



# Developing Institutional Capacity to Support Community Engagement in School Improvement

## Practice Paper

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## Background

**SBMC Research:** In 2009, Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) supported the conduct of a research on SBMC Policy and Practice. Key findings of the research included: SBMCs only existed on paper, roles of SBMCs were not clear, SBMC members were handpicked by the head teachers, existence of a palpable tension between the age long PTAs in existence and the newly formed SBMCs.

The conclusion of the research among others was that SBMCs would never be established without capacity development and funding to support their roles. It also highlighted that women's participation in SBMCs where they existed was 'highly constrained' and children's participation not generally accepted.

**Functional Review:** The State Universal Basic Education (SUBEB) has the primary mandate to establish SBMCs at the state level through the activities of the Social Mobilisation Departments (SMDs) established in 2007. In 2009, ESSPIN commissioned a functional review of the SMDs across its five focal states. Some of the findings were: The SMD (Kaduna) was operating as a unit and those that were established as departments in other states (Kaduna, Kwara, Lagos, and Jigawa) were ill equipped with staff, offices and enabling working tools.

**Right**  
Kwara participants  
at C-EMIS review  
workshop.



For example, the Federal Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) recommended 17 – 20 staff to establish an SMD but most SMDs had less than half this number (Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano and Kwara). In some states, there were no corresponding units of the SMD established at LGEA level (Jigawa).

Other findings were the staff members were given portfolios without the requisite depth in knowledge, exposure and skill to perform their jobs; absence of a detailed job description and understanding of the social mobilization mandate was from a narrow perspective of carrying out sensitization and community mobilisation as well as lukewarm attitude to work. All these issues largely explained poor visibility of the SMDs, low staff confidence and morale as well as uncoordinated and poor working relationship.

In addition, the aforementioned issues were impacting on the capacity of the SMDs to engage the community in performing a broader role of researching, monitoring and engaging issues of access, equity and quality in the delivery of basic education. This was further exacerbated with the absence of a formal engagement of the CSOs either as partners or collaborators to engage with the communities and government on sustained basis.

**Below**  
Civil Society and Jigawa SUBEB signing contract for SBMC scale up.



**Below**  
Social mobilisation officers and CSO during mentoring and monitoring orientation session.



## Scale and reach

Communications and Knowledge Management Situational Analysis: A situational analysis conducted with Social Mobilisation Departments in 2012 assessed department understanding and implementation of their communications and knowledge management role.

Areas for capacity development were identified and included the function of communication and knowledge management in Departments of Social Mobilisation, developing a communication strategy, working with the media, information gathering and management and use of information to highlight what is happening in schools and communities.

### Below

SBMC presents learning materials to pupils.



### Right

Visit by CSO mentoring support to SBMC at school level.



## Addressing Weak Institutional Capacity

Organisational and Technical Capacity: To address the SMDs' functional review recommendations, ESSPIN developed a holistic institutional development framework to support SMDs as the institutional home of SBMCs and the engine to propel community participation in basic education delivery across the supported states. To date, ESSPIN through output 4 has developed capacity of SMDs and CSOs across the states on effective documentation and evidence based reporting to support advocacy issues arising from the communities, and to work in partnership.

The capacity of Social Mobilisation Officers (SMOs) has been strengthened on data management through a system of regular monitoring of SBMC activities and development using M&E tools. To further increase the capacity of SMDs across the states to be more responsive to increasing demand of the communities, additional capacities were built on performance management system, job analysis and development of job description, data trends analysis and reporting as well as performance indicators and target setting.

SMD have also requested and received support on how evidence and data gathered can be utilized for better and more equitable planning for education according to the needs of schools and children expressed in school development plans, SMO and CSO reports, and at LGEA SBMC forums.

Capacity to Lead on Access and Equity: Social Mobilisation Officers and Departments were initially participants, with CSO partners, of the ESSPIN pilot stage Trainings of Trainers and orientations on inclusive education, gender, child protection and awareness, which they then 'stepped-down' to SBMCs at cluster, school and community level. As state governments started rolling SBMCs out using state resources, the SMOs/SMD supported according to state context by CSOs became the SBMC Master Trainers who conduct state level Trainings of Trainers on all areas of SBMC development including access and equity.

**Below**  
Orientation training for social mobilisation officers in Kano.



**Right**  
Social mobilisation officers and education secretaries acquiring knowledge on SBMC activities.



**Communications and Knowledge Management:** In response to the communications and knowledge management situational analysis workshops were implemented with SMDs across all states to support communications strategy development and action planning, use of relevant media to develop and express key education messages for communities, and key functions of communications in SMDs.

Another capacity development opportunity focused on knowledge management through an information gathering workshop to assist SMDs to use information gathered from the community and school and present it in a way that would be useful for education authorities and other key education stakeholders. This workshop included elements of case-study writing, graphic design, producing evidence of impact, and report and newsletter-writing. Innovatively ESSPIN's Communications and Knowledge Management team also supported SMDs to design, script-write, produce, and implement community theatre events in school communities.

These events were attended often by overwhelming numbers of community members who were drawn into debates and dialogue on education and school improvement through an engaging form of media. SMDs also participated in training on use of radio programming to increase community participation and sensitize communities on school improvement and issues affecting children's education.

#### Below

Community meeting on school development plan to improve learning for all children.



#### Above

Children advocacy visit to Kano State House Assembly to commemorate International Day of the Girl Child.

## What has happened as a result of capacity development?

To date, the less-than-positive picture of SMDs in 2009 has been reversed. Across the 6 states, CSOs now work in partnership and collaboratively with the SMDs under an atmosphere of mutual trust through a partnership called Civil Society Government Partnership (CGP) planning and implementing SBMC development support initiatives such as SBMC training, monitoring and mentoring. Anecdotal evidence exists that this collaborative engagement is working and yielding mutual benefits of increasing capacity and experience in community engagement as well as engagement with the government .

In turn because of the SMDs and CSOs support, SBMCs across the states can be identified with the rising profile of visibility and capacity to engage communities and government on basic education issues bordering on quality, access and equity. For example, in Jigawa State SBMCs forums have been institutionalized across 27 LGEAs of the state as SBMC forums are being conducted at the LGEAs using the state government resources. This development is noticeable also in the remaining ESSPIN supported states.

SMDs visibility is growing day by day with budgetary provision to support SBMC development on annual basis being institutionalized as well the capacity of SMD and SUBEB being enhanced to lead, articulate and rollout SBMC development in school communities across the LGEAs of the states. For example, in Enugu State, 40 million has been set aside for CSO engagement and SMO allowance last school year from UBEC Teacher Development Programme (TDP) intervention fund for the roll out of SBMC development support in the 405 schools including activation of SBMCs, training and follow-up mentoring and monitoring support.

**Below**  
SBMC monitoring  
for school  
accountability.

**Below**  
SBMC monitoring  
school infrastructural  
development.



## Sustainability and scale-up

In Lagos state, the SMD has driven forward the training of 1,687 SBMC members across the 154 clusters covering all 1,400 schools. SMD in Lagos have also developed and are using their own database in which data across all indicators of SBMC functionality, women and children's participation and communities supporting inclusive/protective education is entered. They are able as a result of this to monitor progress over time and take relevant actions to address challenges.

In Jigawa State, 100 SMOs have been mobilized to support SBMC development in school communities across 27 LGEAs of the state. Also, SBMCs' roll out in the schools has been gaining ground across all Kaduna, Kano and Kwara States. The Kano State Government in 2014 has begun the rollout of SBMC development to an additional 4,505 primary schools which combined with current ESSPIN-supported schools amounts to all primary schools in the state.

The illustration of the increasing profile of the SMDs include key changes in Lagos state where SMD has moved from one man department to over 10 staff coordinating different activities. SMD which was hitherto a unit under school services has since been upgraded to a full section headed by head of sections and reporting directly to SMD in SUBEB in 2012. The LGEA SMOs have been promoted to Head of sections in 2013.



**Right**  
Civil society and government partnership providing support to community forum.

At the LGEA, the SMD units used to be manned by only one staff have increased to between 5 and 10 staff in all the 20 LGEAs. The former Social Mobilisation Director due to his track record and outstanding performance was promoted to the post of SUBEB Board Secretary.

Similarly in Jigawa State, the Deputy Director SMD was promoted to the rank of Director Social Mobilisation upon retirement of the former Director. Also, public enlightenment unit of SMD has been strengthened through provision of public enlightenment materials, deployment of 2 staff to support implementation of activities on community engagement and learner participation in school improvement activities. There was no corresponding unit or department at LGEA level but now social mobilization section has been created at LGEA level and staff deployed to support conduct of activities at school-community and LGEA level.

As a result of the C&KM capacity development approach the SMDs now have a communications strategy in place and are implementing it. Depending on state context they are working through different media, for example producing their own radio programmes in some states with release of state funding to support these (Kaduna), engaging theatre groups to perform at major education related events (Enugu) and producing better newsletters on the work of SMD (particularly Kano).

**Right**

Mentoring and monitoring support by civil society and government partnership to SBMC at school level.



## Conclusion and Way Forward

In conclusion, the SMD visibility has enormously increased with newly established offices, additional staff, funding to support roll out of SBMC development in schools and working tools such as computers to work with. Others are broader understanding of the work or mandate of the social mobilisation has been deepened, advocacy is approach on evidence basis, SMD staff have detailed job descriptions and monitoring tools, documentation and reporting culture have improved.

All this points to a monumental positive attitudinal shift towards work which is in contrast to most other MDAs. The resultant effect is now bearing fruits on the impact of the SBMCs in leveraging resources, promoting access, and equity and quality issues in the schools across length and breadth of the communities, LGAs as well as the state.

Testimonies of the impact of the ESSPIN capacity development approach hinged on holistic and sustained institutional engagement are numerous in states and at UBEC federal level.

In the second phase of ESSPIN a consolidation strategy will be implemented to build on gains made, particularly in the areas of greater funding for school improvement particularly Direct Funding to Schools, increasing functionality of SMDs at the LGAs for quality delivery, and strengthening and managing the CSO/ Government Partnership. It will also focus on enhancing capacity of SBMCs on school level governance role and dissemination of best practices to stimulate replication in other departments of the SUBEB, LGEA, and State among others.

**Below**  
Provision of toilets facilities increases access for all children.



**Right**  
Social Mobilisation Department staff in a group activity at a training session.



## Changes in SMD Capacity 2009-14: A Summary from States

Kaduna	Situation in 2009	Department Capacity in 2014	Outcomes
	The Social Mobilisation Department was a 1-man unit	<p>As a result of a functional review supported by ESSPIN, Kaduna now has an SMD with 6 departments, 2 units and 12 staff at State level</p> <p>There are Social mobilisation units in all 23 LGEAs with HODs and 7 SMOs each</p> <p>As the result of the time and motion study supported by ESSPIN in 2011, the department developed clear roles for staff with departmental mission, vision and goals with SMD strategic plan in place</p> <p>SMD organisational charter developed, staff have clear work schedules and clear reporting lines</p> <p>There are clear links between SMD at state level and Social Mobilisation Units in the LGEAs with clear reporting lines</p> <p>There are now gender and inclusion Desk Officers at State level and 23 in the LGEAs</p> <p>SMD are the department taking the lead on IE implementation with stakeholders in Kaduna State</p> <p>The Kaduna State Committee on Inclusive Education is domiciled in SMD, IE Policy developed and disseminated from there</p> <p>SMD has engaged CSOs to rollout SBMC development to 1,150 schools in Kaduna State across 10 LGAs with capacity development provided by their own 10 SMD Master Trainers</p> <p>SMOs are taking the lead on addressing child protection issues and networking with NGOs/CBOs</p> <p>SMC can now develop workplans, lead, monitor and report on SBMC development and community/school based needs</p>	<p>An increasingly functional and responsive institution/department in place to support community engagement in basic education through SBMC development across Kaduna State</p> <p>Space created for civil society and government to work in partnership to improve schools</p> <p>Increased numbers of children in schools including girls, children with disability and children from rural/poorer backgrounds</p> <p>There is a focus on school safety and child protection at all levels with Kaduna State Government recently agreeing to fence all primary schools as a result of SBMC advocacy</p> <p>SMD awarded the most organized and proactive department in Kaduna SUBEB in 2012</p> <p>SMD Director awarded the most outstanding director 2014 by the Kaduna State Governor</p> <p>Less stigma/discrimination for children affected for example by disability or albinism</p>

Kwara	Situation in 2009	Department Capacity in 2014	Outcomes
	<p>Department small with limited organisational capacity</p> <p>Weak technical capacity to perform the roles and functions of the department</p> <p>No sense of community ownership of schools</p> <p>Mistrust of government by communities</p> <p>Weak institutional capacity of SMD</p> <p>No monitoring of community school interaction</p>	<p>SMD staff interpersonal relationships have been strengthened with other departments, CSOs, CBOs and wider communities</p> <p>The self-confidence of the staff in SMD has increased in addressing large gatherings of people</p> <p>SMD are now able to write evidence based reports</p> <p>SMD are now able to reach all corners of Kwara State – initially considered an impossible task</p> <p>SMD staff now have an in-depth understanding of their job descriptions and schedules</p> <p>Communication skills within and across departments have improved. Meetings are held and minute taken</p> <p>Skills of documentation, reporting, data collection, analysis and use for evidenced based planning are now visible</p> <p>SMD is able to support communities to mobilise resources for their schools and enhance community ownership of schools.</p>	<p>There is now a relationship between government and civil society previously thought impossible working in partnership for better schools and education for all children</p> <p>There is a mutual understanding now between SMD and the CSOs. They plan together and complement each other's roles.</p> <p>There is sharing of information between government and civil society and between government departments which did not happen before</p> <p>As a result of SMD capacity, community voice is now heard in education and school improvement – especially that of women and children</p>
Lagos	Department situation in 2009	Department Capacity in 2014	Outcomes
	<p>Social Mobilisation was a 1-man department</p> <p>Was a unit under the School Services Department</p> <p>Technical Capacity was weak</p> <p>Limited awareness or capacity on the role of SMD in supporting inclusive education/ gender, child protection and safety</p>	<p>Now over 10 staff coordinating different activities and programmes across 20 LGEAs</p> <p>The LGEA SMOs have been promoted to Head of Sections in 2013</p> <p>been upgraded to a full section headed by Head of Sections and reporting directly to SMD in SUBEB in 2012</p> <p>135 SMOs trained across 20 LGEAs to support rollout to all 1,004 schools</p> <p>Better skills for report writing, reporting, leading, mentoring and coordination of SBMC development in Lagos State</p> <p>Can confidently lead on SBMC development and SBMC/ LGEA Forum which promotes voice and accountability</p> <p>Lagos State SUBEB has worked with SBMCs to develop a 'yellow-card' system which SBMCs wear as ID to monitor and address truancy, child labour and other protection issues in and around schools.</p> <p>2 SMD staff are now members of the One Stop Justice Centre which handles reports and addresses child protection issues (headed by Ministry of Justice).</p>	<p>SBMC in Lagos State 1004 primary schools restructured and school based (as against the former clustering model)</p> <p>The improved capacity of SMD and SMOs has increased SBMC leveraging and resource mobilization e.g. SBMC mobilized over N271M in support of SIP in 2013</p> <p>The former Director, SMD due to his track record and outstanding performance he was promoted to the post of SUBEB Board Secretary</p>

Jigawa	Department situation in 2009	Department Capacity in 2014	Outcomes
	<p>SUBEB SMD had only 5 staff (Director, Assistant Director, IQTE Desk Officer, Self Help Desk Officer and Enlightenment Officer).</p> <p>There was no corresponding unit or department at LGEA level</p> <p>There were no defined roles and responsibilities of staff at the Social Mobilisation Department.</p> <p>Data management skills were very low.</p>	<p>Jigawa SUBEB SMD increased from 5-7 staff</p> <p>as a result of the functional review of the department supported by ESSPIN.</p> <p>The social mobilization section was created at LGEA level and staff deployed to support the conduct of activities at school, community and LGEA level.</p> <p>SMD have clear job description on their roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>As a result of the SMO report format and capacity development, SMD are now able to collect and summarise information at community/school, LGEA and state level</p> <p>The public enlightenment unit of SMD Jigawa SUBEB have been strengthened through the provision of public enlightenment materials.</p> <p>100 SMO positions created to support SBMC development in school communities across 27 LGEAs</p>	<p>SMD now have skills to develop and implement their workplan, lead and manage SBMC rollout, conduct training, collect and use data, monitor and mentor SBMCs.</p> <p>Capacity also exists to support SBMC forums for community voice at LGEA level – state resources, all LGEAs</p> <p>Budgetary provision to support SBMC development on an annual basis has been institutionalized</p> <p>Commitment by the SMD staff at LGEA to support implementation of activities at school and community level has increased</p>
Enugu	Department situation in 2009	Department Capacity in 2014	Outcomes
	<p>SMD did not function well in any of its areas of responsibility</p> <p>No staff had designated responsibilities on Inclusive Education or Child Protection in Enugu SUBEB or the LGEAs</p> <p>There was limited awareness of inclusive education, many children out of school (particularly disabled in Enugu). No awareness of how child protection issues might impact on education.</p> <p>Child protection issues in and around schools were not reported or documented. No data</p>	<p>SMD did not understand their job descriptions, roles and responsibilities; they now ask relevant questions regarding their assignments, tasks, jobs</p> <p>Staff now come to the office regularly and on time and now hold regular meetings and record the minutes</p> <p>There are better staff to staff working relationships and understanding</p> <p>The SMD Director has a better understanding of her job and is better able to lead the department</p> <p>SMD now relate with other departments to an appreciable level</p> <p>SMOs in the LGEA now relate well with Education Secretaries and Supervisory Councillors</p> <p>SMOs are better at team work, collective effort and understand lines of authority and reporting</p> <p>The Social Mobilisation Unit now have dedicated staff related to gender, inclusive education and safety/ protection in schools. There is much greater awareness in the Department and capacity to support inclusive education and make schools safer.</p>	<p>There is now a relationship between communities and schools and communities and government which did not exist before</p> <p>There is less suspicion and mistrust between civil society and government</p> <p>There is improved understanding of the challenges that communities face in getting access for their children to good education</p> <p>There is improved understanding of what communities can do and what government should do</p> <p>There is now reduced stigmatisation for children affected by disability and communities are now advocates for their inclusion in mainstream schools.</p> <p>SBMCs and communities are taking a range of action to address child-protection and safety issues</p>



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