

A MULTI-SECTIONAL APPROACH TO REDUCE THE MANY OUT-OF- SCHOOL CHILDREN IN LAGOS, NIGERIA

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Disclaimer

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Definition of Terms

1. CCT- Conditional Cash Transfer
2. FIJ- Foundation for Investigative Journalism
3. GDP- Gross Domestic Product
4. LASG- Lagos State Government
5. NBS- National Bureau of Statistics
6. NHGSFP- The National Home-Grown School Feeding Program
7. NPE- National Policy on Education
8. OOSC- Out-of-School Children
9. SFP- School Feeding Program
10. RCT- Randomized Controlled Trial
11. UCT- Unconditional Cash Transfer
12. UN- United Nations
13. UNICEF- United Nations Children's Fund
14. UNESCO- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Executive Summary

There are too many out-of-school children in Lagos state, Nigeria. About two million children who should either be enrolled in primary school or junior secondary schools are not in school (The Guardian, 2022). The primary causes of the challenge are poverty and homelessness. Secondary causes include migration arising from insecurity in other parts of Nigeria, cultural norms that promote early child marriage and childhood entrepreneurship as well as lack of educational infrastructure.

The state operates a compulsory free basic education system in public schools where pupils do not pay tuition but must get their school supplies such as school uniforms and textbooks; some children cannot afford the cost of these supplies and engage in menial jobs to raise the funds (FIJ, 2022). The state also operates a nationwide school feeding program aimed at increasing school enrollment in public primary schools; only pupils in primary 1-3 are fed under this program.

I propose the following three alternatives to reduce the number of OOSC in Lagos State:

- A modification of the School Feeding Program to expand implementation to pupils in primary 4-6 and an increase in the number of meals from one to two.
- A conditional cash transfer given to families to encourage school enrollment and attendance.
- Provision of shelter homes to accommodate and educate homeless children.

I evaluate the alternatives using four criteria- cost, effectiveness, cost effectiveness and political feasibility. I provided a cost estimate for each alternative, evaluated its effectiveness based on existing literature, and where there is a gap in literature, I used qualitative descriptions. I measured the cost effectiveness of each alternative and described the political feasibility of each alternative based on public commentaries and an interview. I rank the criteria as low, medium, or high.

As a general recommendation, I highlight the importance of collecting and analyzing data on OOSC to analyze the causes of the challenge and propose suitable options. With the limited availability of data, I recommend a modification of the existing SFP.

The choice of the SFP is based on its effectiveness in increasing enrollment in other states like Lagos state. It has also been implemented in other countries and has been proven to be effective in increasing enrollment. It is slightly more costly than CCT but has a far more reaching effect and moderately politically feasible. It also has other positive effects such as increasing attendance, improving punctuality and other educational outcomes.

I envisage implementation challenges such as quality control challenges with the meals since they are prepared by different vendors, lack of educational infrastructure to support a mass enrollment and administrative challenges with distributing breakfast. These logistical issues can be sufficiently analyzed before roll-out of the program.

Introduction

The Nigerian constitution guarantees the right to education. Section 18 of the constitution as amended, provides that the Government shall direct its policy to ensure there are equal educational opportunities for all, and where practicable, provide free compulsory universal basic education and free secondary education.

Goal four of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (“SDGs”) encourages governments and institutions to ensure there is access to equitable quality education and to create learning opportunities for all (UN, n.d). Based on the projections of the UN SDG, all boys and girls should have complete free quality primary and secondary education by 2030 (UN, n.d.). Seven years to this timeline, UNESCO has estimated that over twenty million children are out -of-school in Nigeria (Premium Times, 2022) with Lagos state accounting for about ten percent of that figure (The Guardian, 2022).

Education is a tool to train citizens in return for contributions to the development of a nation; without a functional educational system, a nation may suffer a deficiency of skilled manpower (Kingdom E.O & Maekae J., 2013.p. 315). Education also provides an opportunity for social interactions, exchange and appreciation of cultural ideas and differences while creating an avenue to instill values that make for good citizenship (Kingdom E.O & Maekae J., 2013.p. 315-316).

A high OOSC rate points to the reality that many children are denied the opportunity of learning and engaging in social interactions necessary for their growth and development. Beyond the personal benefits of education, a state’s development is tied to availability of skilled manpower and existence of working population that can contribute to its economic growth. This is important for Lagos state, a state with an estimated 10 million youth population aged between 15-35 years: the highest in the country (The Guardian, 2022), and an annual growth rate of about 3%.¹

Lagos is also the top destination for citing technology hubs in Africa (BusinessDay, 2023). With this advantage, the state should be positioned to train children to receive skills that will be useful for manpower development and meet the demands of increasing investments in the state. Children who are not educated will not have a source of livelihood in adulthood and may end up getting involved in criminal activities and becoming a security threat to the state. This underscores the importance of solving the OOSC challenge in the state.

Additionally, Lagos state leads the other states in the country on different parameters of measurement including contributing about 15% to the country’s GDP². If Lagos gets it right in reducing its number of OOSC, it will be providing a workable template for other states to adopt given that the high number of OOSC is a national problem.

¹ Macrotrends prediction accessed from <https://www.macrotrends.net/cities/22007/lagos/population#:~:text=The%20current%20metro%20area%20population,a%203.44%25%20increase%20from%202020.>

² Data used in calculation obtained from <https://lagosmepb.org/wp-content/uploads/MACRO-INDICATOR-FLYER-JUNE-2022.pdf>

Problem Statement

Too many children are out of school in Lagos State, Nigeria. Lagos State, one of the 36 states in Nigeria, is estimated to have a population of about 24 million people (World Population Review, 2023) and is home to about two million out of school children (The Guardian, 2022). Leaving these children out of school can widen the already existing socio-economic gap in the state and increase security threats to lives and property.

Definition of the Problem

UNESCO defines OOSC rate “as the proportion of children and young people in the official age range for the given level of education, who are not enrolled in pre-primary, primary or secondary/higher levels of education” (UNESCO, 2022).

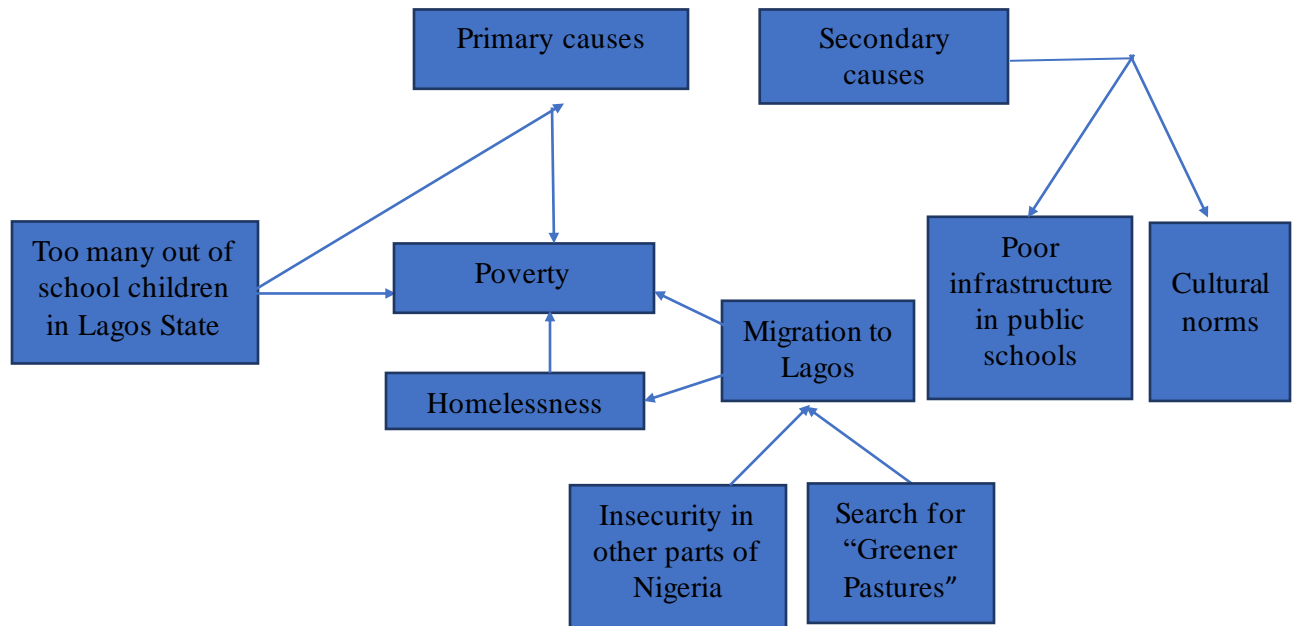
The National Policy on Education defines basic education as education given to children between the ages of 0-15 years, divided into early childcare and education from ages 0-4 and ten years of formal education (NPE, 2014, p.5).

A government representative provided the two million estimates, but there is no data to show the demography and categorization of the children, stating whether they never enrolled or dropped out, amongst other factors.

Another report indicates the state has the third highest number of out-of-school children in the south-western part of Nigeria (Vanguard, 2022). The Nigerian Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster and Social Development in an interview mentioned how a survey showed that Makoko, a slum settlement in one of the 20 local government areas in Lagos state had 7,000 OOSC (Punch, 2022).

UNICEF estimates about ten million children aged between 5-14 years old are not in school in Nigeria (UNICEF, n.d.). There are also reports credited to UNESCO that indicate a much higher figure of 20 million, capturing all categories of out-of-school children although this has been disputed by the Nigerian Government (Premium Times, 2022). Using UNESCO’s data, Lagos state accounts for about ten percent of the country’s OOSC population.

Background of the Problem



The increasing rate of OOSC generally can be linked to homelessness and poverty; children who do not go to school are typically from poor homes and live in rural areas (Nwoko, C., 2015, p.4). According to 2010 data from NBS, Lagos state had a 40% poverty rate (NBS, n.d., p.5) while 2018 data from the World Bank showed that about 40% of Nigerians lived below the poverty line (World Bank, n.d.).

It is important to note a strong link between homelessness and the rate of OOSC, although many states in Nigeria, including Lagos State, lack sufficient data on number of homeless children or population of slum settlers; this poses a challenge in linking homelessness to lack of school enrollment (Prime Progress, 2022).

Based on the client's work in Lagos, homelessness appears to be a strong factor in the high number of OOSC because children from homeless families grapple with instability; they get evicted from makeshift homes typically in the same vicinity as their schools. When they get to a new location some never get to back to school knowing they might be evicted again or are engaged in menial jobs for survival.

Additionally, poverty plays a role in keeping children out of school (Nwoko, C., 2015, p.8). Primary school education is free in government-owned schools in Lagos state, but some households cannot afford the cost of textbooks, uniforms, or other school necessities, which keep them out of school.

The client alluded to children engaging in menial jobs (hawking, cleaning windows in traffic) to supplement their parents' earnings; such activities are done during school hours. Twin brothers who were rescued by the client mentioned how they intended on enrolling in school, did not have the funds for school necessities and saved NGN 1000 from washing the windshield of cars in traffic (FIJ, 2022).

A member of an outreach team that visited a slum last year mentioned to me how the living conditions of the families living in slums were so poor, such that children from these environments were unlikely to enroll in schools and attend regularly.

In some cases, lack of supply of educational infrastructure can hinder access to education or keep children out of schools. (Nwoko, C., 2015, p.7). In Lagos, the teacher-student ratio is 1:57 (LASG, 2019, iii). There is little research on how this can affect student outcomes, but there is potential correlation between a lop-sided teacher ratio or lack of basic infrastructure and willingness of children to go to school.

Cultural barriers affect the out-of-school rates in Lagos, Nigeria. Child labor and early marriage of young girls keep them out of school (Nwoko, C., 2015, p.8). Young girls are sometimes married off, at a young age, thereby affecting school enrollment or attendance rate. Closely linked to this factor is poverty. Some parents believe early marriage of young daughters relieves the financial burden of caring for them.

Children who did not attend conventional schools at the appropriate school age are also kept out of school. They are not eligible to attend early education programs or receive foundational education to fit into their appropriate age category; in the unlikely event they get admitted, they are unable to complete this part of their education before they become adults. This acts as a disincentive for school enrollment (Destiny Trust, 2022).

Conflicts and insecurity in the Northern part of Nigeria account for displacement of over 1.7 million people across Nigeria, 56% of whom are projected to be children (Ndanusa, et al., 2021, p. 70). In 2021, over 600 schools in five northern states were shut due to heightened insecurity and threats of abduction (Guardian, 2022). Families that have lost their homes and sources of income move to Lagos with hope of recovery, but do not see this materialize. One of the children adopted into the client's facility was displaced from her home in Chibok, Borno State due to insecurity, and moved to Lagos, where she and her family members were homeless before the client's intervention.

Significance of the Problem

There is little research on the effect of the problem on society, such as crime rates, standard of living, or other indicators. The connection between crime rates among children in Lagos, or other outcomes and out-of-school rates is yet to be established.

Research, however, shows the projected cost of out-of-school in Nigeria is worth over two years average of GDP growth, and the economic benefit of adopting universal basic education exceeds the years of economic growth (Thomas & Burnett, n.d., p.13).

Additionally, motorists in Lagos also grapple with fear when OOSC creep near the cars to beg for money or clean their windows. A beneficiary of the client mentioned how his rescue from the slum prevented him from getting involved in crime, stating that when he returned to the slum years later, he did not see some of his mates because they were either no more, or were involved in criminal activities (FIJ, 2022).

Political Salience of Problem

The State Governor has identified the challenge and shown commitment towards providing a solution (The Guardian, August 2022). The state also has a program known as “Eko Excel” and since its inception “*many out-of-school children have been taken off the streets, put in classrooms, and protected from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and exclusion*” (The Guardian, January 2022). This underscores the importance of the problem to the state.

Cost to the State

Children who get educated are likely to get a job in the private or public sector where initial earnings are subject to a tax rate of 17%. In a hypothetical situation that all two million children complete their education within record time and get employed with jobs that pay an average of NGN 2,500,000 annually, the state government will earn about NGN850,000,000,000 in taxes in one year.

Overview of Client

Destiny Trust was founded in 2012 to meet the most critical needs of food, shelter, and education of homeless and vulnerable children (Destiny Trust, 2022). Founders were driven by their passion to help less privileged children get educated but started by providing free meals to homeless children who lived in slums in Lagos State (Prime Progress, 2022). Seeing that was a temporary solution, they scaled their activities to include taking children off the streets and getting them back to school (Prime Progress, 2022).

Since inception, the client has been involved in six projects that cater to out-of-school children in Lagos State. These projects include education access, homeless children shelter for children who do not have homes, bridge learning center that provides an alternative educational path for over-aged children who never attended school or dropped out (Destiny Trust, 2022). One of the beneficiaries who got connected to the client ten years ago when the client was founded, is now an undergraduate in a university, in South-West Nigeria (Prime Progress, 2022)

The client has however identified the overwhelming nature of its activities, challenges of funding and partnerships and other matters linked to sustainability of its operations specifically providing education and shelter for the children. The client is fully interested in providing policy direction to the state government on how to reduce the state's OOSC rate. (Prime Progress, 2022).

Proposed Alternatives

Before considering the proposed alternatives, it is important to mention a few policies that have been introduced by the state government to reduce the number of OOSC. The state operates a policy of *Free and Compulsory Basic Education*. A paper suggests implementation of the policy in Nigeria has not been as effective as it should be due to challenges like dearth of reliable statistical data, population explosion, bureaucracy, amongst others (Aja, S.N., et al. 2017, p.83). Statewide or Nationwide Data is unavailable to confirm the proposition or evaluate the effect of this policy on school enrollment and attendance.

Additionally, the state imposed a ban on *street trading and other child labor activities*. Child labor has been identified as one of the reasons for the high rate of out-of-school children in Nigeria, primarily because of poverty (UNICEF, 2012, p.41). Street hawking and park trading are the most prominent forms of child labor and account for over 50% of child labor that occurs in urban areas. (UNICEF, 2012, p.41).

In a descriptive study conducted in a municipal area in Lagos State, 120 children involved in street trading activities were interviewed; results showed that the children engaged in street trading as a means of survival (Ashimolowo O.R. & et al., 2010, p.214). Over 70% of the children agreed that engaging in street trading negatively affected their reading schedules and affected their attendance in school (Ashimolowo O.R. & et al., 2010, p.215). There are no studies that show the effect of banning street trading and other labor activities on enrollment of OOSC.

Background of Alternatives

The outcome of interest is an increase in enrollment of OOSC. World Bank Data from 2010 on out-of-school children in Nigeria shows the number of out-of-school children increased from 6.6 million to 8.6 million between 2007-2010 (World Bank, 2023). Using these figures, I estimate a 30%-50% increase in the number of out of school children in 3-5 years, leading to about 2.6-3.0 million out of school children if some policies are not adopted and strictly implemented.

I propose three alternatives to reduce the number of OOSC. The first two alternatives are modifications of existing policies while the last alternative is somewhat novel. The alternatives are-

- a. School Feeding Program
- b. Conditional Cash Transfers
- c. Shelter Homes

School Feeding Program

Background

According to the World Bank, school feeding is defined as the provision of meals, either breakfast or lunch, or both, to children while they are in school (World Bank, n.d., p.1). These programs reduce short-term hunger, facilitate learning and retention, and encourage school attendance (World Bank, n.d., p.1).

The National Home-Grown School Feeding Program (“NHGSFP”) was initially introduced by the Federal Government in 2004, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, to be implemented in ten pilot states, but due to operational reasons, it was suspended in 2008 (HGSF, n.d. p.8). It was modified and re-introduced in 2016 (Adepoju, A.B. & Johnson, A.T., 2020, p.1).

NHGSFP is jointly implemented by the Federal and State Governments. The Federal Government is responsible for funding the meals of pupils in Primary 1-3, while states are required to fund the program for pupils in Primary 4-6 (Vanguard, 2021). In Lagos state, there is little information on implementation of the program, but a teacher in a public primary school confirmed that pupils in primary 1-3 were fed in the 2021-2022 school year.

Modification of SFP

Currently, children in public primary schools are fed one meal a day capped at NGN100 per meal for children in primary 1-3. I suggest a modification of this program in the following ways:

- i. Extending the school feeding program to pupils in primary 4-6. Lagos state is responsible for funding the program for pupils in primary 4-6, but it does not appear this has been implemented.
- ii. Increasing the budget and number of meals. There should be a review of the amount per meal, per child. Feeding children at a cost of NGN100 per child may raise concerns on the quality of the meal being served to the children. Nigeria recorded an inflation rate of 21.91% in February 2023 which is over six percentage point higher than the inflation rate in February 2022.³

This implies a rising cost of food; the quantity of food purchased at a particular price in 2022, may have substantially diminished. This also implies a downward review of the meals since the cost of feeding each child has not been adjusted. In Osun state, pupils complained about the insufficiency of the meals they are being served and unavailability of core components of their meals which they previously enjoyed (Guardian, 2022).

³ Source: National Bureau of Statistics. Accessed from <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/1241298> on 17 March 2023

The meals should also be increased from one to two, probably a fruit or a healthy snack for breakfast. This will be an addition to the current structure of the program. As subsequent paragraphs will show, school feeding has a positive impact on school attendance and increasing the number of meals will further incentivize enrollment children who are out of school.

Effectiveness of SFP

A review of literature indicates that SFP has a positive outcome on enrollment of OOSC. In states where the program has been implemented, some studies have been conducted to test the effectiveness of the policy. In Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, a study was carried out to know the effect of school feeding programs on different outcomes including enrollment, the results show that school feeding programs increased enrollment by 88 percent (Abolaji, J.A & Raheem, A.O., 2021, p. 3699).

In Osun State, located in the South-Western part of Nigeria, like Ogun state, shares the same geographical location as Ogun and Lagos states, a descriptive study to assess the impact of the state's school feeding program showed that the program increased enrollment by 78.4% and retention by 44 % (Adekunle, Taylor, D. & Ogbogu, O.C., 2016, p. 44).

In the Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria's capital, the school feeding program was introduced in the 2019/2020 academic session for pupils in public primary schools. Prior to its introduction, school enrollment increased by 2.4%, between the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic years. However, enrollment increased by 29.2% in the 2020-2021 academic year (Solomon, B.N. & Yusuf, K.R., 2022, p. 42). The increase was attributed to the school feeding program. An education secretary in one of the area councils stated, "*School feeding programme increases the enrolment of primary school pupils in FCT Abuja schools.*" (Solomon, B.N. & Yusuf, K.R., 2022, p. 42).

School feeding programs are also correlated with increased enrollment in other African countries. In a descriptive study conducted to test the effect of school feeding programs in Sierra Leone on different academic factors, the head teachers interviewed indicated that the program increased school enrollment (Senesie., J.K., et al, 2022, p.116).

Additionally, data showed that enrollment increased by about two percentage points in the academic year after the program was introduced. (Senesie., J.K., et al, 2022, p.116). About 51% of parents interviewed stated that they enrolled their children mainly because they knew they were going to be fed while in school (Senesie., J.K., et al, 2022, p.116).

An impact evaluation on school feeding programs in Kenya showed that, on average, enrollment into those schools with feeding programs was 28% more than those without feeding programs (WFP, 2010). Parents were also encouraged to leave their children in school for the whole day creating more time for them to explore and engage in income generating activities (WFP, 2010).

A review of school feeding programs in some states in Nigeria, and some countries in Africa has shown the positive correlation between the program and increased enrollment in primary schools.

Ogun and Osun states are in the South-Western part of Nigeria, like Lagos state, thus results of the studies conducted in these states can be generalized to Lagos state. Using data from Ogun and Osun states, I envisage that implementing the modified school program will increase enrollment in Lagos state by about 83% over a three-five-year period.

This implies that over 1.6 million out-of-school children will be enrolled in school at the end of five years, reducing the number of OOSCs from 2 million to 400,000. If the program is not implemented, the number of out of school children is expected to increase by about 30% from 2 million to 2.6 million using World Bank's data from 2007-2010.

Conditional Cash Transfer

Background of CCT

Cash transfers can be conditional or unconditional. A CCT is a program by a government, aimed at reducing poverty or improving social outcomes, through disbursement of money upon fulfillment of certain criteria by the recipient (Fiszbein, A. & Schady, R.N., 2009). UCT is a welfare program without any conditions attached to receiving financial support (UNESCWA, n.d.)

The National Cash Transfer was introduced in Nigeria in 2016 to provide financial support to the poor and vulnerable⁴, and is expected to among other things, improve school enrollment and attendance (NASSCO, 2022).

Nigeria has a national cash transfer program. Lagos State was selected as one of the states for implementation of the program; as of 2021, the state had disbursed the monthly amount of NGN 5,000 to 6810 beneficiaries in six local governments in the state (LASG, 2021). There is little information on the details of the program, but it does not appear to be a conditional cash transfer.

Modalities of CCT

The conditional cash transfer program will be targeted at parents who have children who are not enrolled in primary or junior secondary schools. The state government will set up registration desks in all local government areas within the state to gather data and interview the parents.

Qualified parents will enroll their children in school before receiving the first payment. To be eligible for subsequent payments, parents will present evidence of monthly average school attendance, certified by teachers. Students will only be allowed to miss a maximum of 15% classes in a month to avoid disqualification from receiving payments.

Parents will be eligible for the duration of the basic education (nine years), subject to fulfillment of the program requirements. The monthly stipend will be N7,500, a 50% increase from the current cash program of the federal government.

Effectiveness of CCT

It appears there is a gap in literature on the effectiveness of CCT on school enrollment in Nigeria, but this is not unusual, given that cash transfer is a relatively new program in Nigeria.

Some countries have introduced conditional cash transfers to improve educational outcomes like enrollment. In Indonesia, researchers used an RCT to test the medium term-effect of offering CCT to improve some educational and health outcomes. (Cahyadi, N. & et al, n.d.).

⁴ Some States introduced this before the Federal Government. For example, Ekiti State which implemented this program for the elderly in 2013. <https://portal.pep-net.org/document/download/33378>

Households in 180 districts received the quarterly cash transfers while another 180 households in the comparison group did not receive the cash transfers (Cahyadi, N. & et al, n.d.). Facilitators visited the households to verify if they met the conditions and if they did not, they were issued warning letters, a cut in benefit and finally cut off (Cahyadi, N. & et al, n.d.).

The result showed that the program increased school enrollment for children aged 7-15 years. There was a 4.3% increase in enrollment in comparison to the control group which had an average enrollment rate of 92% (Cahyadi, N. & et al, n.d.). It is important to note that these districts had high enrollment rates before the program was introduced.

In the Philippines, *Pantawid Pamilya* was implemented by the Department of Social Welfare and Development to improve educational and health outcomes (Chaudury, N. & Okamura, Y., 2012, p.2). The education condition was enrollment and regular attendance at daycare and schools for children aged 3-14 years; schools verified if these conditions were met by beneficiaries (Chaudury, N. & Okamura, Y., 2012, p.3).

An RCT was conducted to know the effect of *Pantawid Pamilya* on educational and health outcomes including school enrollment (Chaudury, N. & Okamura, Y., 2012, p.4). Before the program, on average, about 83.6% younger children (aged between 7-12) in the CCT group were enrolled in primary school, but this increased by over 12 percentage points (96.2%) over a three-year period. (Chaudury, N. & Okamura, Y., 2012, p.8).

Using the Burkina Faso Nahouri Cash Transfers Pilot Project, researchers tested the difference in conditional cash transfers and unconditional cash transfers in improving educational outcomes (Akresh, R., et al, 2013, p.2). Some fathers and mothers were given conditional cash transfers, while some fathers and mothers were given unconditional cash transfers to know the effect on educational outcomes of children between the ages of 7-15 years (Akresh, R., et al, 2013, p.2).

The results show that conditional cash transfers were more effective than unconditional cash transfers in enrolling children who were not enrolled or less likely to be enrolled in school because of low cognitive ability or age (Akresh, R., et al, 2013, p.4). The CCT led to an increase in enrollment for the sub- treatment groups in comparison to the control groups (Akresh, R., et al, 2013, p.4).

In Brazil, the *Bolsa Escola* was introduced in 1995 by providing stipends to poor families with children aged 6-15 years on the condition that the children had at least 85% school attendance (Glewwe, P. & Kassouf, A.L., 2008, p.4). Only families earning half of the minimum wage and below or with children younger than 15 years or a pregnant/breastfeeding woman were eligible to apply (Glewwe, P. & Kassouf, A.L., 2008, p.4). The program increased enrollment by 2.8% after the first year, 4.3% after the second and 5.5% after the third year (Glewwe, P. & Kassouf, A.L., 2008, p.11).

As seen from the studies across different countries, CCTs have the effect of improving educational outcomes including school enrollment. Using the rates from Brazil, CCT will increase enrollment by an average of 4.2% over a three-year period; this implies that the number of out-of-school children will reduce from 2 million to 1.9 million, but if the program

is not implemented, the number of out of school children is expected to increase by about 30% from 2 million to 2.6 million using World Bank's data from 2007-2010.

The choice of Brazil in testing effectiveness is based on its similarities with Nigeria on socio-economic status, thus the results of the RCT can be generalized within the Nigerian context.

Shelter Homes

It appears the option of shelter homes in reducing the number of out-of-school children is yet to be tested empirically. Literature on this topic is almost non-existent but based on the client's field work and interactions with its beneficiaries, homelessness appears to be a leading cause of a high out-of-school population in Lagos state⁵.

In India, a not-for-profit is engaged in similar activities as The Destiny Trust. Shanti Bhavan Children's Project provides residential and educational support to underserved children leading to graduation and employment which helps them lift their families from poverty (Shanti Bhavan Children's Project, 2023). About 97% children remain in the home during their academic journey while 98% of the children in the home graduate from college and 97% get employed (Shanti Bhavan Children's Project, 2023).

The client operates a shelter home in Lagos and another Southwestern State in Nigeria. In 2022, the client provided shelter care to 83 children and expended NGN 25,800, 430 in caring for the children (Destiny Trust, 2022). The stories of recovery indicate how much this intervention can help in increasing enrollment of OOSC in Lagos State. Below is the story of Sarah who lived under a bridge and was received in the client's facility.

"12-year-old Sarah left her parents who were separated and relocated to Lagos. She lived under Oshodi bridge and got introduced to drugs. She lost interest in education and was rescued by one of the client's partners. She was admitted to the client's facility, fought against depression and suicide, and is now doing well in the specialized educational program run by the client."

Sarah's story may not translate into numbers that reflect effectiveness, but surely indicates how provision of shelter can improve the well-being of homeless children and encourage them to get educated.

There is also the story of Ikenna who lived in a slum with his mum; in 2013 his mum informed him about the client, he was taken from the slum and placed in the shelter home run by the client (FIJ, 2022). Since the relationship between him and the client was established, Ikenna has now been admitted to a University in Nigeria. He acknowledges the client changed his life (FIJ, 2022). In his words:

"It was at this period that someone told my mum about the foundation. That was how they took up the responsibility of taking care of me, and, in the process, my life got transformed." (FIJ, 2022)

Modalities of Shelter Homes

To have this alternative, I propose the state government's participation might be through the provision of cost-free acres of land or refurbishment of abandoned or acquired property. Such homes will be handed to trained educators and managers. The administrative cost of

⁵ The client shared this view with me in December 2022.

managing the homes can be borne by private companies as a form of corporate social responsibility.

Children who live under bridges and in slums, or do not live with their parents will be admitted in these homes. Parents who want to voluntarily submit their children will officially do so upon fulfillment of certain conditions, but they will only be considered if homeless children have been cared for.

The homes will also have specially curated educational programs to facilitate learning within the environment. This will have three benefits- the first being that the home will accommodate over-aged children who may not fit into the conventional schooling system. Secondly, this will solve logistical challenges of transporting children to the public schools which may not be within the immediate reach of the shelter homes. This will also be useful for complete rehabilitation of homeless OOSC who may have been involved in some vices.

Evaluative Criteria

Each alternative will be measured on four criteria-

- i. Cost
- ii. Effectiveness
- iii. Cost Effectiveness
- iv. Political Feasibility

School Feeding Program

Description of Criteria

Cost: SFP will be evaluated on the total cost of implementation and multiplied by the number of OOSC.

Effectiveness: The effectiveness of SFP on reducing OOSC will be measured on how it has increased in enrollment in schools based on empirical studies in other states within Nigeria where the policy has been implemented and tested.

Cost Effectiveness: This criterion will measure the cost of implementing SFP per percent increase in OOSC enrollment. This helps to determine whether the cost incurred in implementing the policy can be justified based on its tested effectiveness.

Political Feasibility: This criterion will determine the likelihood of acceptance, implementation, and sustainability of SFP in Lagos State. It will also assess the reaction of communities to the policy. This will be assessed based on an interview and comments of government officials as recorded in newspapers.

Breakdown of Cost of SFP

I propose the sum of NGN300 for two meals, per child daily and I project an initial roll out of the program will be targeted at enrolling 50% of the out-of-school population in Lagos State. To adequately assess the impact of the program, it is preferable to have the program implemented for a period of three years. The cost is set below:

Cost	Per child	1,000,000 OOSC
Daily	NGN300	NGN3,000,000
Monthly ⁶	NGN6,000	NGN 6,000,000,000
Annually ⁷	NGN54000	NGN72,000,000,000
Three years	NGN162,000	NGN162,000,000,000

Effectiveness

SFP has been implemented and tested in comparative states in Nigeria. SFP has increased enrollment of OOSC by an average of 83% in the Local Governments where the program was implemented and tested. Based on this result, I estimate an 83-85% increase in enrollment of OOSC if the SFP is adopted over a three-year period.

⁶ School starts on Monday and ends on Friday- A school month is twenty days.

⁷ This was calculated using the nine-month school calendar.

Cost Effectiveness

NGN162,000,000,000/83%= I estimate the cost effectiveness of implementing SFP as NGN1,951,807,229 per percent increase in OOSC enrollment.

Political Feasibility

There are positive reactions to implementation of SFP in Nigeria as it has been noted to provide employment across the food production supply chain (Blueprint, 2023). This impact is localized as the farmers engaged in food production and the cooks involved in preparing the meals are in the municipality where the program is being implemented (Blueprint, 2023).

A parent commended the program and stated that his children do not like to miss schools because of the meals they are served (Guardian, 2022). A government official who presides over financial matters in a state like Lagos state also confirmed this positive reaction. He however mentioned how the SFP is one of the programs a state government will be willing to give up when facing financial crunch.

There are also concerns on sustainability of the program at a Nationwide level given the change of leadership scheduled in May 2023. It is not unusual for a new administration to review policies of a previous administration for modification, continuity, or discontinuity. In Oyo state, a state like Lagos, the change of administration led to suspension of the program (Guardian, 2022). If the new administration suspends or annuls the program, this will severely disincentivize Lagos state government to adopt it.

Conditional Cash Transfer

Description of Criteria

Cost: CCT will be evaluated on the total cost of implementation and multiplied by half the number of OOSC based on the assumption that poor families have at least two OOSC.

Effectiveness: The effectiveness of CCT on reducing OOSC will be measured on how it has increased in enrollment in schools based on empirical studies in other countries where the policy has been implemented and tested but can be generalized to the Nigerian context.

Cost Effectiveness: This criterion will measure the cost of implementing CCT per percent increase in enrollment of OOSC. This helps to determine whether the cost incurred in implementing the policy can be justified based on its tested effectiveness.

Political Feasibility: This criterion will determine the likelihood of acceptance, implementation, and sustainability of CCT in Lagos State. It will also assess the reaction of communities to the policy. This will be assessed based on an interview and comments of government officials as recorded in newspapers.

Breakdown of Cost:

I estimate a family will have two OOSC; this implies 1,000,000 families will be under the program. I propose the sum of NGN 7500 per family (assuming a family has two OOSC) paid monthly and I project the program will be targeted at 50% of the estimated number of families, at inception- 500,000 families.

Cost	Per family	500,000 families
Monthly	NGN7,500	NGN 3,750,000,000
Annually	NGN90,000	NGN 45,000,000,000
Three years	NGN270,000	NGN 135,000,000,000

Effectiveness:

Using the Brazil example. I anticipate the implementation of CCT will lead to a 4.2% increase in enrollment rate of OOSC in three years.

Cost Effectiveness:

$\text{NGN}135,000,000,000 / 4.2\% =$ I estimate the cost effectiveness of implementing CCT as NGN32,142,857,143 per percent increase in OOSC enrollment.

Political Feasibility:

Some beneficiaries of the current cash transfer program have reacted positively to the program (Voice of Nigeria, 2022). This indicates a level of acceptance from the public, but this must be interpreted in context of the cash transfer being unconditional; it is unclear how the CCT will be received when there are conditions attached to the funds.

It is one of the programs, a government can easily give up when experiencing a financial crunch and it was reported that the Federal Government was considering stopping the program by December 2022 (Nairametrics, 2022). It however appears that cash transfer programs enjoy political support at the Federal Government level as the news reports in early

April 2023 showed that the Federal Government obtained an \$800 million loan from the World Bank to expand the scope of cash transfers to cushion the effect of fuel subsidy removal (Premium Times, 2023).

Shelter Homes

Description of Criteria

Cost: Provision of shelter will be evaluated on the monthly cost of implementation and multiplied by 10% of the estimate of OOSC.

Effectiveness: Due to the novelty of this option, there are no empirical studies to show its effectiveness on any educational outcome including enrollment.

Cost Effectiveness: This criterion is aimed at measuring cost of implementation per percent increase in enrollment in OOSC. Given there are no studies to show the effectiveness of shelter homes on educational outcomes, measurement of this criterion is undefined.

Political Feasibility: This criterion will determine the likelihood of acceptance, implementation, and sustainability of shelter homes in Lagos State. It will also assess the reaction of communities to the policy. This will be assessed based on an interview and comments of government officials as recorded in newspapers.

Breakdown of Cost:

Using data from the client⁸, the cost of keeping a child in a shelter home is about NGN26,000 monthly. I estimate the state government's intervention if it adopts this policy will be targeted at caring for at least 10% of the number of OOSC which amounts to 200,000 OOSC. There is no data to show the number of OOSC affected by homelessness or poor quality of housing, but based on the client's operations, it has identified homelessness as one of the major reasons for the high number of OOSC in Lagos state.

Cost	Per child	200,000 OOSC
Monthly	NGN26,000	NGN 5,200,000,000
Annually	NGN312,000	NGN62,400,000,000
Three years	NGN936,000	NGN187,200,000,000

Effectiveness:

It appears this program has not been empirically tested in Nigeria or other countries, thus there are no studies to show its effectiveness on increasing enrollment of OOSC. In terms of qualitative stories, one of the client's initial beneficiaries adopted in 2013, was admitted into a university nine years after. (FIJ, 2022).

Cost Effectiveness:

Given the lack of data on effectiveness, I am unable to provide a cost effectiveness estimate of shelter homes per percent increase in enrollment in OOSC.

Political Feasibility:

Due to the unavailability of research on the connection between homelessness and poverty, it is difficult to project the political feasibility of this alternative given that there have not been

⁸ <https://destinytrust.org/impact-reports-financials>

comments or actions from government in this regard. Additionally, the client has not indicated receiving support from the state government during its operations.

Outcomes Matrix

Alternatives	School Feeding Program	Conditional Cash Transfer	Shelter Homes
Cost	Medium NGN 162,000,000,000	Low NGN 135,000,000,000	High NGN187,200,000,000
Effectiveness	High 83%	Low 4.2%	Undefined
Cost Effectiveness	High NGN1,951,807,229 per percent increase in OOSC enrollment	Low NGN32,142,857,143 per percent increase in OOSC enrollment	Undefined
Political Feasibility	Medium	Medium	Undefined

Description of Ranking

Each ranking is defined below:

Rank	Cost	Effectiveness	Cost Effectiveness	Political Feasibility
High	This implies the cost of implementation is high.	This indicates the alternative is effective in increasing enrollment of OOSC.	This implies that cost of implementing the alternative is justified based on evidence of its effectiveness.	This indicates the state government's willingness and commitment to implementation and sustainability of the proposed alternative.
Medium	This implies cost of implementation is moderately priced	This indicates the alternative is moderately effective in increasing enrollment of OOSC.	This implies that cost of implementing of alternative moderately outweighs effectiveness of the alternative on increasing enrollment of OOSC.	This indicates partial acceptance of the program but with likelihood of later suspension of the alternative due to expediency.
Low	This implies cost of implementation	This indicates the alternative does not have any effect or	This implies that cost of implementation	This indicates lack of interest in the program and

	is low.	limited effect on increasing enrollment of OOSC.	far outweighs effectiveness of the alternative on increasing enrollment of OOSC.	likelihood of refusal of adoption of the alternative.
Undefined	This implies the cost of the alternative cannot be calculated.	This implies that there is limited or no evidence in assessing the effectiveness of provision of the alternative in increasing enrollment of OOSC.	This implies that there is limited or no evidence in assessing the effectiveness of the alternative; the cost in relation to per percent increase of OOSC cannot be measured.	This indicates that there is limited or no commentary on public or government's perception of the alternative.

Recommendation

Prior to my providing my specific recommendation on reducing the number of OOSC in Lagos state, it is important to state a general recommendation-collection and analysis of data on OOSC. The dearth of data on OOSC in Lagos state is a challenge to adequately define the problem and propose solutions.

The estimate provided by the state government has not been categorized into sub-groups; knowing how the challenge affects different sub-groups can alter policy recommendation or design. Additionally, there are no historical trends showing the number of OOSC, thus posing a challenge in identifying causes of the problem or evaluating the impact of implementing a policy on reducing the number of OOSC.

With the limited available data on the problem, I recommend modification of the school feeding program. SFP has been proven to be effective in reducing the number of OOSC in Nigeria and other countries. It is also the second least costly of the three alternatives and should not pose a significant cash burden to the state government.

Likely successes of SFP:

Increasing the number of meals from one to two may encourage more parents to enroll their children in school. Knowing their children will be fed breakfast and lunch will incentivize them; children can also prompt their parents to enroll them and drop them at school if they know they will get good meals while learning.

It will also improve punctuality and regular attendance. If children are fed breakfast and lunch; they know they must be in school early enough to get served the breakfast; they know they must remain in class for lunch, reducing truancy and increasing attendance. In Osun state, the SFP increased punctuality by 69% and regular attendance by 58% (Adekunle, Taylor, D. & Ogbogu, O.C., 2016, p.44).

Additionally, a school feeding program can have a positive effect on retention through class and increasing completion rates of primary school education. In Anambra State, a qualitative report states that pupils rejected promotion to senior classes because they wanted to remain in the school feeding program; the focus is on pupils in primary 1-3 (Daily Post, 2022). In Osun state, the SFP improved pupils' performance in academic and extracurricular activities by 44% (Adekunle, Taylor, D. & Ogbogu, O.C., 2016, p.45).

It can assist the government in identifying families of pupils eligible for the second alternative- conditional cash transfer. At the time of registering students in school, the state government can use data obtained during the process to identify and screen families that are eligible for conditional cash transfer.

It can lead to positive spillover effects on the broader economy of the state such as improvement in agriculture to support production of the food products needed for the program. Employment generation through the recruitment of staff that will support in preparing the meals and delivering them to the schools (Blueprint, 2023).

Implementation Challenges

- a. **Quality control:** Given there will be many vendors providing the food to different schools within the state, I expect variations in the taste and quality of the food and monitoring compliance with certain standards may not be possible given the timing of delivery of meals, number of schools and distance between schools.
In assessing the current SFP, a headteacher of a primary school in Cross River complained about the quality and presentation of the meals attributing this to lack of supervision of the vendors (Guardian, 2022).
- b. **Mass enrollment:** The school feeding program can lead to an astronomical increase in enrollment, but it does not appear the current educational infrastructure in the state can support such increase. The state must consider building more schools and employing more teachers to accommodate enrollment of OOSC.
Implementation of SFP in Osun state increased enrollment at a higher level than existing infrastructure, leading to crowded classrooms and pupils sharing instructional materials (Adekunle, Taylor, D. & Ogbogu, O.C., 2016, p.45). About 60% of survey respondents indicated that the infrastructure was not sufficient to match the increased enrollment which arose from the SFP (Adekunle, Taylor, D. & Ogbogu, O.C., 2016, p.45).
- c. **Supply chain issues:** Unforeseen circumstances that affect agriculture may limit supply of certain food products which can negatively affect the vendors' ability to provide the meals.
- d. **Administration of the program:** Feeding the children in the morning may also be challenging for school administrators. Pupils start the school day at 8.00am with a mandatory assembly of teachers and students. If the meals are served after the morning assembly, this may affect the start time of classes.

Steps towards Implementation

S/N	Action Steps	Timeline
1.	Evaluation of current school feeding program in the state.	3-6 months
2.	Survey to know the number of OOSC in the state.	3-6months
3.	Enumeration of schools and evaluation of educational infrastructure.	3 months
4	Review of old vendors and selection of new vendors	1 month
5	Preparation of 2024 budget to incorporate the expense.	6 months

Conclusion

It is not unusual for a state to prioritize its goals and deal with challenges based on competing needs. Some needs may rank higher than others, but that is where education comes in.

Investment in basic education must be prioritized to reduce the number of OOSC in Lagos State.

Investment in education may be daunting because it is slow paced and does not yield immediate results that justify the allocation of funds but the benefits of providing free and basic education far outweigh the costs. It liberalizes access to the growth and development of the youth population and helps to bridge the socio-economic gap that already exists between wealthy and the underprivileged.

The interest in providing free and quality universal basic education should go beyond the declaration of the policy. Other factors needed for the successful implementation of the policy must be identified and incorporated. A starting point will be to start collecting data on the OOSC in the state, identify their categories and notice the trend in the numbers. It is also important to review and modify existing solutions while considering the adoption of new models.

A state like Lagos state should have very few or almost non-existent OOSC and to achieve this, the state government must consider a multi sectional approach that cuts across education, finance, security, housing, information technology youth and social development. The holistic approach to solving the OOSC challenge in Lagos state will have a positive impact on other areas of life, beyond education.

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