



Call for Applications 2024

Micro educational grant

Investing in grassroots educational efforts to catalyze transformative change in northern Nigeria



Enhancing accelerated learning

At the Custodians of African Literature (COAL), we believe that people closer to development challenges are best equipped to lead effective solutions in solving them. COAL would like to partner with grassroots initiatives through a micro education grant program. The aim of the initiative is to co-deliver local educational initiatives that improves educational outcomes for children and young adults in northern Nigeria. As a flagship initiative, this round of the micro grant has a geographical focus in Plateau state Nigeria with possibilities for extending nationally. We aim to carefully assess projects that demonstrate the potential for long-term, far-reaching impact on individuals and communities. We actively seek out initiatives that exhibit a profound dedication to education and aim to provide them with the resources needed to grow exponentially. Crucially, we prioritise initiatives that are deeply committed to promoting comprehensive literacy skills, encompassing reading, writing, numeracy, listening, speaking, critical thinking and creativity among children and youth. By investing in these grassroots efforts, we strive to catalyse transformative change at individual and community levels.





The Problem

Globally, 250 million children are out of school and 763 million adults lack basic literacy skills ([UNESCO, 2023](#)). Illiteracy costs the global economy over \$1 trillion annually ([World Literacy Foundation, 2022](#)). Sub-Saharan Africa has “the highest rates of education exclusion, over one-fifth of children between the ages of about 6 and 11 are out of school, followed by one-third of youth between the ages of about 12 and 14. According to UIS data, almost 60% of youth between the ages of about 15 and 17 are not in school” ([UNESCO, 2024, p1](#)). In Nigeria, 18.5 million children are not in school, disproportionately impacting girls in mostly northern states of Yobe, Taraba, Zamfara, Sokoto and Plateau serving as the hotspots of out-of-school children in the country ([Adeleke and Alabede, 2022](#)). Based on a report by UNICEF, as cited by Malala ([2023](#)), girls constitute the majority of out-of-school children (OOSC) in Nigeria, accounting for 38% of the total OOSC population.

Despite increased enrollment rates in recent years, many Nigerian school children still lack basic literacy skills. “3 out of 4 children in basic education are unable to read with comprehension or solve simple math problems” ([UNICEF, 2022, p4](#)).

The reasons for this are complex and multifaceted. Research has identified several key factors that lead to disadvantaged children leaving school or never attending, these include poverty, child labor, distance to schools, over-age attendance, nomadic or pastoralist lifestyles, gender-related barriers, health issues, disabilities, lack of parental support and lack of adequate education infrastructure from the government (Akyeampong et al., 2020). Furthermore, the lack of investment in education infrastructure disproportionately affects rural and low-income communities. Many schools still often lack functional classrooms, instructional materials, and access to books and properly trained teachers, Sub-Saharan Africa alone needs about 15 million teachers ([UNESCO, 2023](#)). Current national-level statistics from sources such as UNESCO and USAID show moderate improvements in youth and adult literacy rates over the past decade. However, these estimates fail to paint an accurate picture of literacy skills for disadvantaged Nigerian school children. Broad averages mask disparities that still exist between income levels and between rural versus urban populations.

This continues to adversely, disproportionately affect the quality of literacy instruction students receive in under-resourced schools. Socio-cultural factors also negatively influence literacy acquisition. Many parents in disadvantaged communities have low literacy levels themselves, limiting their ability to support children at home.

Plateau State, located in Nigeria's volatile Middle Belt, exemplifies the education crisis afflicting much of Nigeria. School infrastructure across the state is inadequate, with insufficient facilities, scarce teaching resources, and acute teacher shortages undermining student outcomes. Communities lack engagement in local educational development partly due to limited advocacy and awareness efforts ([Gyang and Gusen, 2021](#)). Ultimately, these deficiencies obstruct schools' ability to deliver quality education to Plateau State students. Simultaneously, regional instability exacerbates existing challenges. Sporadic ethno-religious violence, like recent clashes in Jos, fuels child displacement and halts learning for over 250,000 students ([Gyang and Gusen, 2021](#); [UNICEF, 2022](#)). Financial constraints further entrench inequality within the system. Given education's outsized role in determining life outcomes, redressing these urgent needs in Plateau State schools becomes instrumental for providing youth pathways out of vulnerability. The lack of literacy threatens to trap yet another generation of disadvantaged children in a cycle of poverty and limited opportunities.





What we are looking for

Data from the assessment showed that the accelerated learning model had been impactful to increasing access to education with the plans of facilitating school enrollment. It also elucidates pointers for enhancement and upscaling of the initiative. Some of the most notable ones identified include:

- Developing a contextualized, community-centric curriculum that incorporates character traits and positive indigenous values, with input from stakeholders.
- Enhancing community engagement through forums, committees, awareness campaigns, and involving stakeholders in decision-making.
- Strengthening volunteer teacher systems through training, continuous professional development, and support.
- Establishing a well-defined learning model with clear transition pathways to formal education.
- Investing in digital learning solutions, including computers, systems, and training manuals.
- Implementing robust project management, monitoring, evaluation, and documentation systems.
- Exploring sustainable funding strategies through partnerships with government, donors, and private sector.
- Advocating for policies and strategies that support the expansion of accelerated education programs.

Based on the above, COAL is calling for innovative accelerated education models that will enhance the learning and transition of OOSC into formal education systems around any one, a combination of the above scalable models or any innovation models.



Who Can Apply

- Registered Non-governmental organizations with a youth and educational mission
- Community-based organizations, schools, libraries, or other non-profit entities serving low-income and marginalized communities in Plateau State Nigeria
- Initiatives must have been operational for at least 1 to 2 years

Eligibility Criteria

- Projects must contribute to literacy in low-income communities.
- Must demonstrate a transitional pathway of out-of-school children into formal or alternative education models.
- Proposals should clearly articulate how the project will amplify youth voice, agency, and leadership in addressing local challenges related to education and inequality.
- Projects must be locally led and demonstrate strong community engagement and support, including the involvement of parents, educators, and other relevant stakeholders.
- Shortlisted applicants will be required to provide a clear plan for project implementation, including a timeline, budget, and expected outcomes within the 6 to 12-month grant period.
- Priority will be given to projects that have the potential for long-term sustainability and scalability beyond the initial grant period, with a clear vision for future growth and impact.
- Projects should incorporate innovative approaches, such as the use of technology, arts-based learning, creativity or community-driven solutions, to enhance educational outcomes and engagement.
- Applicants should demonstrate a commitment to monitoring, evaluation, and learning throughout the project lifecycle to ensure continuous improvement and accountability.



Grant Amount

Successful applicants will receive a micro grant ranging from **₦500,000 to ₦1,000,000** depending on the scope and scale of the proposed project. In exceptional cases, larger grants may be considered for projects with the potential for significant regional or national impact.

Additionally both successful and unsuccessful applicant will receive technical and institutional support in the following:

- Project management in the development sector
- Basic of monitoring, evaluation and learning
- Outcome reporting
- Grant writing
- Youth volunteers to support the implementation of successful initiatives and many others.

Application Process

Interested applicants should submit a proposal by filling this form [here](#)

All applications should be submitted by **30th June 2024**

Selection Process

All proposals will be reviewed by a panel. Shortlisted applicants may be invited for an interview or to provide additional information. Final decisions will be communicated within 4 weeks of the application deadline.

For any questions or inquiries, please contact us at info@coalng.org. We also encourage applicants to attend our upcoming webinar to learn more about the application process and tips for success on 15th June 2024 at 10:00AM WAT, [register here to attend](#).

We look forward to receiving your innovative proposals and working together to empower the next generation of young leaders. Together, we can create a brighter future for children and youth in low-income communities in northern Nigeria.

"A good head and good heart are always a formidable combination. But when you add to that a literate tongue or pen, then you have something very special.

Nelson Mandela



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