



# From Cook to Classroom: Grandma Rakiya's Second Chance at Education



# VOICES

Second Chance to Education is akin to giving girls their lives back – “How would it feel to get your life back?”

Rakiya Isah, a grandmother of four, from Kachia Local Government in Kaduna State never had the opportunity to receive a formal education. Being an only child and orphaned at a young age, seeing the four walls of a classroom could only be a pipe dream. To earn a living, Rakiya honed her cooking skills and secured employment as a cook for a school feeding program at Rehab Centre Kachia in Kaduna State. According to her, a fresh wave of frustration would hit her every morning while she stood at the sign-in register, asking others to assist her with writing her name. What seemed like a dream began to materialise the moment she heard of the Second Chance Education initiative and saw the number of women trooping to register in her village.

Rakiya walked up to the Head Teacher of the school where she worked and told him of her intention to join the program. She was immediately enrolled in primary 2, being the first beneficiary to register at LGA Rehab Kachiya at the time. Today, despite her numerous chores, Rakiya is attending school alongside her child (Primary 5) and grandchild (Primary 1). She juggles cooking and serving the children in the morning, attends classes, and then returns to serve the food during break time.

Hauwa Muhammed, a Gender and Inclusion Desk Officer, at the Kaduna State Universal Education Board is particularly passionate about the Second Chance Education initiative.

*In her words, “This initiative was developed to enable girls who have dropped out of school to come back and pursue their education”.*

Several initiatives have been implemented to enhance girls’ learning in Kaduna State. One of which is the Second Chance Education initiative, uniquely designed to give vulnerable individuals like Rakiya, who had missed the opportunity a second chance to complete formal education. The Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn (PERL) programme, played a crucial role in supporting the Second Chance Initiative. Its intervention centred on realigning and redefining organisational structures and job descriptions to streamline and enhance the implementation of the initiative.



*Rakiya Isah and Hauwa Muhammed, Gender and Inclusion Desk Officer, Kaduna State Universal Education Board during an interview*

The programme's work that has fostered collaboration amongst Education MDAs is addressing the need for coordination as well as enabled the alignment of the program's activities, ensuring that different partners and stakeholders work towards the objectives of the initiative. This support is part of wider education reforms to advance more equitable, quality, and sustainable learning and literacy outcomes for the populace, especially women.

Rakiya reveals that starting was not easy, She recalls several pupils saying, "How can somebody that is giving us food wear a uniform and sit in the same class with us" but, that did not stop her.

*Now in primary 5, Rakiya exclaims with joy "I can write my name! I don't need assistance anymore".*

What was such a difficulty in the past is now one of the many things she does with ease. Her basic literacy and numeracy skills have improved and she is glad that she can write her market lists and letters, and communicate more effectively. Rakiya's commitment to receiving a formal education and balancing her work responsibilities serves as an example of overcoming obstacles to pursue learning.

Rakiya's dream is to be able to complete her education up to the University level. She hopes to be a medical practitioner in a hospital someday. It is envisioned that more girls and women like her will have the opportunity to receive a second chance at education and pursue their dreams. As Rakiya continues her educational pursuit, the hope is to extend this opportunity to more girls and women, offering them the chance to rewrite their stories. Interventions of programmes like PERL remain pivotal in ensuring that the right systems are in place, to see through the implementation of policies, plans and budgets and enhance the delivery of public goods and services.

**Contact Address:**

- 📍 10 Bobo Street  
Maitama, Abuja, Nigeria
- ✉ info@perlnigeria.net
- 🌐 www.perlnigeria.net
- 📺 Find us on Facebook
- 📘 www.facebook.com/perlnigeria



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.