

Community Impact Case Study FY21

Teach For Nigeria: Government and community partnerships lead to systemic change across Ogun State

In Ogun State, Teach For Nigeria's partnerships with the government and orientation to authentic relationships with diverse community stakeholders have enabled the organization to mobilize collective action across a group of dedicated educational reforms, leading to tangible advances in multi-sector collaboration, teacher training, and virtual learning during the pandemic.



The Basics

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa and the 6th most populous in the world. It has been referred to as the “country of the young,” with nearly 50% of the population under age 15. Despite this important demographic trend, the country’s education system is in crisis; a third of school-aged children are not enrolled in school, and almost 60% of those children who are in school are not learning. Despite these dire conditions, only 6% of the national budget is allocated to the Nigerian education sector, far below the UNESCO recommendation of 26%.

Teach For Nigeria launched in 2017 with a cohort of 44 Fellows; today, the organization is poised to recruit 296 fellows for its 5th cohort, and the alumni community has grown to 249 members in just 4 short years. During this time, Teach For Nigeria has become an integral player in the education landscape in Ogun State, the organization’s first placement site and the country’s educational center. Teach For Nigeria is a key institutional partner to the regional government, providing teaching and leadership talent, staffing the state’s virtual learning effort during lockdown, and influencing the initial and ongoing training of the state’s teachers.



The Approach

The Ogun State government stands out for its commitment to education. The leadership is progressive and forward-thinking, and understands the importance of teachers and teacher training in improving student outcomes. During the early stages of TFN, Folawe Omikunle took a systematic and relational approach to building relationships with the education commissioner, public servants, and Chairman of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). She met frequently with these stakeholders to discuss improving education in Ogun State and the nation, and sought their thought partnership with mapping stakeholders and brokering meetings with key champions. Consequently, when public demand for educational reforms reached a peak in 2018, the government made the rare move to pay a portion of salaries for TFN fellows and to invite TFN to serve as a collaborating partner in enacting change.

Since then, TFN has become a prominent institutional partner and enabler of collaboration and alignment across the system. The team was asked to collaborate with the government to deepen its impact, while improving the quality of education in the state by “getting the DNA of TFN” into the system. In order to cultivate collective impact (and avoid spreading the team too thin), TFN introduced government stakeholders to respected, successful NGOs such as Wave Academies, and Profuturo Fundacion to stoke systemwide collaboration and impact. With that, a group of education reformers was formed.

The Choices

Teach For Nigeria’s approach in Ogun State is grounded in the organization’s deep belief that they cannot single-handedly solve the challenges facing young people in Nigeria, and thus must “act as a catalyst to build a network of leaders who understand the root causes of inequity and are committed to changing it.” This has led the organization to invest in:

- 1 Delivering community-centered fellow training and support**, including an explicit commitment to building listening skills and humility
- 2 Partnering with and influencing institutions** in order to scale impact and shift mindsets throughout the public education system
- 3 Generating shared data and proof points** to enable collaboration and alignment across the system

The Impact

This collective approach is enabling TFN to play a key role in expanding opportunity for children well beyond the communities where the organization places. At the moment, TFN, in partnership with Profuturo Fundacion, is working to improve the quality and access of education for students in Ogun State by training 5,000 teachers on student vision, developing digital skills, and more. In another partnership with Google for Nonprofit, TFN has launched a leadership program for a pilot cohort of 13 heads of schools, to train them on transformative leadership that will help accelerate impact within school systems. And recently, the Tai Solarin College of Education, a prominent teachers’ college, invited TFN to help achieve its vision to revamp its teacher training institution. Tai Solarin College produces 80% of the teachers in Ogun State and Lagos, so the potential for impact is vast.

TFN's partnership with the government has also accelerated the impact of fellows and alumni. During the Covid-19 pandemic, for instance, fellows mobilized to ensure students were safe and continued to learn. Through a partnership with the local government, a group TFN fellows developed and became the face of TV educational programming that was broadcasted to hundreds of thousands of children so they could learn while at home. Martin Odebowale, a fellow who led this effort, is now on staff as a Special Assistant to the Special Adviser on Primary and Secondary at the Ogun State MOE. As a second year fellow, he is also leading the State's remote learning intervention, OgunDigiClass, during the COVID-19 crisis for primary and junior secondary school teachers, leading related public private partnerships, tracking interventions, hosting the MOE's social media, and more.

The Insights

TFN's approach and impact highlight two key insights related to community impact.

- Investing in relationships is vital to building trust and the foundations for long-term collaboration
- Mobilizing collective action is key to addressing vast challenges that a single actor cannot solve