



Safe Schools Declaration in Nigeria

Advocacy Brief

Situational Analysis

Even though the North-East is the epicentre of the crisis in Nigeria, we need to look at education holistically from a countrywide perspective. Several attacks on education such as violence against students and education personnel have been reported in other areas of the country.

In Nigeria, attacks have ranged from hoodlum attacks, break-in and vandalism of school properties by hoodlums and drug addicts to attacks involving burning schools or killing, injuring, kidnapping, detaining or torturing students, teachers and academics. Hundreds have died as a result and hundreds of thousands more have missed out on the right to education.

Military use of schools and universities in Nigeria refers to the broad range of activities in which security forces and non-armed groups with approval from relevant government authorities have engaged the physical space of educational institutions, whether temporarily or on a long-term basis. They have used these sites in a variety of ways, including as military bases, shelters, for storage of weapons or ammunition, for interrogation, detention, or as outposts and observation posts.

The short-term impact of attacks on education includes death, injury, and destruction of educational infrastructure. The long-term impact includes disruptions in attendance, declines in student enrolment, diminished quality of education and learning, lower rates of transition to higher education levels, overcrowding and reductions in teacher recruitment. Attacks on higher education have undermined research and teaching, and have resulted in “brain drain.”

All of the above can prevent Nigeria from fulfilling the right to education and other rights, as well as achieving educational and development goals.

Attacks on education have also compromised schools' capacity to protect students from social risks, thereby leaving learners more vulnerable to sexual and other forms of exploitation, recruitment as child labourers or child soldiers, and in other instances, early marriage and pregnancy.

The reported motives for targeting schools, universities, students, teachers and other education staff include the desire to: block the education of girls, abduct children for use as combatants, sex slaves or logistical support in military operations, or abduct students and teachers for ransom; seize schools and universities for use as barracks, bases or firing positions, or attack schools because they are being used for these purposes by opposing forces.

An estimated 1,400 schools have been destroyed since 2014, with over 1,280 casualties among teachers and students. The crisis has further devastated the education system and children, teachers and schools are on the front line of the conflict.

Recorded attacks reported damage in the schools and universities from bullets, shells or shrapnel. Schools have been deliberately set on fire and looted. Likewise, the cumulative effect of attacks, looting and wanton destruction of schools, climatic degradation, and the impact of occupation by armed groups or its use as shelter by IDPs has left the education infrastructure in a catastrophic state.



The common thread is that these incidents involve the deliberate use of, or threat to use force in ways that disrupt, harm or deter the provision of education and enjoyment of the right to education.

The evidence is incontrovertible: attacking schools, universities, students, teachers and academics is a common tactic in Nigerian crisis. While some progress has been made, much more can and should be done to protect education from attack.

Advocacy has been undertaken over the past several years to increase awareness of the problem of attacks and catalyse improved responses and prevention. At the same time, there is an improvement in the awareness of attacks on education, their devastating impact, as well as a growing global consensus around the imperative of preventing and mitigating such attacks.

The Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) Advocacy Plan contemplates an improvement in national efforts to prevent schools, universities, students, teachers, academics and other education staff from being attacked; it encourages the investigation, prosecution and punishment of the perpetrators of attacks; sharing knowledge about effective responses; and helping those who have been attacked to recover and rebuild their lives.

The SSD Advocacy Plan represents an integrated approach to protecting education from attack that combines a variety of advocacy approaches and activities, and adapts them to the specific Nigerian context, weighing the risks and challenges as they pertain to the prevailing conditions.

Implementation of the SSD Advocacy Plan, in turn, strengthens communities by encouraging social cohesion through education that is conflict-sensitive and helps to build individual and community resilience. This will amplify the work of local schools and communities to better prevent attacks on education, protect schools from military use, respond to, and mitigate the impacts of attacks and military use when they do occur in conflict-affected communities around the world.

The SSD Advocacy Plan considers long-term sustainability to ensure that risk to education does not return once the Nigerian conflict ends. It is based upon the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict, on the Feedback Review of Legal Framework for the Protection of Education Institutions from Attack in Nigeria, Nigeria Education assessment policy, International Law Framework among other relevant documents related to Safe Schools Declaration.

What is the Safe Schools Declaration?

The Safe Schools Declaration is an inter-governmental political commitment that provides countries with the opportunity to express support for protecting students, teachers, schools, and universities from attack during times of armed conflict; the importance of the continuation of education during armed conflict; and the implementation of concrete measures to deter the military use of schools.

The Declaration was developed through consultations with states in a process led by Norway and Argentina in Geneva in early 2015, and was opened for endorsement at the Oslo Conference on Safe Schools on 29 May 2015.

What do countries that endorse the Declaration agree to do?

By joining Nigeria to the Declaration, we commit to undertake several common sense steps to make it less likely that students, teachers, schools, and universities will be attacked, and to mitigate the negative consequences when such attacks occur.

These measures include:

- To highlight the incidence and impact of attacks on education in conflict and insecurity among key actors and cultivate public support for safe education.
- To promote better systems for monitoring and reporting attacks on education.
- To promote effective programmes and policies to protect education from attack, including prevention and response.
- To encourage adherence to existing international laws protecting education and the strengthening of international norms and standards as needed; and
- To fight impunity for attacks on education by promoting and supporting a range of accountability measures.



Background on Safe Schools Declaration in Nigeria

SSD Committee: The Education in Emergencies Working Group Nigeria (EiEWGN) is a coordination structure that serves as a pressure group to facilitate provision of quality education opportunities that meet the physical protection, psychosocial, developmental and cognitive needs of people affected by emergencies. The aim is to enable structured learning to continue in times of acute crisis or long-term instability.

In April 2017, the EiEWGN inaugurated the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) sub-committee tasked with the responsibility of raising awareness and implementing the SSD in Nigeria. Members of the SSD are:

- EiEWGN lead: FME (National & International Development Partnerships Division, Secondary Education Division (Safe Schools Initiative))
- EiEWGN Co – lead: UNICEF
- EiEWGN Co-lead: Save the Children
- SSD Sub-Committee Chair : Riplington Education Initiative (REI)
- Ministry of Defence (Education Corps)
- Plan International Nigeria
- Talents in Children Promotions
- United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID)

Nigeria was part of the first group of 37 states that “endorsed” the Safe Schools Declaration on May 29, 2015 and signed the letter of endorsement on March 8, 2018.

Legal Review: Having signed the SSD, the next step was to conduct a legal review commissioned by the EiEWGN with the aim of identifying legal gaps in existing legislature in the protection of schools and universities, to analyze potential community response mechanisms that have been used and are in place in response to attacks or potential attacks on education establishments in Nigeria and finally to develop and suggest policies for operationalization, contextualization and support for the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration Guidelines.

education and the formulation of effective programmes and policies to protect education from further attacks.

The workshop had representatives from different areas such as Security (Armed Forces, Police, Civil Defense), Policy (Government), Legal, CSOs and (I) NGOs as well as educational staff.

The feedback obtained through Breakout Group Discussions marks the basis of the steps to be taken regarding the implementation and domestication of the SSD. Now the steps to be taken are around the implementation, domestication, as well as legal and policy aspects.

Feedback Review of Legal Framework for the Protection of Education Institutions from Attack in Nigeria:

The SSD Committee held it on may 21st, 2018.

The essence of the technical meeting was to ensure the involvement and acceptance of all stakeholders of the just completed legal review. It also gave the stakeholders an opportunity to share their views on the findings and the way forward for SSD implementation in Nigeria.



Inception Workshop: The SSD Committee held an Inception Workshop on May 2nd-3rd 2018 in Abuja. It was an urgent call to SSD implementation and demonstrated the growing need for a coordinated approach to protect education from attack in Nigeria.

The Inception Workshop highlighted the incidences and the impact of attacks on education in Nigeria. It promoted the importance of monitoring and reporting attacks on



Achievements in the implementation of SSD

- Bringing together relevant stakeholders and gathered suggestions, feedback and input on how Nigeria can chart an improved framework implementing the Safe Schools Declaration to secure schools and universities from attack.
- Raising awareness about the role of the Safe Schools Declaration in protecting education from attack in Nigeria
- Demonstrating the growing need for a coordinated approach to protecting education from attack in Nigeria
- Highlighting the challenges, opportunities and way forward to protect education from attack, nationally.
- Thanks to the efforts of the EiEWGN, Nigeria is a positive example in the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration. Nigeria has the potential to take a lead in the region and use its position to influence other African countries in preventing attacks on education.
- Expanding the network through the process.
- Possessing the Safe Schools Declaration as a fundamental initiative for the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus process

Next Steps

Policy (Government):

- Promoting security and safety policies in schools including early warning signals and stressing the need for regular training of teachers, parents and students on emergency preparedness.
- Advocating the strengthening of government policies and commitment toward the reconstruction of educational institutions and replacement of assets that may have been destroyed/damaged
- A National Stakeholders Forum to develop 'School Safety and Security : Guidelines and Minimum Standards'

Legal:

- A review of relevant legislations such as Universal Basic Education Act (UBE Act), Child Rights Act. The objective is to further strengthen legislation on protecting schools and children from attack with clearly stipulated sanctions on perpetrators.
- A national Bill that will be an echo of the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) will be proposed.
- The aim is to establish schools and learning environments as zones of peace or conflict-free zones in national legislation. SSD Bill will be presented with the support of Federal Ministry of Education, National Human Rights Commission and Federal Ministry of Justice.

Security (Armed Forces):

- Proposing the SSD Act to the Nigerian Army stipulating that The Military Decision Making Process (MDMP), must include sufficient consideration of logistical requirements; logistics factors, such as the bivouacking of troops, storage of military equipment and stores, and other pre-planned requirements for hard shelter, should be factored in such that the use of school and university infrastructure is not required.
- Including military training activities and manuals, as well as measures that armed forces can take to mitigate potential risks for local students and teachers arising from current or past use of educational facilities for military purposes.
- Raising awareness about potential risks and the short and long-term impact that their actions can have on students' and teachers' safety and on education in general.
- Training security forces, police, and military forces in international humanitarian law and human rights law, in order to limit violations

Building base-evidence:

- A nation-wide (all 36 states and FCT) sociological study of the different ways that educational institutions have been undermined and learning disrupted in Nigeria in recent times.
- Gathering reliable data on education personnel, institutions and assets that have been attacked MRM+NEMIS+EMIS+EiEWGN+IDPs.

Next Steps

Advocacy:

- Promoting and enhancing community protection mechanisms aimed at building resilience of students and community members
- A review of best practices on spaces (not schools) that government can provide to military/security forces during conflict/crises.
- Working with security forces by focusing on continuous dialogue, sensitisation and capacity building and further the cause through harmonisation of SSD in their code of conduct/training manuals.
- Raising awareness among state authorities, and community leaders and members, of the risks associated with the military use of educational infrastructure, including linked violations such as child recruitment and sexual exploitation and abuse, with the aim of reducing the practice of offering the use of such buildings to the military.

Advocacy Events:

- Review of Legal Framework for the Protection of Education Institutions from Attack in Nigeria launch.
- Information Dissemination and Advocacy

Coordination:

- Establishment of Safe Schools Declaration desks in the Ministry of Education to lead and monitor implementation of the SSD at Federal, State, and Local Government levels. In the interim, SSD will be placed in Education Support Services Division.
- Implementation of SSD Advocacy Plan through the more than 86 members at national level that are members of the EIEWG.



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We must increase our efforts to uphold the right to education.

