



Building Blocks of Change: Jigawa's Mega School Initiative



VOICES

"I like it here; it shows that the government is working," expresses Hauwa Suleiman Abdulhamid, a teacher at Mega School Dutse, as she enthusiastically talks about the positive impact of the new school facilities on students' learning. Before joining Mega School Dutse, she served as the Vice Principal at Government Day Arabic Secondary School, specialising in Home Management. In her previous role, being the only female teacher in a school with an insufficient number of educators made her uncomfortable. Reflecting on her past experiences, she appreciates the positive change in her current environment and applauds the initiative to decongest classrooms across the state.

Mega School Dutse, located at the heart of the city centre in Jigawa State, is one of the three mega schools newly constructed by the state government. The school boasts of a clean environment, fully-equipped laboratories, access to potable water, separate toilets for girls and boys and 82 well-built classrooms designed to accommodate a maximum of 60 and 35 students per classroom for the secondary and primary section respectively. The atmosphere is generating excitement among both students and teachers and is fostering ambition among pupils. Hauwa notes that as the bells chime for break time, *"Little girls in the neighbourhood are drawn to the renewed excitement of the students; they come out to wave cheerfully at them."*

Constructed as a replica of previous Capital and Model Primary schools, the fee-paying school model is much more affordable than private schools and is intended not for profit, but rather to boost contribution to the running cost of the schools towards financial sufficiency.



Hauwa Suleiman Abdulhamid in her office

The Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn (PERL) has played a pivotal role in catalysing improvements in the Education sector in Jigawa State. PERL support facilitated increased funding for education and is shaping policies targeted at teacher training, construction of new schools, and specific initiatives promoting



Classroom blocks at Mega School Dutse, Jigawa

girls' education. Notably, 91.5% of the N58 billion allocated to the Education sector in Jigawa State's 2022 budget was released to support such initiatives. Other interventions to improve resource allocation have led to dedicated resources for projects catering for girl's needs. In 2023, 1.02 billion was earmarked for projects targeting girls. Additionally, PERL is also engaging to improve the timeliness of budget releases, enhancing budget execution processes, and integrating performance into the processes for allocating resources.

The construction of the Mega School and other initiatives to improve education through increased budget allocations underscores the recognition of the need to accelerate reforms in education. The Mega school initiative undertaken by the government is anticipated to address the educational needs of approximately 784,381 out-of-school children in Jigawa State

and also, decongest existing schools operating above their maximum capacity in the vicinity.

Whilst the Mega School has an 82-class capacity, currently only 16 classes are in use from its first intake, when the school opened in September 2023. An enrolment drive would benefit the state as well as additional teachers, especially females, to serve over 2000 girls, currently enrolled at Mega School Dutse. Ensuring a more amenable learning environment for pupils and educators will not suffice, without the resources, the initiatives to raise the quality of education cannot be sustained. A concerted effort by PERL and other programmes to augment the resources available to the sector will determine the extent to which the long-term development goals of education can be met, and ultimately, the improvement of educational outcomes in Jigawa State.

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The Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn (PERL) is a five-year public sector accountability and governance programme, funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office. The programme provides support to governments in the core areas of policy development and implementation towards delivering public goods and services; supports citizens to engage with these processes and facilitates evidence-based learning and advocacy.

The opinions expressed in this leaflet are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.