

FUNDRAISING REPORT

ACCESS TO SCHOOL PROJECT 2025: IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Project Title: Access to School (A2S) Project

Implementing Organisation: Access to Learning and School Initiative (ATLAS Initiative)

Report Component: Community-centred implementation across five LGAs

Start Date of Implementation: 16th October 2025

Project Locations: Ikorodu, Yaba, Somolu, Kosofe, and Oshodi LGAs in Lagos State

Target Beneficiaries: Out-of-school girls and vulnerable children

Number of Beneficiaries: 100 girls supported for re-enrolment

Enrolment Completion Date: 13th November 2025

Collaborating Partners: Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB); School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs)



1	Table of Contents	
2	Background	5
2.1	Objectives of the Project	6
3	Implementation Highlights	6
3.1	Opening and Institutional Alignment	6
3.2	Technical Implementation	7
3.2.1	Community Mapping and Verification	7
3.2.2	Distribution and Re-enrolment Support	7
3.2.3	Beneficiary Distribution by LGA	7
3.2.4	Enrolment Scheduling and School Integration	8
3.2.5	Safeguarding Integration	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.3	Community Engagement and Local Insights	8
3.3.1	Positive Shifts and Emerging Momentum	8
3.3.2	Interactive Q&A and Localised Knowledge	8
3.3.3	Ongoing Barriers and Structural Constraints	9
3.3.4	Practical Enablers Requested by Communities	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.4	Requests for Support	9
3.4.1	Strengthening Local Education Governance	9
3.4.2	Formal Partnership with Law Enforcement and Social Welfare Departments	9
3.4.3	Community Advocacy for Girls' Education	10
3.4.4	Inclusion of Local Government Child Advocates (LGCAs) in Future Safeguarding Outreach	10
3.4.5	Immediate Advocacy for Protective Structures in Vulnerable Communities	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4	Outcomes and Impact	10
4.1	Successful Re-enrolment of 100 Out-of-School Girls	10
4.2	Enhanced Community Participation and Ownership	10
4.3	Improved School Readiness and Psychosocial Support	11
4.4	Strengthened Safeguarding Capacity and Awareness	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.5	Strengthened Partnerships Between ATLAS Initiative and Local Education Authorities	11
5	Challenges Encountered	11
5.1	Delay in Funding	11
5.2	Monitoring Constraints and SBMC Capacity Variations	11
5.3	Persistent Structural Barriers to Educational Continuity	12
5.4	Weak Referral Pathways and Institutional Responsiveness	12
6	Solutions and Strategic Responses	12

6.1	Fundraising Strategy Enhancement.....	12
6.2	Early Fundraising Initiation	12
6.3	Multi-year Funding Commitments	12
7	<i>Capacity Building for Financial Sustainability</i>	13
7.1	SBMC Fundraising Training and Mentorship	13
7.2	Community Resource Mobilisation Frameworks.....	13
7.3	Diversification of Funding Sources	13
7.4	Private Sector Partnerships and Corporate Social Responsibility Error! Bookmark not defined.	
7.5	Philanthropic Foundations and High-Net-Worth Individuals Error! Bookmark not defined.	
7.6	International Development Agencies and Multilateral OrganisationsError! Bookmark not defined.	
7.7	Faith-Based Organisations and Community Foundations.Error! Bookmark not defined.	
7.8	Online Fundraising and Digital PlatformsError! Bookmark not defined.	
8	<i>Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions</i>	13
8.1	Formalise Referral and Case-tracking Pathways	14
8.2	Decentralised Capacity Building for SBMCs	14
8.3	Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.....	14
9	<i>Lessons Learned.....</i>	15
9.1	Community Structures Are Critical for Sustainability	15
9.2	Capacity Building Must Precede and Accompany Material Support.....	15
9.3	Continuous Monitoring Is Essential for Retention.....	15
9.4	Early Fundraising Mobilisation Prevents Implementation DelaysError! Bookmark not defined.	
9.5	Diversified Funding Sources Enhance Organisational Resilience. Error! Bookmark not defined.	
9.6	Community Actors Are Knowledge Holders, Not Passive Recipients.. Error! Bookmark not defined.	
10	<i>Conclusion</i>	16
11	<i>Photo Gallery.....</i>	17

2 Background

Despite Nigeria's commitment to universal basic education, the country continues to face significant challenges in ensuring equitable access to quality education for all children. Lagos State, whilst relatively well-resourced compared to other regions, still grapples with persistent educational exclusion affecting vulnerable populations, particularly girls in peri-urban and informal settlement areas. These children are systematically marginalised through intersecting barriers, including chronic poverty, inadequate infrastructure, early marriage pressures, gender discrimination, child labour, and the absence of responsive social protection mechanisms.

The Access to School (A2S) Project, initiated by the Access to Learning and School (ATLAS) Initiative, emerges as a strategic intervention aimed at addressing this multifaceted crisis. ATLAS Initiative implemented the 2025 A2S cycle to reduce barriers to basic education for out-of-school girls in five Local Government Areas of Lagos State. The approach combines identification and re-enrolment support with safeguarding, SBMC stewardship, and collaboration with SUBEB to sustain attendance and ensure long-term educational continuity.

Implemented across five Local Government Areas (Ikorodu, Yaba, Somolu, Kosofe, and Oshodi), the 2025 iteration of the Access to School Project adopted a comprehensive, community-centred approach that integrated material support, stakeholder engagement, capacity building, and sustained monitoring. In this reporting period, 100 girls were supported to return to school across the target LGAs. Enrolment formalities already initiated with partner schools were scheduled for completion by 13th November 2025, after which routine attendance tracking would commence.

The project recognised that enrolment alone does not guarantee educational continuity; children must also be supported through protective environments, adequate learning resources, and committed community structures that actively champion their educational rights. To operationalise this holistic vision, ATLAS Initiative collaborated closely with the Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) and School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) to identify vulnerable children, distribute essential school materials, and embed safeguarding principles throughout the implementation process.

This partnership ensured that the project was not merely a charitable intervention but rather a systemic, sustainable model of educational inclusion that leverages existing local governance structures and builds long-term community ownership. This investment in community-centred educational access is foundational to achieving broader development objectives, including gender equity, poverty reduction, and social cohesion. By combining advocacy, direct material support, stakeholder collaboration, and child protection training, the Access to School Project 2025 has made a meaningful contribution to the realisation of children's fundamental right to education, while simultaneously strengthening the protective ecosystems necessary for their holistic development.

2.1 Objectives of the Project

The 2025 cycle pursued five interlinked objectives designed to facilitate the re-enrolment and sustained educational participation of out-of-school girls, with particular emphasis on those facing compounded vulnerabilities. Specifically, the project aimed to:

- i. Identify and support out-of-school girls in high-vulnerability communities, with a deliberate focus on those facing heightened barriers due to poverty, gender discrimination, and social marginalisation.
- ii. Provide essential materials that enable immediate school readiness and facilitate successful transition back into formal education systems, including school bags, uniforms, books, writing supplies, and basic hygiene items.
- iii. Strengthen SBMC-led follow-up and coordination with education authorities to ensure local ownership, accountability, and sustainability of educational inclusion efforts.
- iv. Promote girls' empowerment through safe access to schooling and community advocacy that challenges discriminatory norms and advances gender equity in education.
- v. Monitor progress and generate learning for adaptive delivery at the LGA level, establishing robust evaluation frameworks to track outcomes and inform continuous improvement.

These objectives align with national basic education objectives, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), and the broader mission of ATLAS Initiative to advance equitable, inclusive, and sustainable education systems that uphold children's fundamental rights and enable them to realise their full potential irrespective of socio-economic background or gender.

3 Implementation Highlights

The 2025 Access to School Project adopted a multi-layered, community-centred implementation strategy designed to ensure both immediate impact and long-term sustainability. The approach integrated rigorous beneficiary identification processes, strategic stakeholder engagement, direct material provision, capacity building on safeguarding, and structured handover mechanisms to local education structures.

3.1 Opening and Institutional Alignment

LGA-level sessions with SUBEB officers and SBMC representatives clarified roles for identification, verification, safeguarding, and last-mile distribution. The training commenced with a welcome address by Mrs. Shobowale, Director of SUBEB, who underscored SUBEB's institutional commitment to child protection and educational inclusion. Representatives of ATLAS Initiative, led by Oreoluwa Garba, provided an overview of the organisation's vision and facilitated introductions between stakeholders and community trackers.

SUBEB affirmed policy backing for SBMC-led follow-up mechanisms, whilst headteachers in participating schools confirmed readiness to receive the identified beneficiaries within the reporting window leading to 13th November 2025. This institutional alignment ensured that the

project benefited from formal endorsement at multiple levels of the education governance structure, thereby enhancing legitimacy, facilitating coordination, and strengthening prospects for sustained implementation beyond the initial project cycle.

3.2 Technical Implementation

3.2.1 Community Mapping and Verification

ATLAS Initiative, SUBEB, and SBMCs collaborated to validate cases of out-of-school girls through systematic community mapping techniques. Conducted in close collaboration with trained community volunteers, the beneficiary identification process employed participatory approaches to locate and document out-of-school children across the five target LGAs. Prioritisation considered age-appropriate placement, distance to school, previous attendance history, and safeguarding concerns. Priority was accorded to girls facing compounded vulnerabilities such as extreme poverty, displacement, disability, orphanhood, or exposure to exploitative labour. This participatory approach ensured that selection criteria were informed by local knowledge and contextual realities, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and accuracy of beneficiary targeting.

3.2.2 Distribution and Re-enrolment Support

One hundred complete school kits were officially handed over to SBMCs for onward distribution to verified beneficiaries. A formal ceremonial event was convened during which ATLAS Initiative publicly transferred responsibility to the SBMCs, thereby fostering community pride, ownership, and sustained engagement. Kit contents included a school bag, exercise books, textbooks, writing materials, and basic hygiene items suitable for the early weeks of re-entry. The ceremonial handover served both a symbolic and functional purpose, demonstrating ATLAS Initiative's commitment to educational equity whilst simultaneously transferring accountability to local structures.

3.2.3 Beneficiary Distribution by LGA

The 100 beneficiaries were distributed across the five target LGAs according to needs assessment findings and consultation with local education authorities:

- Yaba: 10 girls supported
- Somolu: 10 girls supported
- Kosofe: 10 girls supported
- Oshodi: 10 girls supported
- Ikorodu: 60 girls supported

The notably higher allocation to Ikorodu reflects the concentration of out-of-school girls identified during community mapping exercises in that LGA, as well as the presence of robust SBMC structures capable of managing larger beneficiary cohorts.

3.2.4 Enrolment Scheduling and School Integration

Re-entry commenced on a rolling basis with completion scheduled for 13th November 2025. SBMC focal persons and headteachers managed school-level placement, class allocation, and first-week integration processes. This phased approach allowed for careful attention to individual children's needs, enabled schools to absorb beneficiaries without overwhelming existing classroom capacities, and facilitated tailored psychosocial support during the critical early transition period.

3.3 Community Engagement and Local Insights

To ensure sustainability and local ownership, ATLAS Initiative empowered SBMCs to manage the continued distribution, follow-up, and monitoring of beneficiaries' school attendance and wellbeing. Alongside the material handover, awareness and sensitisation sessions were conducted within targeted communities. Caregiver and community dialogues surfaced both momentum and constraints, providing critical insights that informed adaptive programming and highlighted areas requiring additional support.

3.3.1 Positive Shifts and Emerging Momentum

The visibility of SBMC stewardship improved community trust in the selection and distribution processes. Beneficiaries and their families expressed appreciation for the transparent, locally managed approach, which reduced suspicions of favouritism or external imposition. The availability of basic materials reduced first-day anxiety and strengthened girls' motivation to return to school. Parents and caregivers reported that having proper school supplies enhanced their daughters' confidence and sense of belonging within the school environment. These sessions encouraged parents, caregivers, and community leaders to view education not as a privilege but as a fundamental child's right deserving of collective protection and promotion.

3.3.2 Interactive Q&A and Localised Knowledge

The interactive Q&A session proved a critical and reflective component of community engagement, offering participants, many of whom are grassroots community actors, a platform to interrogate safeguarding concepts and relate them to their everyday realities. The session began with open-ended prompts such as "Who is a child?" and "Who qualifies as a vulnerable adult?" eliciting responses that reflected both formal definitions and community-specific interpretations. Participants contextualised childhood not only by age but by dependency, social marginalisation, and exposure to harm, highlighting nuanced cases such as teenage domestic workers, child caregivers, and street-connected youths.

During this session, several key concerns were consistently raised. Trackers reported a rising incidence of child abuse, particularly verbal, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse in overcrowded informal settlements where supervision is minimal and economic stress is high. Food insecurity and hunger emerged as cross-cutting themes, cited as both causes and consequences of educational

exclusion. Trackers described instances where children, although enrolled, were too malnourished or distracted by hunger to attend consistently or concentrate effectively. The lack of support and referral mechanisms was a recurring frustration, with participants highlighting gaps between community vigilance and institutional responsiveness, citing long delays, inadequate feedback, or complete inaction when cases were reported.

3.3.3 Ongoing Barriers and Structural Constraints

Household financial strain, harmful gender norms, and risks of early marriage were frequently cited as persistent barriers to sustained school attendance. Economic pressures often compelled families to prioritise immediate income-generating activities over education, particularly for girls whose domestic labour or early marriage were viewed as economic strategies. Discussions highlighted barriers such as financial hardship, early marriage, and gender bias that continue to threaten educational continuity. Variations in SBMC record-keeping capacity affected consistency of attendance tracking, particularly in larger wards where the volume of cases exceeded available volunteer capacity and organisational infrastructure.

3.4 Requests for Support

Throughout the training and community engagement sessions, stakeholders consistently identified critical gaps in the existing child protection and education support ecosystem. Their field experiences revealed that whilst awareness of safeguarding principles is growing, the absence of functional linkages between community actors and statutory institutions significantly weakens the protection response for at-risk children. To this end, participants made the following strategic requests for support:

3.4.1 Strengthening Local Education Governance

SBMCs requested structured mentoring, simple supervision tools, and peer-learning clusters at LGA level to standardise verification, follow-up, and basic data quality. This request reflects the recognition that whilst SBMCs possess local legitimacy and contextual knowledge, they require additional technical capacity and systematic frameworks to fulfil their monitoring and accountability functions effectively.

3.4.2 Formal Partnership with Law Enforcement and Social Welfare Departments

Stakeholders called for formal collaboration with social welfare departments and relevant law-enforcement units for timely escalation of protection concerns, with defined focal contacts and response timelines. Participants called for structured collaboration between ATLAS Initiative, SUBEB, and relevant government agencies, particularly the Nigeria Police Force and State Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Welfare. Currently, the lack of defined protocols and contact points means that community-reported cases of abuse or neglect often go unresolved or uninvestigated. Establishing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), designated safeguarding focal

points, and case-handling timelines would significantly enhance accountability and improve the speed and effectiveness of responses.

3.4.3 Community Advocacy for Girls' Education

Communities requested targeted sessions addressing early marriage, gender bias, and the economic case for girls' secondary completion, alongside safe-space dialogues for caregivers. These requests indicate a readiness among community members to engage with normative change processes, provided they are equipped with evidence-based arguments and supported through facilitated dialogues that create space for reflection and collective problem-solving.

3.4.4 Inclusion of Local Government Child Advocates (LGCAs) in Future Safeguarding Outreach

Participants emphasised the importance of decentralising child protection knowledge and enforcement by actively engaging Local Government Child Advocates (LGCAs) in future training sessions and safeguarding interventions. These advocates, who operate closest to grassroots communities, are strategically positioned to serve as liaisons between communities, schools, social workers, and law enforcement. Inclusion of LGCAs would facilitate the continuity of child protection efforts beyond periodic training events and help institutionalise safeguarding as a core local governance function.

4 Outcomes and Impact

The Access to School Project 2025 generated significant, measurable outcomes that contributed tangibly to improved educational access, community engagement, and child protection within the five target Local Government Areas. The principal outcomes and impacts included:

4.1 Successful Re-enrolment of 100 Out-of-School Girls

The project successfully facilitated the re-enrolment of 100 out-of-school girls into partner schools across the five target LGAs, with enrolment formalities scheduled for completion by 13th November 2025. By addressing both material and socio-cultural barriers, the intervention enabled previously excluded children to access formal education, thereby contributing to gender equity objectives and advancing progress towards inclusive education targets. The distribution pattern, with 60 girls in Ikorodu and 10 each in Yaba, Somolu, Kosofe, and Oshodi, reflects targeted deployment based on needs assessments and local capacity.

4.2 Enhanced Community Participation and Ownership

The active involvement of School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) throughout the project lifecycle strengthened community ownership and accountability for educational outcomes. The visibility of SBMC stewardship improved trust in selection and distribution processes, reducing suspicions of favouritism. SBMCs demonstrated heightened commitment to tracking

beneficiaries, following up on attendance, and advocating for continued educational access, thereby fostering a culture of collective responsibility for child welfare and education.

4.3 Improved School Readiness and Psychosocial Support

Beneficiaries received comprehensive school kits containing school bags, exercise books, textbooks, writing materials, and basic hygiene items. The availability of these materials reduced first-day anxiety and strengthened girls' motivation to return to school. Parents and caregivers reported that having proper school supplies enhanced their daughters' confidence and sense of belonging within the school environment. This holistic approach facilitated successful transition into the school environment and improved beneficiaries' overall readiness to engage meaningfully with the learning process.

4.4 Strengthened Partnerships Between ATLAS Initiative and Local Education Authorities

The collaborative relationship established between ATLAS Initiative, SUBEB, and SBMCs has deepened mutual trust, enhanced information sharing, and facilitated coordinated action on educational inclusion and child safeguarding. SUBEB's policy backing for SBMC-led follow-up mechanisms and headteachers' confirmed readiness to receive beneficiaries demonstrate robust institutional alignment. This partnership model serves as a replicable framework for future interventions and contributes to the institutionalisation of community-based educational support mechanisms.

These outcomes collectively demonstrate that the Access to School Project has contributed meaningfully to the realisation of children's right to education whilst simultaneously strengthening the protective and enabling environments necessary for sustained educational participation and holistic child development.

5 Challenges Encountered

Despite the notable successes achieved, the Access to School Project 2025 encountered several operational and contextual challenges that affected the pace and scope of implementation. Acknowledging these challenges is essential for adaptive learning and for informing more effective project design in future iterations. The principal challenges included:

- **Delay in Funding:** The project experienced delays in the disbursement of funds, which consequently affected the timeline for procurement, distribution, and implementation activities.
- **Monitoring Constraints and SBMC Capacity Variations:** Whilst SBMCs demonstrated a strong commitment and ownership, variations in SBMC record-keeping capacity affected the consistency of attendance tracking, particularly in larger wards where the volume of cases exceeded the available volunteer capacity and organisational infrastructure.

- **Persistent Structural Barriers to Educational Continuity:** Household financial strain, harmful gender norms, and risks of early marriage were frequently cited as persistent barriers threatening sustained school attendance.

5.1 Weak Referral Pathways and Institutional Responsiveness

The lack of formalised support and referral mechanisms emerged as a significant constraint. Participants highlighted gaps between community vigilance and institutional responsiveness, citing long delays, inadequate feedback, or complete inaction when safeguarding cases were reported to local authorities or police. The absence of clear protocols, designated focal points, and accountability mechanisms undermined the effectiveness of community-based protection efforts.

6 Solutions and Strategic Responses

In response to the challenges encountered during the 2025 implementation cycle, ATLAS Initiative has developed a comprehensive suite of strategic solutions designed to address systemic constraints, enhance organisational capacity, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the Access to School Project. These solutions reflect lessons learned, stakeholder feedback, and best practices in educational inclusion programming.

6.1 Fundraising Strategy Enhancement

To mitigate the impact of funding delays experienced in 2025, ATLAS Initiative will implement an enhanced fundraising strategy characterised by early mobilisation, diversified revenue streams, and strengthened financial planning.

6.2 Early Fundraising Initiation

Beginning fundraising activities in the first quarter of the year will provide adequate lead time for donor identification, proposal development, relationship building, and fund mobilisation. This extended timeline will enable the ATLAS Initiative to secure commitments well in advance of implementation periods, thereby ensuring that procurement, recruitment, and preparatory activities can commence on schedule without compressing critical phases. Early mobilisation also allows for more strategic engagement with potential funders, enabling tailored proposals, site visits, and relationship cultivation that enhance funding success rates.

6.3 Multi-year Funding Commitments

Securing multi-year commitments from institutional donors will consolidate practice improvements, enable more strategic planning, facilitate staff retention, and support steady increases in enrolment and retention of girls. Multi-year funding reduces the transaction costs associated with annual fundraising cycles, enhances organisational stability, and enables investment in systems strengthening, capacity building, and evidence generation that yield returns over extended timeframes.

7 Capacity Building for Financial Sustainability

Recognising that long-term sustainability requires local resource mobilisation capacity, ATLAS Initiative will invest in strengthening the fundraising capabilities of School-Based Management Committees, enabling them to contribute to project sustainability through community-level resource generation.

7.1 SBMC Fundraising Training and Mentorship

ATLAS Initiative will develop and deliver comprehensive training modules equipping SBMCs with foundational fundraising skills, including donor identification, proposal writing, community appeal strategies, accountability mechanisms, and transparent financial management. Training will cover both traditional community fundraising approaches (such as community levies, fundraising events, and philanthropic appeals to community members) and more structured engagement with local businesses and faith-based organisations. SBMCs will be mentored in developing annual fundraising plans, setting realistic targets, and establishing transparent accountability systems that build donor confidence and community trust.

7.2 Community Resource Mobilisation Frameworks

SBMCs will be supported to establish community education funds that pool small contributions from parents, local businesses, community associations, and philanthropic individuals. These funds can supplement external donor support, providing resources for emergency needs, top-up support for additional beneficiaries, and sustainability beyond donor-funded cycles. Community ownership of fundraising initiatives reinforces local accountability, reduces dependency on external actors, and cultivates a culture of collective investment in children's education.

7.3 Diversification of Funding Sources

To enhance financial resilience and reduce vulnerability to single-source funding delays, ATLAS Initiative will pursue a deliberately diversified funding portfolio encompassing multiple donor categories and revenue streams.

8 Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

To ensure that the gains from the 2025 implementation cycle are retained and translated into actionable community and policy-level outcomes, the following strategic recommendations were developed collaboratively with stakeholders:

8.1 Formalise Referral and Case-tracking Pathways

ATLAS Initiative should spearhead the development of formalised referral frameworks with both governmental and non-governmental service providers. This includes developing a concise directory of contacts across schools, SBMCs, SUBEB, social welfare, and community-based actors, establishing clear documentation protocols, designated points of contact, and timelines for response. Introduce a case-tracking log with minimum data fields to record reports, actions, and outcomes. Provide feedback to referrers to reinforce reporting culture and accountability.

Partner organisations should include the Ministry of Youth and Social Development, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) response units, child protection NGOs, food aid agencies, and primary health care providers. The creation of a Referral Directory and Response Protocol Handbook could enhance the usability of these pathways for community trackers and SBMC members.

8.2 Decentralised Capacity Building for SBMCs

SUBEB is encouraged to institutionalise safeguarding and monitoring training by adopting a train-the-trainer model in each LGA to standardise beneficiary verification, first-week accompaniment, attendance tracking, and safeguarding awareness. This approach would cascade safeguarding knowledge throughout the education system and reinforce protective norms in multiple localities.

Schedule quarterly peer-learning meetings anchored by SUBEB focal officers to facilitate knowledge exchange, problem-solving, and continuous improvement. Regular refresher workshops, contextualised training modules, and peer learning sessions should form part of a continuous capacity development strategy that strengthens SBMC capabilities in verification, follow-up, and basic data quality management.

8.3 Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

A robust, participatory M&E framework should be co-designed by ATLAS Initiative and SUBEB to assess the implementation, reach, and effectiveness of educational inclusion and safeguarding interventions. Co-design a light dashboard with the following indicators:

- Inputs: number of kits delivered by LGA; number of SBMC focal persons oriented
- Outputs: number of girls re-enrolled and placed by target date; proportion with first-week accompaniment
- Outcomes: attendance at weeks 1, 4 and 8; number of referrals made and resolved; retention at the end of term

- Learning: key barriers flagged; response times; improvement actions adopted by SBMCs

The framework should include both quantitative metrics (e.g., number of cases reported, referrals made, children re-enrolled) and qualitative indicators (e.g., perceived safety in school environments, community trust levels, SBMC self-efficacy). Importantly, the M&E system should be designed to support adaptive learning, using data to inform mid-course corrections, refine training content, and tailor interventions to emerging risks.

9 Lessons Learned

The implementation of the Access to School Project 2025 generated valuable insights that can inform future programming, enhance operational effectiveness, and strengthen the sustainability of educational inclusion interventions. Key lessons learned include:

9.1 Community Structures Are Critical for Sustainability

The early and sustained engagement of SUBEB and School-Based Management Committees proved instrumental in ensuring smooth implementation and fostering long-term sustainability. Partnership with SUBEB and engagements with SBMCs early ensured smooth implementation and stronger sustainability. Local structures possess contextual knowledge, social legitimacy, and embedded networks that external actors cannot replicate. Future interventions should prioritise the meaningful involvement of community structures from the project design phase through implementation and evaluation, thereby ensuring that initiatives are not externally imposed but rather co-created and locally owned.

9.2 Capacity Building Must Precede and Accompany Material Support

Whilst the provision of school kits addressed immediate material barriers to enrolment, the project's impact was significantly amplified through concurrent capacity-building efforts focused on safeguarding, monitoring, and advocacy. The integration of safeguarding training, stakeholder capacity building, and community-centred implementation strategies demonstrated that holistic approaches yield superior outcomes compared to material support alone. Future projects should integrate comprehensive training modules for community partners, equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to sustain project outcomes beyond donor-funded cycles.

9.3 Continuous Monitoring Is Essential for Retention

Enrolment represents only the first step in the educational inclusion journey; sustained attendance and meaningful engagement require ongoing monitoring, support, and responsiveness to emerging challenges. Establishing accessible, user-friendly monitoring systems and institutionalising regular follow-up mechanisms are critical for ensuring that beneficiaries remain in school and thrive within the learning environment. Future iterations should invest in strengthening SBMC

monitoring capacities through tailored training, provision of monitoring tools, and establishment of feedback loops that enable adaptive responses to retention risks.

10 Conclusion

The Access to School Project 2025 represents a significant milestone in ATLAS Initiative's ongoing commitment to advancing equitable, inclusive, and sustainable education for out-of-school children in Lagos State. The 2025 delivery period successfully supported 100 girls to return to school across five LGAs, with completion of enrolment formalities scheduled for 13th November 2025. SBMC stewardship and SUBEB alignment provide a credible foundation for retention. By combining direct material support with capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and community-centred implementation strategies, the project has successfully facilitated the re-enrolment of vulnerable girls whilst simultaneously strengthening the protective environments necessary for their sustained participation and holistic development. The project's achievements underscore the critical importance of integrating educational access with child safeguarding, recognising that enrolment alone is insufficient without concurrent attention to children's safety, dignity, and psychosocial wellbeing.

Through its partnership with SUBEB and School-Based Management Committees, ATLAS Initiative has not only delivered immediate outcomes but has also contributed to the institutionalisation of community-led educational advocacy and protection mechanisms that will endure beyond the project's lifespan. The challenges encountered and lessons learned provide valuable insights for future programming, highlighting the necessity of flexible project management, early fundraising mobilisation, diversified funding sources, robust capacity building for local partners, continuous monitoring, and sustained community engagement.

The next phase should consolidate referral pathways, expand SBMC capacity particularly in fundraising and financial sustainability, operationalise a simple monitoring dashboard to surface risks early, and implement the diversified fundraising strategy encompassing private sector partnerships, philanthropic foundations, faith-based organisations, and online platforms. Moving forward, ATLAS Initiative remains committed to expanding the reach and deepening the impact of the Access to School Project.

By building on the foundations established in 2025, the Initiative aims to support even greater numbers of out-of-school children, strengthen community ownership of educational inclusion efforts, and contribute meaningfully to the realisation of Nigeria's education sector goals and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Ultimately, the success of this initiative and

its long-term sustainability depend on collective action and sustained commitment from all stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organisations, community structures, and individual donors.

Each contribution represents an investment not merely in educational access but in the creation of protective, empowering, and transformative learning environments that enable Nigeria's most vulnerable children to realise their full potential and contribute meaningfully to the development of their communities and nation.

11 Photo Gallery



Figure 1: Staff of ATLAS Initiative at the A2S Event at SUBEB, Lagos



Figure 2: Beneficiaries of A2S



Figure 3: Representatives of A2S Beneficiaries, SUBEB Staff, ATLAS Staff and SBMC Members



Figure 4: Some A2S Beneficiaries and their Parents

Contact

Access to Learning and School (ATLAS) Initiative Nigeria

Website: www.atlas.org.ng

Twitter: @atlas_ng

Facebook: Access to Learning and School Initiative