 68-70% of ESSPIN schools met the SBMC functionality standard compared to 18% of control schools.

**SBMC women's inclusiveness:** Around half of ESSPIN schools met ESSPIN's SBMC women's inclusiveness criteria, compared to only 3% of non-ESSPIN schools.

**SBMC children's inclusiveness:** Participation of children in school management and school improvement decisions appeared to be not yet fully accepted, due to socio-cultural norms. However, there was a small but significant increase between CS1 and CS2 in the overall number of

child participation criteria met. The overall proportion of schools meeting the standard remained low at 6% across all schools in the six programme states. There were large differences between ESSPIN and non-ESSPIN schools in this area, with around one in five ESSPIN schools meeting criteria for children’s inclusiveness compared to only 2% of non-ESSPIN schools.

### Are all children learning equally?

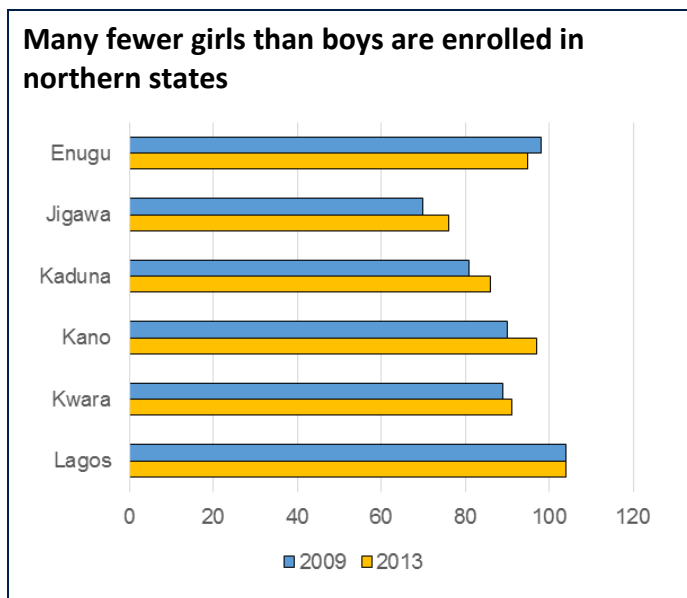


Figure 4: Number of girls enrolled per 100 boys, by state and year

The school surveys and annual censuses provide rich data on inequalities in learning outcomes and enrolment. There are still large gender gaps in enrolment in Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna and Kwara. In Jigawa there are only 76 girls for every 100 boys in government schools; for Kaduna there are 86.

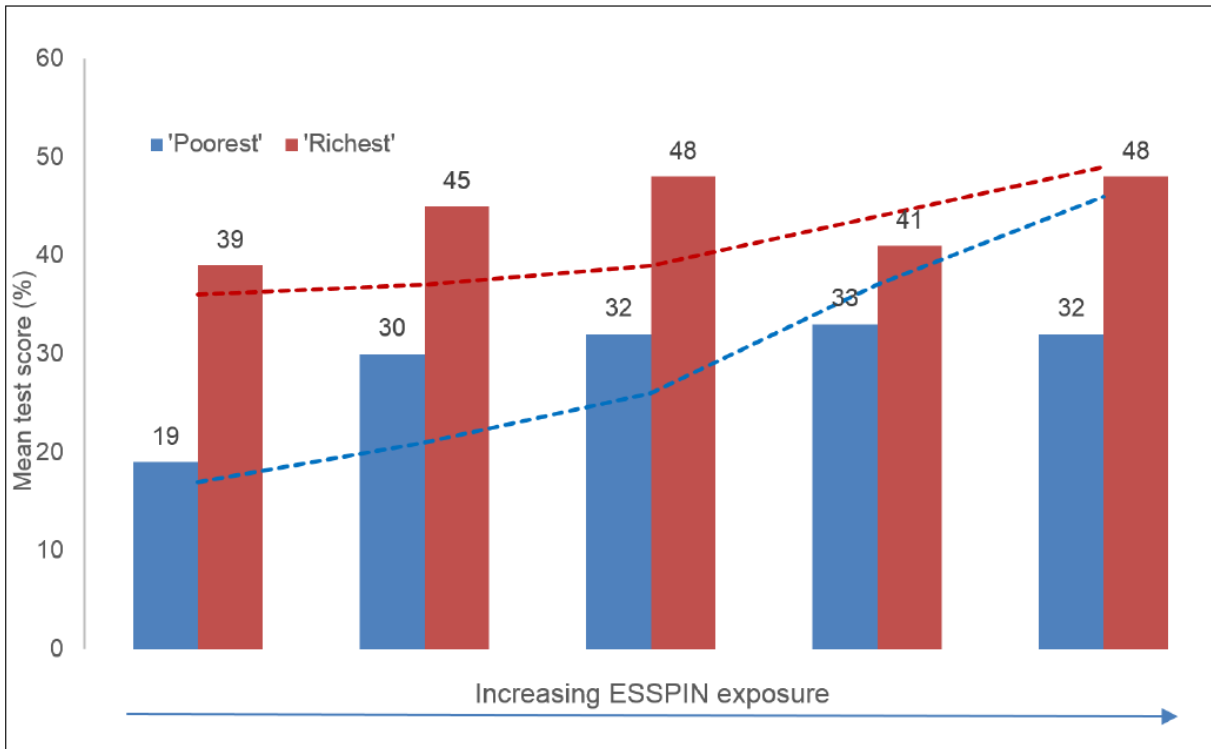
Figure 4 shows the gender gap has declined rapidly between 2009 and 2013, yet it is a long way from parity. However, we find no significant gender differences in mean pupil test scores either in 2012 or 2014. Once in school, it appears that girls learn just as well as boys in the six states, and there is little difference between ESSPIN and non-ESSPIN schools in this respect.

The gender gap in pupil enrolment may be influenced by the gender of their teachers: only 14% of teachers are female in Jigawa and 24% in Kano, compared to 84% in Enugu and Lagos. Female teachers and head teachers are on average better than male ones, even controlling for state, although the reasons for this are not clear. Among other differences, female teachers are more likely than male ones to encourage equal participation of boys and girls in the lesson.

Learning outcomes differ starkly by **wealth**, to the extent that children from the richest 20% of households within each state score (on average) around twice as highly as those in the poorest 20%. Wealth inequalities are particularly strong for English literacy.

Does being in an ESSPIN school in CS2 dampen the effect of wealth inequality? We find evidence (Figure 5) that the poorest children are benefiting disproportionately from ESSPIN, and that wealth disparities are smaller in the group of children who attend ESSPIN schools than in the group of children who attend non-ESSPIN schools.

**Richer children have much better learning outcomes but the SIP reduces the achievement gap between richer and poorer pupils**



Note: Bar graphs show actual values, while dotted lines show average trend in mean scores.

Figure 5: Grade 4 pupil test scores (%) by wealth quintile within each state

**Rural-urban** gaps remain extremely wide. Children in urban schools are, on average, scoring around 20 percentage points higher than those in rural schools. Children in more remote rural schools have particularly low learning outcomes. For every increase of 10 kilometres in distance between the school and the headquarters of the local government authority, average test scores dropped by around one percentage point.

The survey did not find any evidence that pupils attending school who mainly speak a minority language at home attain significantly different results in the numeracy and literacy tests than those who speak the majority language of each state. SBMC groups in minority areas have expressed concern that lack of local-language speaking teachers for nomadic groups is keeping children out of school, and several have raised money to pay minority language speaking teachers. Taking this information together with survey results may indicate a divide between children who can cope with a second language at school and those who are excluded by it.

Around one-third of children in the six states were over-age for their grades (older than eight in grade 2 or older than 10 in grade 4), mostly by just one year. Although in many contexts being over-age is associated with low attainment and high risk of drop-out, in the surveyed schools in states where ESSPIN works, over-age children had better learning outcomes than children of the appropriate age for their grade. We were not able to estimate results for children with disabilities,



as we only found 54 children in the survey schools sample with a disability affecting their ability to take the test.

## 6. Conclusion

ESSPIN's strategy to promote inclusive education has consistently involved a twin-track approach: promotion of top-down policy development and leadership approval, and bottom-up stimulation of demand, with notable successes and capacity development in both areas. Communicating both ways has been a key part of this approach: communicating to communities that the government agrees all children should go to school and be supported by the community; and communicating to government the evidence that communities want greater inclusion and need additional resources to support their efforts.

This strategy appears to have shown results at school and community level. ESSPIN's understanding at the start of the programme was that the children most at risk of exclusion in Nigeria are girls, those affected by poverty and disability, and almajiri children and those from nomadic and remote communities. The Composite Surveys show that ESSPIN schools are performing better than control schools in a number of areas key to inclusion, namely school inclusiveness, spatial inclusion in the classroom, SBMC functionality, women's inclusiveness, and children's inclusiveness. We find suggestive evidence that the poorest children are benefiting disproportionately higher from ESSPIN, and that ESSPIN schools have smaller wealth-related performance disparities than non-ESSPIN ones. There is also evidence from SMO and CSO reports, and SBMC records, that SBMC action has resulted in many more children being encouraged to enrol and supported to attend school regularly despite many barriers. We have also shown that, once in school, girls and boys perform equally well, and that certain issues such as being over-age or coming from a minority language background are not necessarily as debilitating as had been supposed.

ESSPIN schools appear to be performing better than non-ESSPIN schools in terms of inclusive practices in schools, classrooms and SBMC, and along various dimensions of marginalisation. Through training, mentoring and regular encouragement from CSOs and local government, school communities have been encouraged to support all aspects of vulnerable children's education – not just enrolment, but food, clothing, equipment and encouragement to attend every day. Without such sustained support from communities to keep excluded children in school, Nigeria would not make progress towards sustained, equitable education for all.

However, the overall situation across ESSPIN states contains many challenges, and may be deteriorating in some cases, such as classroom spatial inclusion, and head teacher actions to improve pupil attendance. There are wide disparities in pupils' learning outcomes in rural versus urban schools and, though these are less pronounced in ESSPIN schools, it is still significant. Similarly, pupils from 'poorer' backgrounds are performing starkly worse than their better-off peers and again, though this disparity is dampened in ESSPIN schools, it is still significant. Contextual factors such as persistent insecurity and gender inequality in some of the ESSPIN states in northern Nigeria, may also be part of the explanation for slow or non-existent improvement between CS1 and CS2 along the dimensions this report explores.

While low levels of inclusion reflect persistent socio-cultural patterns that are beyond the control of ESSPIN, recent large-scale roll out of interventions, funded by State governments and through

Federal sources, has meant that the programme now has direct links with a very large number of schools in the six states. Much of this roll out happened in 2013/14 and so is unlikely to have started having a major impact by the time of ESSPIN's latest survey, near the end of the 2013/14 school year. Ultimately, the large and recent increase in scale-up of interventions at states' own expense should start to push up the overall state averages, just as they have already responded within ESSPIN-supported schools.

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