

Transforming Education in Niger State (TENS II) Programme

REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS

Lessons Learnt from the TENS II Programme

Niger State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Federal Republic of Nigeria



MRL[®]
Public Sector Consultants

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MRL[®] Public Sector Consultants
for the Niger State Ministry of Basic and
Secondary Education



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Federal Republic of Nigeria as part of the Transforming Education in Niger State (TENS II)
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This document and other data in relation to the TENS II Programme on which it is based are
available online at **www.tensng.com**

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*“Education is not a privilege for the few,
but a necessity for the masses.
For it is the foundation of any society”.*

- Dr. Roni Ajao



Preface

This report is a comprehensive reflection on the lessons learnt on the Transforming Education in Niger State (TENS II) Programme, Federal Republic of Nigeria from a programme management perspective as good practise outlined by the Association for Programme Management (APM).

The TENS II Programme was undertaken on behalf of the Niger State Government under the direction of His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Niger State – Mohammed Umaru Bago.

This lessons report focuses mainly on the Education Census from July 2nd, 2024 – August 30th, 2024, for this aspect of the TENS II Programme.

Core deliverables for this Phase of the Programme were the following:

- A comprehensive Education Census of all educational establishments in the State both public and private.
- A detailed report on the education sector in Niger State based on insights from the school verification exercise, the school census, and the qualitative data collection.
- A report exploring implementable solutions for Nomadic Education.
- A report exploring the use of digital technologies for education under the Digital Futures Education Initiative (DFEI).
- A report with recommendations on how to address the issue of Out-of-School Children using the data collected to explore further insights.
- An Entrepreneurship Education Strategy for the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in Niger State.
- Leadership and field training for Enumerators, Education Administrators and Education Quality Assurance Officers.
- A new TENS II Programme Logo for the programme.
- An interactive TENS II Programme Website.

The report highlights the key challenges encountered during the Programme, ranging from financial management and operational difficulties to data management and team dynamics. It also outlines the strategies that were employed to address these difficulties offering practical recommendations for future programmes and projects undertaken by MRL® Public Sector Consultants Limited (MRL®),

The insights gathered are intended to inform and guide future programmes and projects, ensuring that similar challenges can be effectively managed, anticipated and mitigated. By documenting these experiences, the report aims to contribute to the continuous improvement of programme and project management and implementation using up to date programme management methodologies and practices on assignments within the public / education sector.

We hope that the lessons captured within this document will serve as valuable reference points for our clients, stakeholders, and MRL® team members working in similar contexts.



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Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd



1

INTRODUCTION



1. Introduction

The Transforming Education in Niger State (TENS II) Programme is a comprehensive initiative aimed at overhauling the state's education system. Recognising the significant challenges faced by Niger State's predominantly rural education landscape, the initial stage of the TENS II Programme sought to collect comprehensive baseline data through an extensive Education Census of all schools and institutions within the State, both public and private. The data collected informed the strategic interventions to improve educational quality, access, and infrastructure.

By conducting a thorough assessment of schools, including their location, enrolment, teacher qualifications, and facilities, etc., the TENS II Programme will provide the foundation for evidence-based policymaking and resource allocation. Ultimately, the Programme strives to create a robust and inclusive education system that empowers students and drives Niger State's development under the new vision for the New Niger of which education is pivotal by His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Niger State – Mohammed Umaru Bago.

The Education Census has been supported by other areas of work to fully understand the problems within the education system. A separate report 'TENS II, The Education Census (2024)' is available for the details on the Census. A further report 'TENS II School Mapping Training Manual for Local Government Area Managers' (2024) is also available for additional information relating to the Education Census.

Whilst the Education Census focussed on the quantitative aspect, the scope of the work for the TENS II Programme adopted a mixed methods research strategy utilising both quantitative and qualitative data acquisition techniques. This was to facilitate a panoramic perspective and deep understanding of the education sector in Niger State. This comprised of the following distinct but integrated stages: -

1

Desk-based Research and Literature Review

A desk-based systematic review of the existing education data that has been collected at state, national and independent sources (i.e., international organisations, such as, UNICEF) was undertaken. The secondary sources of data were relevant in providing an up-to-date perspective on the status of the education sector, which also set the framework for the data collection exercise. In this regard, members of the TENS II Programme Team reviewed data from the following sources: -

- I. Niger State
- ii. The Ministry for Basic and Secondary Education
- iii. The Niger State Ministry for Tertiary Education
- iv. The Niger State Universal Basic Education Board
- v. The Annual School Census which is coordinated by the Federal Ministry of Education.

These data sources, in addition to information provided by the following: -

- i. The Niger State Teachers Professional Development Institute
- ii. The Niger State Quality Assurance Board
- iii. The Niger State Ministry for Nomadic and Pastoral Affairs
- iv. The Niger State Education Resource Centre
- v. The Niger State Private Schools Board
- vi. The Niger State Technical Schools Board
- vii. The Niger State Ministry for Communications, Technology and Digital Economy
- viii. The Niger State House of Assembly (Education Committee)
- ix. The Niger State Education Resource Centre
- x. Niger State Education Secretaries and Zonal Heads
- xi. The Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE).
- xii. The Niger State Ministry for Small and Medium Enterprises
- xiii. The Niger State Ministry for Womens Affairs
- xiv. The Niger State Ministry for Local Government and Chieftancy Affairs

2

A School Verification Exercise across all LGAs using the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education's list of schools / higher education institutions / private school establishments / nomadic schools to verify all institutions including unidentified schools.

Additional lists were obtained from the Niger State Universal Basic Education Board (NSUBEB) and the Niger State Ministry of Tertiary Education.



Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd

A comprehensive Education Census (Baseline Education Statistics) and Infrastructure Survey, as aforementioned of the following educational establishments: -

- Primary and Secondary
- Government-owned Early Childcare Development Education (ECCDE) Primary and Secondary schools (I.e., Junior and Senior Secondary Schools)
- Private schools (Nursery – Secondary)
- Faith-based Institutions (Qu’ranic and Christian)
- Nomadic Schools
- Tertiary institutions (Government-owned and private).

Conducting interviews with key stakeholders (qualitative) i.e., parents, teachers, school administrators, officials in the Colleges of Education, LGA officials, traditional / community leaders / State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education officials. Educational secretaries, Commissioners, Permanent Secretaries and other civil servants.



Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd

2. Categorisation of the Lessons Learnt

For the purposes of this report the lessons learned from phase I of the TENS II Programme has been classified into distinct groups. The various groupings are as follows: -

1 Financial Management

2 Operational Challenges

3 Team Dynamics

4 Communication and Stakeholder Management

5 Programme Management

These grouping were identified as the lessons learnt fall within one of these categories.

Each category is discussed in the subsequent chapters below. The report aims to reflect on aspects of the TENS II Programme that can be improved on other phases of TENS II going forward and other initiatives as part of MRL[®] Public Sector Consultants Limited (MRL[®]) core values, professional integrity and continuous improvement in line with ISO 20700: 2017 or management consultancy standards, the Association for Project Management (APM) and

the Institute for Consulting (IC). Development of the lessons learnt report is also undertaken as part of our quality management procedures to strengthen the way we deliver programmes and work with our clients.

We also recognise that two programmes or projects are the same, given the requirements of the programme in terms of the client's needs and the context.

3. Financial Management

Effective financial management is critical to the success of any large-scale programme or project. The TENS II Programme is no exception. The TENS II Education Census, the key element of this phase of the programme, involved well over one thousand three hundred team members working to an extremely tight deadline within a specified budget. Research has shown that conducting educational surveys across large geo-graphical areas in various terrains, especially in the public sector is extremely challenging. One important feature in the success of these

education surveys / census is the coordination between various stakeholders.

The TENS II Programme in Niger State experienced several financial challenges that impacted the timely execution and overall efficiency in the delivery of the Programme. These challenges have provided valuable lessons that can inform future initiatives ensuring better financial planning, budgeting, risk management, and stakeholder coordination.



Source: MRL[®] Public Sector Consultants Ltd

3.1 Delayed Payment and the loss of Key Personnel

One significant issue encountered was the delayed payment of the deposit to MRL[®] Public Sector Consultants by the Niger State Government Finance department. The delay resulted in the late commencement of the programme which affected the programme timeline and the ability to mobilise resources promptly.

In a programme with tight deadlines and multiple moving parts, any delay in funding can have a cascading effect, slowing down the entire process putting un-necessary pressure on the programme team. The Programme initiatives should incorpo-

rate a more rigorous pre-programme financial planning phase, ensuring that all necessary funds are secured and released well in advance of the programme start date.

Additionally, establishing a contingency plan for financial delays, including an emergency fund or bridge financing options, could mitigate the impact of such delays on programme timelines. Accurate cost forecasting and flexible budgeting are essential in public sector programmes, particularly in volatile economic environments, such as, Nigeria.

With future programmes or projects, the Niger State Government and MRL® Public Sector Consultants Limited should develop and include a detailed analysis of the potential cost escalations likely to occur due to inflation, currency fluctuations, and the need for additional manpower. Whilst, the Programme had a contingency budget of five percent (5%) this was extremely insufficient due to the increase in the rate of inflation and instability of the Naira. Establishing a financial buffer that reflects the current economic climate within the budget to accommodate unexpected costs will help ensure future programmes can proceed without financial disruptions.

Due to the delayed payment to commence the TENS II Programme, this resulted in the loss of key international staff members based on the uncertainty of the commencement date. Whilst MRL® were able to subsume some of the initial set up cost, this was not feasible long-term resulting in identified staff taking up other assignments and rescheduling of activities severally for those remaining on the programme.

3.2 Impact of Currency Devaluation on Payments

The devaluation of the Naira during the project period led to a significant reduction in the value of payments received. This reduction not only affected the overall budget but also had implications for the purchasing power of funds allocated for various project activities. The reduced payment amounts strained the programme's ability to cover costs effectively, leading to adjustments in scope and priorities. Unfortunately the devaluation of the Naira led to a loss from a financial perspective. In future projects, it is essential to consider currency fluctuations as part of the

financial risk management strategy. Budget forecasts should include provisions for exchange rate variations, and contracts should be structured to allow for adjustments in the event of significant currency devaluation. Hedging strategies or contracts denominated in more stable currencies could also be explored to protect the project's financial integrity. Going forward, MRL® will request for a portion of the funds to be paid by the government in the United States Dollar (USD) or the pound sterling (GBP) to reduce the loss.

Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd

3.3 Delayed Payments to Enumerators and LGA Managers

The payment delays extended beyond the consultancy firm to the enumerators and Local Government Area (LGAs) Managers, who were essential to the on-ground execution of the Education Census. These delays were primarily due to the late disbursements by the Niger State government's finance department and individual errors in payment details.

The late payments affected morale and, in some cases, disrupted the fieldwork activities as enumerators and LGA managers faced financial difficulties that hampered their ability to carry out their duties effectively.

An initial challenge was the short timeline given to enumerators to open a bank account with Zenith Bank Plc for those who did not bank with the specified bank chosen to manage the programme account. The period to open an account with Zenith Bank Plc for the enumerators, compounded by the limited number of Zenith Bank branches in Niger State and the poor management of the account opening by Zenith Bank representatives created delays in the financial setup necessary for the enumera-

tors to begin their work, ultimately impacting the programme timeline.

To avoid such issues in future programmes and projects, it is crucial to establish a streamlined payment process with clear timelines and accountability at each stage. Prior discussions with the nominated bank before the commencement of the programme should be undertaken well in advance.

Automation of the payment processes, combined with regular audits, could reduce human errors and ensure timely disbursements. Only nominated individuals should have access to the banking database to avoid names being deleted and substituted with other names of enumerators not selected for the exercise. The database should be password protected, enabling only nominated personnel to access the folder.

Setting up a communication channel specifically for payment-related issues could help address concerns quickly in the future and maintain the workforce's motivation.



4. Operational Challenges

The operational aspects of the TENS II Programme faced several challenges which is expected on a programme of this magnitude. Notwithstanding, the operational challenges impacted the timely and effective execution of the TENS II Programme with several timeline adjustments required to be made to ensure the timeline in which to deliver the Programme was met. Whilst from a programme management perspective, the programme timeline had built in a level of

contingency, going forward and for other initiatives, this needs to be carefully assessed, planned and resourced to ensure undue pressure is not put on the management team responsible for managing the assignment.

The operational issues ranged from logistical constraints to communication breakdowns and mismatched resource allocation. These are discussed individually below: -

4.1 Technical Difficulties

A number of LGA managers encountered technical difficulties, such as, difficulty in identifying the GPS coordinates on their devices. Whilst these issues were eventually resolved, it created a delay in the geo-mapping exercise. This issue, along with the inability to access private schools in

certain LGAs, due to the State not advising these institutions on time led to delays in completing the geo-mapping exercise. The geo-mapping exercise was crucial to the verification exercise before the deployment of enumerators to conduct Education Census.



4.2 Network Connectivity Issues

Several enumerators had challenges accessing the Internet, which hampered the fieldwork or experienced frequent power outages, preventing the fieldwork from being completed. This resulted in incomplete data collection, requiring further

data collection activities, adding to the time taken to complete the Census. A backup option using paper may be worth considering, as well as the availability of power banks and several network provider options.

4.3 Security Issues

Another operational challenge was the inability to access certain wards due to security issues. The management of the TENS II Team could have worked more closely with the State security, i.e., the Niger State Commissioner for the Ministry of

Homeland Security and/or nominated officials, and the Commissioner and officials for the Ministry for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs to explore options to gain access to these wards.

4.4 Selection of Fieldworkers (LGA Managers and Enumerators)

A more stringent approach should be taken when hiring fieldwork staff. A considerable amount of time was spent dealing with enumerator issues, including inconsistent attendance, incomplete surveys, lost/missing devices, and disregard for protocols. These issues affected the quality of some of the data collected. Whilst the issue of data quality has been thoroughly addressed, this impacted the data analysis aspect.

More time was required to enable some enumerators to return to the field to collect the missing data. In a few cases, enumerators had not attended the training session and, therefore, were unable to undertake the fieldwork properly, resulting in additional support being given to these enumerators or, in some instances, the enumerators being replaced by more competent hands.

4.5 Submission of Enumerators Names from Ministries

Another significant operational issue was the late submission of enumerator names by the ministries coupled with the deployment of additional names of enumerators after the deadline set. The programme team filled the quota of enumerators due to the Ministry's delayed response. However, the TENS II team was still required to accommodate an additional 100 enumerators whose names were sent extremely late in the process and without assigned LGAs. This situation caused potential delays as the TENS II team

had to wait for the Ministry to assign LGAs to these extra enumerators and explore how to accommodate these extra individuals, most of whom were unwilling to travel to far LGAs not centred around Minna and Suleja. Furthermore, the registration process for enumerators should have been more detailed to prevent them from attending training and receiving payments, absconding, and not finishing the work.





4.6 Internal Communications

Communication issues further hampered operations. Messages from the Programme team were not always successfully reaching the enumerators, leading to gaps in information dissemination. To address this, plans were made to devolve messaging responsibilities to LGA team leads,

ensuring that enumerators were well-informed and could proceed with their tasks effectively. WhatsApp groups for each LGA were also established so that the TENS II Management Team could disseminate messages via the LGA Managers to the enumerators.

4.7 Access to Schools

A major issue also experienced by enumerators was the difficulty getting access to schools. This problem was largely centred around private schools despite the intervention of the Niger State Private Schools Board. Some of the private school heads and principals did not allow the data collection process in their respective schools which added to the incompleteness of the survey data which has been documented. Some school proprietors had the perception the Education

Census had tax implications. In future, proactive communication using different media platforms on the purpose of the Census prior to the commencement of the Programme will go to some lengths to educate relevant stakeholders.

Whilst a level communication awareness was undertaken, this was insufficient. A dedicated amount in the budget should be allocated to publicity campaigns.

4.8 Provision of Vehicles

Transportation logistics also posed a major challenge. The lack of adequate transportation at the outset delayed the time the team could have utilised to visit schools across the State. The visits to schools and institutions had to be re-arranged and concentrated within a specific time. Whilst a sufficient number of schools were visited, before the end of the school year for the purposes of the programme deliverables, this could have been managed more effectively if vehicles were provided well in advance. The pilot vehicle,

vehicle and bus were extremely adequate, and police officers attached were committed and hardworking, ensuring we reached the various destinations requested.

Notwithstanding, following the visits to the LGAs, arrangements for vehicles for further visits, meetings and movements was a challenge. This issue needs to be addressed for the remaining aspects of the TENS II Programme which should be resolved going forward.



Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd

4.9 National Cost of Living Protest

As of the time of writing this report, three tertiary institutions in the State had not yet been visited, due to the national 'Cost of Living Protest' in Nigeria.

The national Cost-of-Living Protest occurred from the 1st August 2024 to 10th August 2024. This event delayed the collection of data from tertiary institutions for approximately eight working days. The data from these institutions were eventually

collected and incorporated into the supplementary Education Census Analysis Report to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the data collected and analysed and to ensure the overall integrity of the programme deliverables.

Whilst it is acknowledged this incidence was not expected, however, options could have been explored whether the Cost-of-Living Protest would proceed and plans put in place.



4.10 Legal Representation

Additionally, operational challenges extended to internal issues, such as, inadequate notification and updates to the MRL® legal team, cost incurred to secure office and a mismatch of available skills to deliverables. Whilst the need for flexibility on the programme was identified from the outset in terms of team roles and skillsets due to the nature of the programme and the fast-paced environment, the need for a dedicated communication

officer, and a dedicated programme manager would have improved the running of the programme.

These issues highlighted the need for improved resource allocation, clearer communication channels, and more proactive legal and logistical planning in future programmes.



Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd

4.11 Safety

Two safety incidents in the programme involving LGA managers were reported during the geo-mapping exercise. This underscores the need for stronger safety protocols and risk management strategies in field operations. For example, accident registers and the identification of local hospitals in each LGA in case of an incident requiring medical attention are needed. Furthermore, given the large number of person-

nel involved, details of the government-registered practitioner should be held formally on the records.

In summary, the operational challenges faced by the TENS II programme reveal the importance of robust planning, clear communication strategies, and aligning skills and resources with deliverables.



5. Team Dynamics

5.1 Team Working

Team dynamics played a crucial role in both the execution and outcome of the TENS II Programme. The collaboration among various stakeholders including government officials, local community leaders, and programme staff was extremely positive and contributed to the progress of the programme.

A particularly valuable insight from the programme is the realisation that communication should be assigned as a primary responsibility to a team member. Whilst there was a Communications and

Social Media Team Lead, there were insufficient individuals to undertake the communication activities resulting in communication being delayed occasionally or inconsistent messages. When communication was prioritised, it led to improved coordination and smoother operations; however, when it was not, gaps and delays occurred, which in turn created further issues. Having a dedicated team to deal with communication for a programme of such magnitude will benefit the smooth running of an initiative.

5.2 Decision-making

Another critical lesson learned pertains to staffing decisions. To complete the work within the limited timeframe, the programme team opted to hire additional personnel quickly. However, this approach did not necessarily yield the best results. In several instances, less competent staff required additional oversight and intervention, which ultimately slowed down progress and led to additional costs. As a result, those who were capable and understood the assignment often had to take on extra work to compensate for

others who were underperforming. This not only strained resources but also affected team morale.

In summary, the TENS II Programme highlighted the importance of good team dynamics, where communication is managed proactively, and staffing decisions are made with a focus on competency. By addressing these areas, future programmes can avoid similar pitfalls and ensure a more cohesive, efficient, and team integration.



Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd

6. Enumerators and LGA Managers

The role of enumerators and LGA managers was integral to the success of the TENS II Programme, as they were directly responsible for the verification and collection of essential data from various schools and educational establishments across Niger State. The data served as the foundation for the programme's outcomes, making the accuracy and reliability of their work critical to the overall success of the initiative.

However, several challenges arose during the

programme that highlighted the need for improved planning, communication, and management in future endeavours. The delays from the client in terms of payment compressed the schedule, forcing the training of enumerators and LGA managers to be re-scheduled. This urgency was compounded by the impending school summer holidays, which further limited the time for any mishaps or programme slippage.

6.1 Training of Enumerators and Work Verification

The training and logistical hurdles led to several issues in the field. Some enumerators provided incorrect or incomplete information, which could have compromised the accuracy of the data if additional days were not introduced to collect the missing information. Furthermore, other methods were introduced involving the local education secretaries and zonal officers in each LGA to

verify the data collected or provide further assistance in gathering the required data. Going forward, the number of training days could be increased to ensure full understanding, and all enumerators and other relevant personnel. i.e., LGA managers are made to sit and pass an assessment before being deployed to conduct the fieldwork.

6.2 Telephone Surveys

Telephone surveys were used to collect data in areas with security challenges. This methodology should be adopted in future assignments to also verify visits to schools by enumerators or other aspects of an assignment where verification is required in challenging circumstances.



Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd



Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd

7. Contractual Agreements

The TENS II Programme encountered significant delays in the preparation of contractual agreements due to setbacks in receiving the initial deposit payment from the client.

This delay impeded the MRL® director's ability to prepare and finalise contracts with the core team members promptly. As a result, some team members commenced working on the TENS II Programme before their contracts were issued, leaving them with little to no time to thoroughly review and agree on the contractual terms.

This situation highlights the importance of ensuring that financial commitments from clients are secured well in advance of a programme or project's commencement. Adequate time is needed for the preparation of contracts, allowing team members to read, fully understand, and

agree to the terms and conditions before committing to their roles on the programme. Clear and timely contractual agreements are also essential for establishing and managing expectations, as such, preventing misunderstandings during programme execution.

Despite these initial challenges, the TENS II Programme did not report any significant issues related to breach of contract. This could be attributed to the straightforward nature of the contracts, including the adaptability of the team members to the consultancy's working style.

Moving forward, it is recommended that clients improve their financial processes to enable timely contract execution.

8. Data Management

8.1 Data management and the use of SharePoint

The management of data was a critical component of the TENS II Programme, particularly given the complexities involved in gathering, storing, and analysing large volumes of educational data across LGAs. Effective data management is essential for ensuring that the data collected is accurate, accessible, and useful for informing policy decisions and guiding targeted investments in the education sector. However, several challenges arose during the Programme relating to the storing of all programme information.

Introducing a robust data management system from the onset of the Programme and ensuring all team members follow the processes and procedures defined is critical.

The use of SharePoint, a web-based collaboration platform used for storing, organising, sharing, and accessing information securely from any device is beneficial and should be used on assignments moving forward. SharePoint was subsequently introduced into the Programme with every member of the core team having full access to the web.



Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd



8.2 Training and Capacity Building

A significant challenge encountered during TENS II Programme was the loss of data due to system crashes. This incident underscored the urgent need for a more resilient data management infrastructure capable of safeguarding against such losses.

Although the programme aimed to digitise data capture and storage to enhance planning and service delivery, the data losses in some cases highlighted vulnerabilities in the existing system. To address these challenges and mitigate risks, the programme utilised SharePoint, a web-based collaboration platform. SharePoint was used primarily for document management, and collaboration, and as a central repository for reports, pictures, and

other important documents. Its secure, cloud-based environment provided a reliable solution for storing and organising information, ensuring that critical data remained accessible from any device, thus helping to maintain the integrity and availability of the programme data, deliverables and other relevant information. To ensure the effective handling of data, team members underwent comprehensive training focused on managing data efficiently and sharing it on SharePoint. This training was essential for enabling accurate data collection, storage, and analysis, which are critical for developing well-informed policies and driving targeted interventions in the education sector. As aforementioned, the use of SharePoint should be adopted on other initiatives.

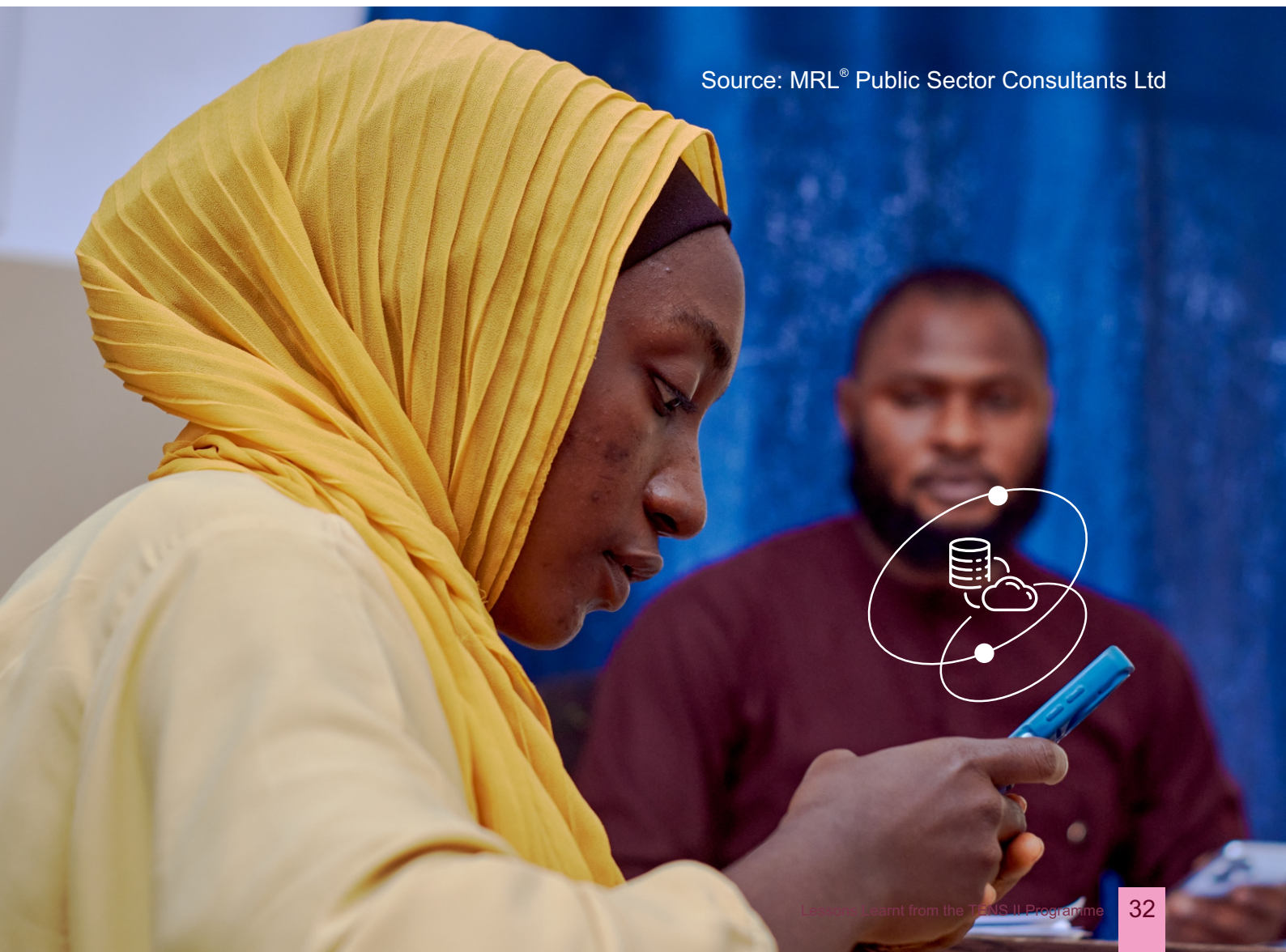
8.3 Data Collection and Image Management

The data collection process was conducted using the KoBo Toolbox app, a suite of tools designed for mobile data collection. While KoBo Toolbox has features, such as, an image download section, it has limited storage space assigned to each account, which proved inadequate for the programme needs. As a result, enumerators were instructed to capture pictures of schools and share them via a WhatsApp group solely created for this purpose. Although this approach was intended to be straightforward, it quickly became challenging. The WhatsApp group became overwhelmed with pictures, making it time consuming for core team members to access and

manage the images effectively. Additionally, the process of manually downloading, renaming, and uploading about two thousand pictures to SharePoint was labour-intensive. Whilst this was a quick fix, given the limited capabilities of the Kobo Toolbox, the approach on similar assignments would be to integrate a media upload space within the KoBo Toolbox app. This will allow enumerators to upload pictures digitally as they were taken, storing them on a central server that core team members can access directly.

This integration will streamline the data management process, reduce the need for manual intervention and minimizing the risk of data loss or mismanagement.

Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd



9. Other Challenges Encountered

9.1 Political Instability and Security Concerns

During the fieldwork, Nigeria faced security challenges, particularly in the northern regions, including Niger State. The security instability created challenges for the programme, as enumerators in some LGAs had to navigate volatile and dangerous environment. In some cases, specific wards in certain LGA's were in accessible due to the importance and safety attached to those working in the field, i.e., enumerators and LGA Managers. The need to prioritise safety based on international standards is a good practise and should continue to be adopted on other programmes and projects.

The security concerns also extended to the safeguarding of educational infrastructures, which were vulnerable to attacks and vandalism

by bandits. Ensuring the security of educational infrastructure is an issue addressed in a separate deliverable, as this is likely to be a constant challenge if not addressed. The security instability not only impacted the fieldwork in some localities, but also poses a long-term threat to the sustainability of educational services in Niger State.

The security challenges underscore the importance of incorporating risk assessment and contingency planning into the programme design. Future programmes must be prepared to adapt to a changing landscape and ensure that the safety of fieldworkers and the integrity of educational infrastructure are prioritised.

Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd





Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd

9.2 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collection phase of the Programme was crucial and requires not only meticulous planning but also careful monitoring. Unfortunately, there was a significant delay in one of the core aspects of the project's data analysis and interpretation. This issue was flagged repeatedly, but the responsibility for coordinating this task fell heavily on a single team member, which contributed to the delays. For future projects, it is essential to

improve the planning and scheduling of tasks. Specifically, appointing a dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation Officer would be highly beneficial. This role would involve overseeing the data collection process in collaboration with LGA managers, ensuring timely data consolidation, and coordinating with the team to avoid a last-minute rush before deadlines.

10. Recommendations for Future Programmes

To ensure the improved delivery and successful completion of future educational programmes in the public sector, a multi-faceted approach is essential. Comprehensive financial management, robust data management, effective stakeholder engagement, and proactive risk management must all be prioritised to address the challenges encountered in the TENS II Programme.

10.1 Financial Management

As highlighted above, one of the most critical aspects of programme and / or project success is the development of comprehensive financial plans that anticipate and account for potential risks, including delays in payments, currency fluctuations, and inflation. Strengthening coordination between the programme team and finance departments is vital to ensure the timely release and accurate disbursement of funds. Transparent communication with all stakeholders regarding financial matters will prevent misunderstandings, build trust, and ensure that everyone is aligned with the financial goals of the programme. Additionally, incorporating financial flexibility into contracts and budgets will allow for adjustments in response to un-expected economic changes, ensuring that the programme can proceed without financial disruptions. By implementing these strategies, future programmes led by us, can achieve greater financial stability, efficiency, and success.

10.2 Data Management

Effective data management is another crucial element for the success of future projects. It is recommended to prioritise the integration of cloud-based solutions with regular backup protocols to safeguard against data loss. Given the complexities involved in gathering, storing, and analysing large volumes of data, enhanced training for enumerators and LGA managers is essential. This training should include clear instructions on the use of data collection tools and processes to prevent errors and delays. Developing a more efficient system for managing images—such as integrating media upload capabilities within the data collection tool—would streamline the process, reduce manual intervention, and minimise the risk of data loss or mismanagement. Ensuring clear communication and ongoing support for field teams will help maintain data accuracy and reduce the need for corrective actions.

10.3 Stakeholder Engagement and Coordination

For future programmes, the structured approach to stakeholder engagement should be more robust, especially when dealing with government bodies and community leaders. Establishing regular communication channels and feedback loops can help align expectations, expedite decision-making, and prevent delays similar to those experienced with contractual agreements and the deployment of enumerators. This coordination will ensure that all stakeholders are informed and involved in the programmes progress, leading to more efficient and effective outcomes.

10.4 Risk Management and Contingency Planning

Given the security challenges encountered, future initiatives must incorporate more robust risk management strategies. Developing detailed contingency plans for various scenarios such as national unrest, natural disasters, or other unforeseen events will ensure that the programme can adapt quickly and effectively to changing circumstances. These plans should prioritise the safety of fieldworkers and the protection of educational establishment, ensuring that the programme's objectives can be met even in challenging environments.



Source: MRL® Public Sector Consultants Ltd

11. Conclusion

The Education Census has been the focus of this stage of the TENS II Programme. Most Local Government Area enumerators successfully executed the data collection processes without encountering significant obstacles resulting in the successful outcome of the TENS II Programme.

For example, comprehensive visual documentation was captured, encompassing dilapidated infrastructure such as, broken furniture, damaged ceilings, and deteriorated facilities within classrooms, toilets, and administrative offices. Additionally, photographic records of school signboards, routes, and identification numbers were meticulously compiled.

Furthermore, a testament to the TENS II Programme's impact is evidenced by the proactive engagement of certain school propri-

etors and head teachers, who voluntarily reached out to provide data and facilitate interviews after realising their omission from the initial school list.

A significant benefit to the State is an up-to-date comprehensive list of all the educational institutions in the State which should be the list that all Ministries, Departments and Agencies utilise and regularly update on an annual basis.

Notwithstanding, to enhance the programme's efficacy, a more proactive approach to several key areas is warranted. Rigorous pre-programme planning, inclusive of comprehensive training modules and clearly defined roles for all enumerators, could have significantly mitigated issues related to data quality and adherence to protocols.



Additionally, given the importance of technology in today's world, and the State's drive to embed technology in the delivery of services, more time should have been spent planning, and on the implementation of the technological solution in relation to the data collection exercise tool to be utilised. This would have addressed the limitations and problems encountered with Kobo Toolbox. Prioritising the infrastructure needs in programme areas, such as, ensuring reliable power supply and excellent network connectivity, would have also created a more conducive environment for data collection.

Promoting stronger relationships with community leaders through targeted engagement strategies

and potentially offering incentives could have significantly improved respondent cooperation.

Moreover, implementing contingency plans, including alternative data collection methods and backup communication channels, would have enhanced the programme's resilience to unforeseen challenges. A better plan can also be devised for effective registration processes with proper backup.

Despite the success of the Education Census, by integrating these recommendations, future educational programmes in Niger State and beyond can overcome the challenges experienced.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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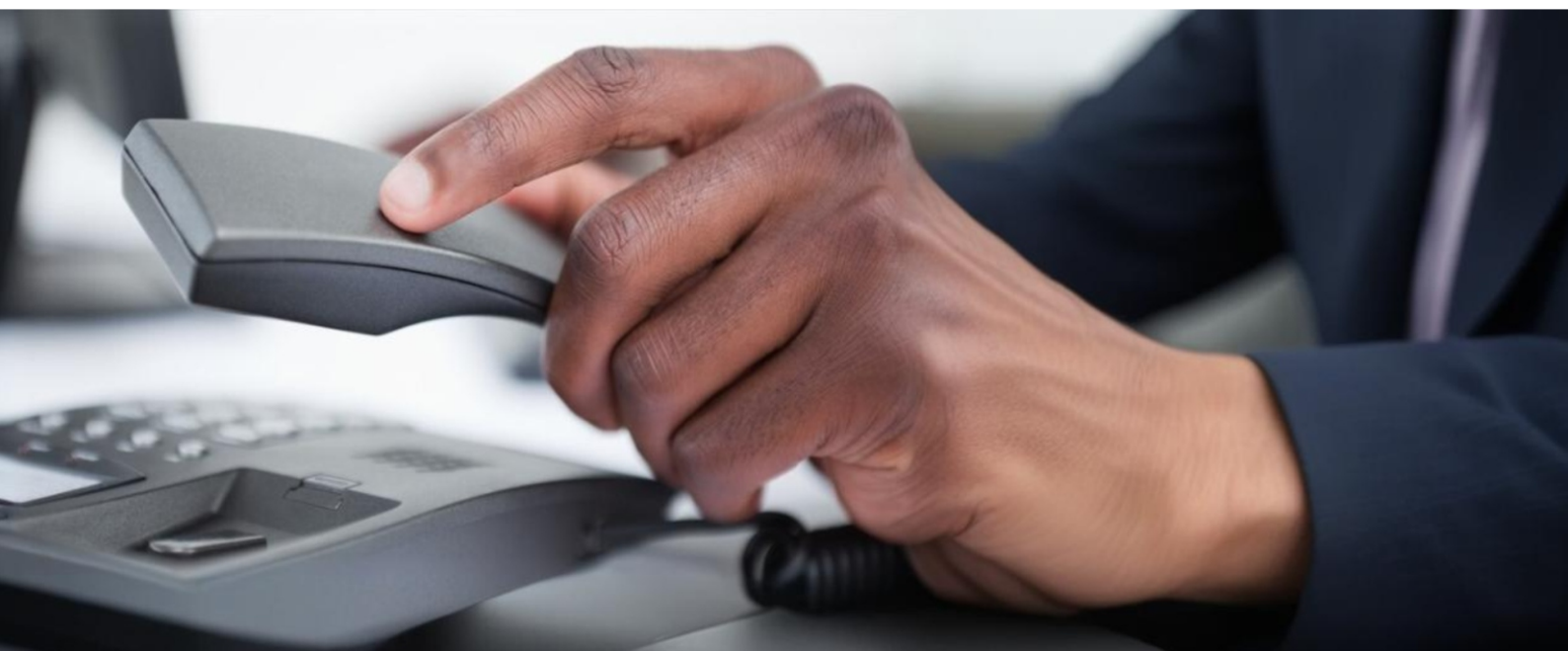
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