



2025 Spotlight Report on SDG 4 implementation in Nigeria

By

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Overview of SDG 4 progress in Nigeria

It is on record that Nigeria has made **moderate progress** towards SDG 4 targets based on available data and initiative by the government, private sector, civil society organizations and international development organizations but significant challenges remain:

- **Access to education:** Though with all the concerted efforts primary school completion rates are improving but remain below the universal target. Early childhood education enrolment is expanding, yet less than half of eligible children attend ECCD programs, reflecting gaps in infrastructure and accessibility.
- **Gender equality:** The gender parity index is improving but uneven across regions, with girls still less likely to enrol or complete school compared to boys. Persistent socio-cultural barriers and insecurity affect girls' education, particularly in northern Nigeria as teenage pregnancy and trafficking affects girls in southern Nigeria.
- **Quality and skills:** Literacy rates among youth and adults hover around 60%, with many lacking foundational reading and numeracy skills. Vocational and technical skills development is limited, impacting youth employability and economic growth further compounding the high level of poverty and indecent jobs in Nigeria.
- **Funding:** Education financing increased to 7.07% of the national budget in 2025 but falls short of the UNESCO recommended 15-20%. Underfunding impacts quality improvements and learning outcome, teacher training, and educational infrastructure availability in all sectors of education.
- **Out-of-school children:** though there are conflicting figures on the actual number of out of school children. The federal Ministry of education working figures states that Approximately 10.5 million Nigerian children remain out of school, mostly in conflict-affected, hard to reach communities due to natural disasters in rural areas, underscoring the need for inclusive policies and targeted interventions to marginalized communities.



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SDG 4 Progress in Nigeria at a glance — Data Overview (2022–2025)

SDG 4 Indicator	Latest Value	Target / Benchmark	Status	Source
4.1.1 — <i>Completion rate of primary education</i>	65% (net completion rate, 2023)	100% by 2030	Off track	Nigeria Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) 2023
4.1.2 — <i>Literacy rate among youth (15-24 years)</i>	62% (2023)	100% by 2030	Off track	UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) 2024
4.2.1 — <i>Participation rate in early childhood education (ECCD)</i>	45% (2023, pre-primary enrolment)	100% by 2030	Low Progress	National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) 2023
4.5.1 — <i>Parity index (gender equality in education)</i>	0.85 (primary level, girls/boys' enrolment)	1.0 (equal access)	Improving	UNICEF Nigeria 2023
4.6.1 — <i>Youth and adult literacy rate</i>	59% adult literacy (2023)	100% by 2030	Slow Progress	UNESCO, Nigerian Ministry of Education
4.4.1 — <i>Proportion of youth with relevant skills for employment</i>	~40% with technical/vocational skills	100% by 2030	Moderate Progress	World Bank Nigeria Education Report 2024
Public education budget allocation	7.07% of national budget (2025)	15-20% recommended by UNESCO	Underfunded	Nigerian Federal Ministry of Finance 2025
Out-of-school children (6-15 years)	~10.5 million children out of school (2023)	Zero out-of-school children by 2030	Critical	UNICEF Nigeria 2023

Overall, it is instructive to understand that, Nigeria must accelerate investments, strengthen governance, collaborate with the civil society and citizens, and address equity gaps to meet SDG 4 targets and indicators by 2030.

CSACEFA Nigeria Profile

CSACEFA – National Education Coalition Implementing the SDGs in Nigeria

The Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA) is Nigeria's foremost national education coalition, working to advance the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (quality education) through inclusive policies and grassroots advocacy. With a network of over 600 civil society and community-based organizations, CSACEFA promotes foundational learning, gender equality, climate education, and increased public investment in education. It plays a central role in aligning Nigeria's education strategies with



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SDG 3 (health), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 14 (climate and life below water), and SDG 17 (partnerships).

CSACEFA has contributed to integrating early childhood care and development (ECCD) programs with child health and nutrition initiatives, supporting SDG 3.2 and SDG 4.2. The coalition champions girls' education through campaigns to end child marriage, increase menstrual hygiene support, and ensure safe school environments, particularly in underserved regions, advancing targets under SDG 5.3 and SDG 4.5. It also supports climate change education by promoting environmental literacy and sustainability in schools, contributing to awareness on SDG 13 and SDG 14.

As a national accountability actor, CSACEFA drives advocacy for improved education financing and tracks government spending against international benchmarks and National obligations on right to education. It actively engages with government institutions, donors, and other CSOs to strengthen education systems and contribute to Nigeria's Voluntary National Reviews. Through evidence-based policy dialogues, budget tracking tools, and civil society consultations, CSACEFA exemplifies the collaborative approach of SDG 17 while ensuring that inclusive, quality education remains a national priority.

CSACEFA serves as Nigeria's voice in global education platforms such as the Global Campaign for Education and contributes to national Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) at the High-level Political Forum and leads civil society members on the Major Groups and Other stakeholders (MGoS) civil society statement in the Nigeria VNR 2025.

Spotlights indicators Progress report

1. Rights from the Start: Progress in SDG 3.2 and SDG 4.2

Progress in SDG 3.2: Neonatal and Child Mortality

- **Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR):** As of 2021, Nigeria's NMR was 34 deaths per 1,000 live births, a slight improvement from 39 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018. However, this remains significantly above the SDG 3.2 target of 12 deaths per 1,000 live births by 2030.
- **Under-Five Mortality Rate (U5MR):** The 2023/2024 Nigeria Demographic Health Survey (NDHS) indicates a U5MR of 110 deaths per 1,000 live births. To meet the SDG 3.2.2 target of reducing U5MR to 25 per 1,000 live births by 2030, Nigeria must achieve an annual average rate of decline (AARD) of 16.5% which is about 18 deaths per 1,000 live births

Programs Connecting SDG 3.2 and SDG 4.2

Nigeria has integrated **early childhood development (ECD) programs** with health initiatives to improve child survival and learning outcomes.



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- **Midwives Service Scheme (MSS):** this scheme was launched in 2009 and has MSS deployed skilled midwives to rural areas to improve maternal and child health outcomes, indirectly supporting early childhood development by ensuring healthier births.
- **Abiye (Safe Motherhood) Project:** Implemented in Ondo State, this initiative provides free maternal and child healthcare services. Between 2009 and 2016, the state achieved an 84.9% reduction in maternal mortality, from 745 to 112 per 100,000 live births.
- **Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI):** This strategy focuses on reducing child mortality by addressing the major causes of under-five deaths through improved case management, health system strengthening, and community practices.
- The **National Integrated Sustainable Development Goals (iSDG) Model** aligns health and education policies to ensure holistic child development.

Progress in Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)

- **Policy Framework:** The National Policy on Education recognizes the importance of early childhood education, promoting the establishment of Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) centers.
- **Access and Quality:** While ECCDE centers exist, access remains limited, especially in rural areas. Quality of services varies, with disparities in teacher qualifications, learning materials, and infrastructure.
- **Integration with Health Services:** Programs like MSS and initiatives like the Abiye Project demonstrate efforts to integrate health and early education services, acknowledging the interdependence of health and learning in early childhood.
- The **Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) program** has been expanded with a **play-based curriculum** to improve learning outcomes.
- The **Oando Foundation** has upgraded **21 early childcare centres**, benefiting over **4,851 children**.
- The **Sterling One Foundation (SOF)** recently launched the Early Child Learning Advancing programme (E-Clap) in Nigeria and began the piloting with the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for all in 3 states Oyo, Kano and Abia states, providing early child education model towards achieving the SDGs. The project target and set up 27 centres and **targets 3,459 children** across the states.

2. Gender Equality in Education: Progress in SDG 5 and SDG 4.5

Gender Barriers to Education

- **Cultural Norms and Early Marriage:** Deeply embedded cultural norms perpetuate the belief that girls should focus on domestic responsibilities. These views, reinforced by traditional practices, contribute to some parents' reluctance to send their daughters to school. Early marriage remains one of the most pervasive issues affecting the



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Nigerian girl child, with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimating that **44 percent of Nigerian girls are married before the age of 18.**

- **Safety and Infrastructure:** Safety and security challenges were also highlighted as impediments, with many families reluctant to send their daughters to school due to fears of abduction, violence, or harassment, especially for girls who must walk long distances. Additionally, many schools in rural and semi-urban areas lack the basic facilities required for conducive learning environments, including inadequate sanitation facilities, which disproportionately affect girls during menstruation, leading to absenteeism and dropouts, the lack of counsellors to provide support to children with SRGBV
- **Literacy rate for women and girls:** Only **65.7% of women** aged 15-49 are literate, compared to **77.5% of men**

Gender Divides in EdTech

- While specific data on gender divides in EdTech in Nigeria is limited, general barriers such as limited access to digital devices, internet connectivity, and digital literacy disproportionately affect girls, especially in rural areas.
- **Women represent only 17% of tech professionals** in Nigeria.
- **45 million Nigerian women lack internet access**, limiting their participation in digital education

Progress in Addressing Gender Gaps in Education

- **Education Budget Allocations:** In 2025, Nigeria allocated N3.52 trillion to the education sector, representing 7.07% of the total budget. While this is an increase from previous years, it still falls short of UNESCO's recommendation of allocating 15-20% of national budgets to education.
- **State-Level Initiatives:** Some states are making significant progress in tackling barriers to education for girls. Kano state, for example, allocated 31% of their 2025 budget to education. In Oyo state, 21% of their 2025 budget is allocated to education, continuing a trend of increased investment. However, the absence of dedicated budget lines for girls' education remains a concern. Adamawa state declared payment external examination fee for all the female students, while this is commendable, there is no proper budgeting and support for the classroom learning before external exams
- The **SDG 4 Scorecard** shows slow progress in gender parity in secondary education, with **completion rates improving but still below targets.**

Policies to Overcome Gender Barriers

- **Gender-Responsive Education Budgeting (GREB):** Nigeria has made progress in using gender analysis for education policies, but still needs a cohesive national GREB framework. Girls across Nigeria have called on the government to implement this



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framework, which would ensure investments address the specific needs of girls, tackle gender disparities in education access and outcomes, and promote equitable education for all. (malala.org)

- The **National Policy on Gender in Education** aims to increase **girls' enrolment and retention**.
- The **Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act** addresses gender-based violence in schools.
- The Child Right Act in Nigeria fashioned towards the United Nation Convention on the Right of the child, address the rights of the child against violence.

Efforts to Eliminate Harmful Practices (SDG 5.3)

- **Legislation:** The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP) aims to eliminate harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage and female genital mutilation. However, the Act has not been enforced in many states, increasing girls' vulnerability to abuse.
- **Though Child marriage rates remain high**, but interventions like the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme and CSACEFA advocacy actions to End Child Marriage are making progress.
- **Female genital mutilation (FGM) rates are declining**, as a result of the rigorous campaigns actions taken by civil society organizations community actors are beginning to understand the effect of FGM on the girl child, but efforts need acceleration.

3. Equitable Access to Free and Quality Skills Development, Education, and Training of Youth and Women

Youth NEET Rate and Challenges

- While specific data on Nigeria's youth Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) rate is limited, challenges affecting youth access to employment, education, and training include inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teaching materials, and a shortage of qualified educators learning to poor learning outcome.
- **Available data indicates that 14.4% of Nigerian youth aged 15-24 were neither in school, employment, nor training in Q1 2024, up from 13.7% in Q3 2023. There is a steady decline in youth employment.**
- **Limited job opportunities and inadequate vocational training** contribute to youth unemployment. Again most youths have shown apathy to skills training, which would have provided job, this is occasioned by the poor support and skills building, and or technical and vocational centres in the remote and semi urban areas where these skills are most needed.

Women's Access to Skills Development and Decent Work



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- Women's access to skills development, education, and decent work is hindered by factors such as limited access to education, socio-cultural norms, stigmatization of women engaging in artisans' jobs and inadequate infrastructure.
- **Nigeria women's unemployment rate is 6.2%, compared to 4.3% for men.**
- **77% of women work in the informal sector**, limiting access to stable employment leading to declining economic growth.

Policies and Government Programmes

- **World Bank Support:** In September 2024, the World Bank approved a \$1.57 billion financing package for Nigeria to support its health and education sectors. This funding aims to increase the availability and effectiveness of financing for basic education and primary healthcare services, addressing governance issues that constrain service delivery.
- The **Nigeria for Women Programme** supports female entrepreneurs.
- The **National Skills Development Policy** promotes vocational training for women artisans and skilled work

Good Practices by CSOs

- **CSACEFA** as a Civil Society Organization is constantly advocating for **gender-sensitive education** policies, and **skilled based curriculum**
- **The Partnership for Amplified Voices (PAV)** engages CSOs in education reforms.
- Organizations such as **GEAPP** and **FSD Africa** suggest integrating green skill training into existing programs and emphasize creating job opportunities for women and young people. Successful companies invest in local training programs, which lead to faster project rollouts and improved local engagement. ([Reuters](#))

4. SDG 14 and the Role of Climate Change Education

Government Education Programmes Connecting Climate Change Education to SDG 14

- Nigeria's Climate Change Act, 2021, requires the government to establish a National Climate Change Action Plan and a five-year carbon budget, with specific annual targets. The Act establishes the National Council on Climate Change, tasked with executing the National Climate Change Action Plan and controlling the newly established Climate Change Fund.
- The **Schools Climate Change Awareness Program** educates students on environmental sustainability.
- The **Federal Ministry of Environment** integrates climate education into school curricula.

Good Practices from Government and CSOs



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- Organizations such as GEAPP and FSD Africa suggest integrating green skill training into existing programs and emphasize creating job opportunities for women and young people. Successful companies invest in local training programs, which lead to faster project rollouts and improved local engagement.
- CSACEFA advocated and contributed to ensuring climate education is infused into the basic education curriculum in Nigeria

5. Gender-Responsive Budgeting and Programming in Education

Allocations for Gender Programmes in Education

- Between 2015 and 2025, the Ministry of Women's Affairs received only 0.05% to 0.25% of the national budget annually, highlighting the government's limited financial commitment to gender issues.
- **Nigeria's education budget for 2025 is N6.131 trillion, but only 7.06% of the total budget is allocated to education, far below the UNESCO-recommended 26%.**

Agencies Allocating Gender Budgets for Education

- State governments play a pivotal role in bridging the gender gap in education through gender-responsive education sector plans (GRESPE). Currently, only a few Nigerian states have developed such plans, leaving many girls in regions with gender-blind policies that fail to cater to their specific challenges.
- The **Federal Ministry of Education, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), and Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund)** support gender-focused programs.
- The Global Partnership for Education GPE through the World is supporting the federal government through several Gender supported programmes like the Adolescence Girl Initiative Learning and Empowerment (AGILE), The Basic Education Service Delivery (BESDA) and the System Transformation Grants (STGs)

Gender Budgets for Education in Emergencies

- Specific data on gender budgets for education in emergencies is limited. However, the underfunding of gender initiatives and the lack of gender-disaggregated data hamper the ability to assess the impact of budgets on different genders, making it challenging to design effective interventions.
- CSACEFA and other civil society organizations are constantly advocating for education financing in emergencies with the states and the federal government

6. Education Financing

Progress in Meeting International Benchmarks



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- Nigeria's **education budget remains below the UNESCO benchmark**, affecting quality and access, and learning outcomes.
- In 2025, Nigeria allocated N3.52 trillion to the education sector, representing 7.07% of the total budget.
- **Only 7.9% of the 2024 budget is allocated to education**, with limited focus on inclusion.

Debt situation and impact on education

- **Nigeria's debt servicing cost in 2025 is N15.81 trillion**, exceeding the combined budget for education, health, and infrastructure.
- **Underfunding leads to poor school infrastructure and teacher shortages**, contributing to poor learning outcomes and increasing the growing number of out of school children standing at an estimated 18.2 out of school aged children in Nigeria.

Government actions to mobilize taxes and sustainable financing

- The **TETFund proposes increasing the education tax to 3%** to boost funding.
- **Nigeria's Sustainable Finance Principles** aim to integrate ESG considerations into education financing.
- **The Universal Basic Education is has prosed increasing the consolidated revenue from 2% to 3% for the universal basic education funds**

Summary of Recommendations

1. **Increase education funding** to meet international benchmarks. At the GPE replenishment campaign, Nigeria government promised a progressive increase in the budget to meet the recommended benchmark by 2030, this should be consciously implemented.
2. **Expand ECCD programs** to improve early childhood learning, States governments must be intentional on funding and ensuring proper implementation of the ECCDE through the Local Government Education Authorities.
3. **Strengthen gender-responsive policies** to close education gender parity gaps.
4. **Enhance vocational training** to reduce youth unemployment.
5. **Integrate climate change education** into school curricula to expose children and learners to green energy jobs.
6. **Improve education financing mechanisms** through tax reforms.
7. **Strengthen social accountability mechanism** that ensures citizens and civil society contributions and feedbacks on government policies and programmes especially at the subnational levels.

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