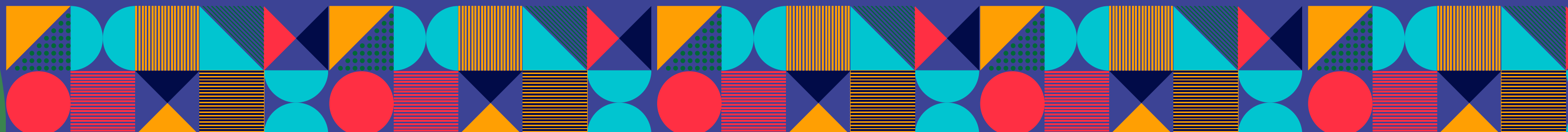




Case Study: Strengthening Girls' School Retention in Kaduna State

August 2025



Background

Her Future Initiative (HFI), a small community-based organisation in Kaduna State, received a one-year grant to improve girls' retention in junior secondary school. Retention had become a pressing issue: many girls dropped out between ages 11 and 14, often at the onset of puberty. Local education statistics showed that only about 40% of girls who completed primary school continued beyond Junior Secondary 2. Common barriers included cultural beliefs that schooling was less important for girls, financial pressure on families, early marriage, and concerns around girls' safety in school environments.

Programme Design

The programme aimed to address these barriers with four main activities:

- Community sensitisation meetings with parents, traditional leaders, and faith leaders
- School-based mentorship clubs for adolescent girls, run by trained female teachers
- Teacher training workshops on gender-sensitive pedagogy and psychosocial support
- Provision of menstrual hygiene kits to encourage regular attendance

The design was ambitious but straightforward: the assumption was that by combining awareness-raising, school support, and practical incentives, girls would remain in school longer and families would see the value of education.

Midline Findings (after 6 months)

Monitoring data revealed some worrying trends:

- More than 80% of planned activities had been delivered.
- Yet attendance records showed little or no change compared to baseline.
- Mentorship sessions were poorly attended—on some days, fewer than 20% of girls showed up.
- Teachers reported that many parents continued to discourage attendance after puberty, citing domestic duties and marriage prospects.
- In one of the two LGAs, repeated episodes of insecurity (including localised violence) forced schools to close for several weeks at a time.

Key Challenges

The case highlights several challenges often faced in education programmes:

- **Measuring success:** The team reported strong progress against its activity plan, but this did not translate into real improvements in outcomes.
- **Assumptions:** The programme assumed parents would change attitudes after a few sensitisation meetings, but this proved overly optimistic.
- **Context shocks:** Insecurity disrupted normal schooling, something the original plan did not anticipate.
- **Engagement:** Girls themselves had limited voice in shaping the interventions; their needs and preferences were not always clear.

Reflection Questions

1. Programme Quality Check

- What does it tell us when 80% of the plan is completed but results are weak?
- What dimensions of programme quality were missing (e.g., relevance, feedback, adaptation)?

2. Adaptive Management Decisions

- Where could the team have paused to adapt?
- What small changes could have been tested quickly?

3. Tools for Community Feedback

- How could the programme have picked up parental resistance earlier?
- What simple feedback tools could help close the loop with parents and girls?

4. Sustainability Lens

- Parents remained unconvinced despite community meetings – what could be tried next?
- What steps could build community ownership and sustained outcomes?

Everyday Adaptive Toolkit

- Rapid Quality & Context Check
- Change & Decision Log
- Trigger Checklist
- Feedback Loop Board
- Most Significant Change stories

