

## United Nations Development Programme



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### Project Initiation Plan (PIP)

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Project Title:              | Development and initiation of the ARC Project to support Almajiri Children and Youth                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Expected CP Outcome(s):     | <p><b>Output 1.5: At risk communities in 'hot spot' areas, are enabled to access livelihood opportunities, including skills-building, entrepreneurship, and employment opportunities.</b></p> <p><b>Output 2.1: National and sub-national systems and institutions enabled to achieve structural transformation of productive capacities that are sustainable, employment and livelihoods-intensive</b></p> <p><b>Output 2.3: Options enabled and facilitated for inclusive and sustainable social protection</b></p> |
| Initiation Plan Start Date: | 1 January 2021- 31 December 2021                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Implementing Partner        | the Special Advisor to the President on Social Investments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

#### Brief Description

The Almajiri system has been in existence for decades in Northern Nigeria and refers to children who have been set to acquire Quranic education under the supervision of a Mallam. The practice today is characterized by chronic poverty with multiple reports of child protection issues including abuse, neglect. At the end young adults have no skills and are illiterate unable to find any employment. This system is one of the greatest impediments to Nigeria achieving its development aspirations. Outside the North, there are also many out of school and street effected children. Although difficult to estimate there are approximately 13.2 million out of school children with 69% in the North equivalent to 7% of the population. The Government under the leadership of the Special Advisor to the President on Social Investments leads the overall government response to address this issue. UNDP and UNICEF will jointly work with this office in developing a framework and project document which will form the overall framework in addressing this issue. The PIP will support development of this, launch and initiation of priority interventions. The framework will propose the menu of services that can be provided and system to better identify, coordinate and track support to children and young adults who require help and assistance.

|                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Programme Period:     | February 2021- July 2022 |
| Atlas Project Number: | _____                    |
| Atlas Output ID:      | _____                    |
| Gender Marker:        | _____                    |

|                            |             |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Total resources required   | : \$270,000 |
| Total allocated resources: | \$70,000    |
| Regular                    | _____       |
| • Other:                   |             |
| ○                          |             |
| ○ Donor                    | _____       |
| ○ Government               | _____       |
| Unfunded budget:           |             |
| In-kind Contributions      | _____       |

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## I. CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

There are approximately 13.2 million out of school children in Nigeria with 69% from Northern Nigeria. The majority of these from the Almajiri system with UNICEF estimating that they make up at least 70% of Nigeria's out of school children. Precise numbers are hard to come by but there could be as many as 11-15 million in Nigeria today, equivalent to 7% of the population.

This system is practiced in Northern Nigeria and refers to young boys (Almajiri) and girls (Almajira) who have migrated from their homes in search of Islamic knowledge. The term has expanded to refer to young people who beg on the streets and not in secular education. They are primarily from poor family background who study Islamic learning with Malammai("Mallams"), teachers of the Quran and depend on alms/ begging to survive.

The system today is characterised by social exclusion, chronic poverty and abuse, churning out young people with little to no formal education or employable skills posing social and economic challenges to the Government and to Almajiri themselves. The Covid-19 pandemic has further highlighted the issue with deportation of Almajiri children from across different states highlighting multiple vulnerabilities

There is not a lot of reliable information on what happens to them once they reach adulthood. Given their multiple vulnerabilities there have been concerns that Almajiri are at risk of recruitment into non-state armed groups. For example, a UNDP pilot study based on interviews with young adults formally associated with Almajiri highlighted some concerns which may increase vulnerability to recruitment in armed/violent extremist groups including low levels of education, low understanding of religious texts with 30% knowing Almajiri friends who had approached or joined armed groups including Boko Haram.

UNICEF data also points to a number of child protection issues facing children. A recent survey based on data from over 6,000 in Kaduna and other northern states found that half were suffering from child neglect, abuse and exploitation whereas others faced psychological and mental distress, health concerns, gender-based violence and children in contact with the law. Many required services to address these issues including food and nutrition, legal, education, health and counselling services.

**The Response:** There have been a number of efforts to address this issue before, but they have failed as a result of lack of the support of Mallams and communities given deep cultural, social and religious underpinnings. Previous initiatives have also underscored the importance of having in place political leadership which is trusted and committed. The high levels of trust placed in President Buhari and his Government in the North, and amongst the Almajiri provide an opportunity for the current administration to address the numerous challenges facing the Almajiri system.

**The ARC Project:** Under the leadership of the Special Advisor to the President on Social Investments, the government has devised an initiative to address the Almajiri system and beyond that, the plight of children in street situation in Nigeria with a strategy to put in place systems, mechanisms and structures at the state level to address this phenomenon. Addressing this would reduce poverty, insecurity, address poor health and education outcomes, protection issues and other development challenges. The project proposes an intervention to empower the children with critical information and social skills, incentivization strategy for Mallams and teachers as well as a communications strategy to prevent a resurgence of Almajiri. It will also explore the opportunities of integrating them into the mainstream education systems in the various states.

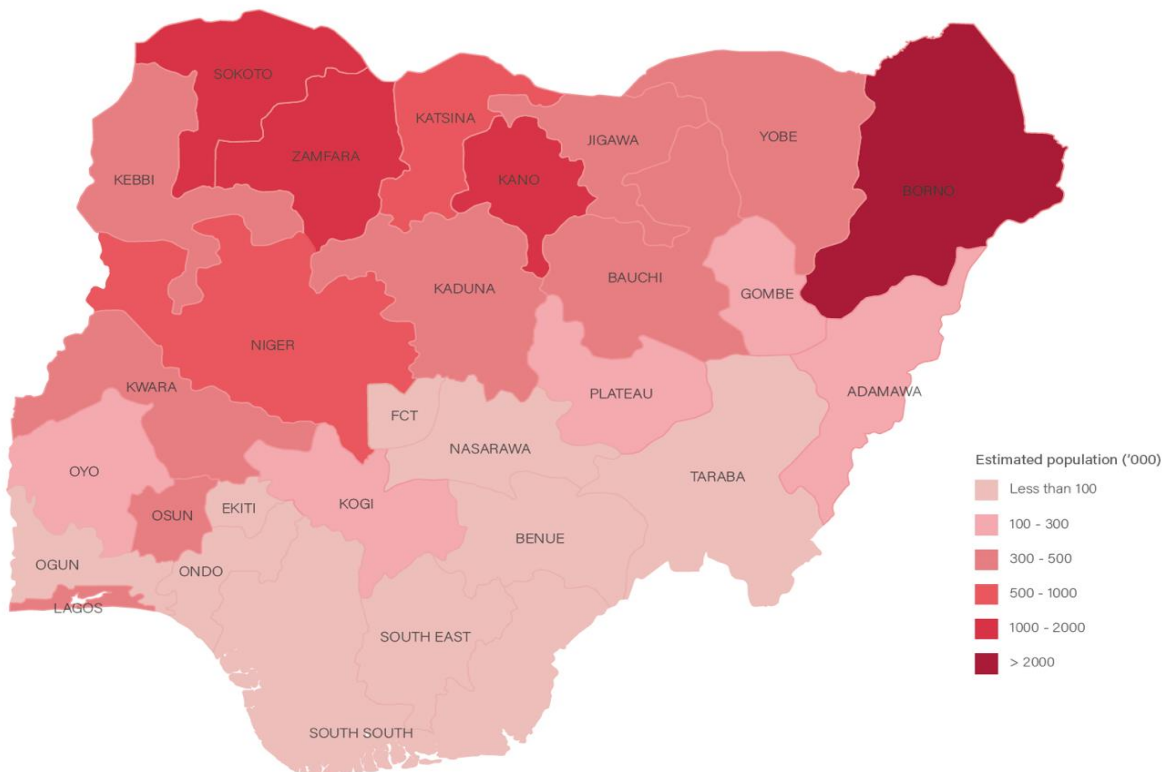
In recognition of the need to generate political will to address the issue, there is outreach with the Northern Governors Forum to galvanize their support and commitment. This has resulted in statements of support for this initiative as well as a stakeholder summit to facilitate mapping. The Project would be tailor-made for different affected age groups and targets those at risk, including street-affected children. There is also a monitoring, evaluation, and knowledge management component

Working in partnership with UNICEF and UNDP, the Government will develop the current concept into a fully-fledged and costed offer/ project with objectives as well as milestones and themes/outputs along the lines of those already set out by the Government which would be required as a basis for the success of this initiative. The Project seeks to complement and expand on the wide range of actors working in this space and to engage these actors not simply as implementers but as active participants in the design and development of the engagements. For this reason, the design phase will factor in broad-based consultations to ensure engagements are informed by lessons learned and the context. This will also help ensure a continuous process of cross-fertilisation and adaptation between our project and those of our partners.

On completion of the Project, the Consultant(s) in partnership with the office of the Special Advisor to the President on Social Investments, UNDP and UNICEF will also support development of informational materials, briefing notes and other materials to support the launch of the Project.

The National Consultant will work with the International Consultant and in close collaboration with the Special Adviser to the President on Social Protection, UNDP and UNICEF in development of the Project including development of methodological note, in-country consultations, development of the Project, incorporation of comments and validation of the Project as well the launch of the Project by the Government of Nigeria

FIGURE 1 ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ALMAJIRIS BY STATE



**Partnerships:** The response is coordinated through the Special Advisor to the President on Social Investments. The response will require a whole of government approach as well as partnership with UN System, academia and Civil Society. The high levels of confidence placed on President Buhari by the Almajiri population, and by association the government, provides a unique and opportune moment for the current administration to provide meaningful leadership in modernising the Almajiri system

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## II. EXPECTED OUTPUT

The PIP will deliver the following :

1. **Overall framework and Project Document (with funding architecture) developed.** In partnership with the Special Advisor to the President on Social Investments, UNDP and UNICEF will design an overall framework: The Special Advisor to the President on Social Investments Office have already designed a concept which will be the basis for action but broadened according to consultations etc. as well as key needs to address the issue. The framework should also set out a system of coordination to ensure broad based collaboration, communications plan, monitoring and evaluation systems and propose funding mechanisms. UNDP (in partnership with UNICEF) will support project development including launch
2. **Initiation of priority interventions:** establishment of coordination and oversight mechanisms and commencement of activities in pilot states (*it is expected that in the main, activities will fall under the new approved project that will be developed although new activities may be initiated during this phase*)

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## III. KEY ACTIVITIES

To ensure that the strategy comprehensively addresses the potential risks to development at both the systemic level as well as among masses of now young adults who have gone through the system, a two-pronged approach is envisaged. The first approach focuses on the current system and the second approach on the young adults who have gone through the system. The success of both approaches is strongly dependent on political leadership and trust. The following are the broad objectives of the strategy.

**Capitalise on the current trust and confidence in the President:** The strategy for modernization of the Almajiri system capitalises on and is strongly anchored in the trust and confidence the Almajiri population place on the current President and administration – and therefore its success relies on the administration to own and lead the implementation of the strategy. The Special Advisor to the President on Social Investments is leading this process.

The PIP will support development of a comprehensive framework based on the concept which their office has developed and also outreach with key partners which has been ongoing for some time including key ministries, State Governors, private sector partners, CSOs, UN Agencies, development partners and others.

**Modernising the current system:** The strategy is based on incentivising modernisation through the provision of basic services/needs in 'exchange' for the inclusion of literacy and numeracy classes as well as adopting standards of good governance of religious institutions, including a well-rounded curriculum for religious education. Moreover, in anticipation of eventual graduation from the system, an apprenticeship training programme is also envisaged to be added to the curriculum. Political leadership is particularly crucial for this proposal to trade the practice of begging for more productive learning activities and honing of skills.

The Government have developed a concept which focusing on the following

- central coordination : framework of services for implementation in the states
- development of strategy that addresses peculiarities of Almajiri crisis in Northern Nigeria. The Government has expanded scope to look at out of school children which is a problem also in the south
- systematic change: change management approach centered around coordination of standards, learning, sharing, preventative communication strategy, incentivization for Mallams and impact at scale. The strategy involves bringing together traditional, religious and government stakeholders to drive systematic change

some of the activities that have been suggested include: (*note these may be subjected to change during the project design period*)

- *Basic needs/services*

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services and a school feeding programme would be initiated, with the latter embedded within Nigeria's School Feeding Programme to ensure sustainability. The approach ensures that the Mallams continue to play an important role while at the same time the children are protected against illiteracy as well as provided with basic needs. The success of integrating literacy curricula within the Almajiri system will translate to laudable progress towards the attainment of SDG 4 and ensure that the right to education truly takes a stronghold across the country.

- *Strengthening governance of Almajiri schools*

With a view to strengthen the quality of religious education, curriculums that are grounded in the scholarly heritage and sciences of critical thinking will be expanded. Moreover, effective standards to promote good governance, high standards of education/curriculum, training on effective governance, good leadership and safeguarding – all with a view to strengthening the resilience of religious institutions – will form part of this strategy. Toolkits will be cascaded through Training of Trainer programmes and linked to the network of mosques and madrassas. A certification system for the schools (bronze, silver, gold) will be enacted to generate incentive structures and to track implementation

- *Apprenticeship training*

Partnership with the private sector will be formed to align apprenticeship trainings to the market's current and future needs for low-medium skilled labour. For instance, trainings that focus on skills required for the set up and maintenance of green cities can be explored, including for instance on recycling systems, sustainable local businesses, overseeing the revitalisation and/or management of open spaces, regulatory requirements for reduction of emissions, etc. Structured entrepreneurial trainings will also form part of the apprenticeship program so that students are equipped with the necessary skills and mindset to identify and launch new ventures. The objective of the apprenticeship trainings is to have a pool of trained individuals that the private sector can tap into but who are also self-sufficient to start new businesses and enterprises after completing their studies.

To monitor the implementation and compliance of this 'exchange', methods used by the successful and largest school feeding programme – India's Midday Meal Scheme – will be employed. An Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) and an automated Management Information System (MIS) will be set up to compile a real time database. Essentially, the IVRS is a cost-effective automated telephony system that interacts with callers and gathers the required information and routes calls to the appropriate recipient (if required). Both Mallams and teachers deployed to conduct the literacy and numeracy classes will be required to take and report on attendance of the children fed and taught each day – through the IVRS system. The unit of analysis will be the school thus real time information flow will come directly from implementation of the activities. Discrepancies between numbers fed and attending the classes will be detected almost immediately and can be investigated and appropriate responses applied. The real time monitoring system will be combined with weekly evaluation/tests administered to the students to observe progress as well as random and regular inspections by State Government Officers from different State departments. In addition to attendance, the IVRS will be set up to capture the quality and quantity, cleanliness and wholesomeness of the meals served. A similar set of indicators will be established within the IVRS system to promote the transparency of curricula and to track implementation of activities targeted to strengthen the governance and resilience of religious institutions. It is advised that the monitoring system is centralised and embedded within UBEC's Office of the Deputy Executive Secretary (Technical) department.

Finally, to ensure that all possible residual incentives are addressed, the modernisation strategy will establish a monthly payment system for the Mallams – mirroring the system that exists for public servants across the country. Thus, while integrating literacy and numeracy skills into the system, the system itself will also be integrated and aligned with the nation’s existing infrastructures. Through further discussions with stakeholders, the strategy will identify a sustainable solution to provide Mallams with a steady income.

**Interventions addressing those ‘graduated’/left the system:** For the young adults who have gone through the system, the main objective is to embed them within the larger development agenda. Skills and capacity development trainings will be similar to those offered in the schools – but accelerated. They will also include expanded opportunities for adult education. The strategy proposes to set up a large-scale volunteer system for low-skilled work that are aligned to market demands as well the country’s initiatives. For instance, significant cash for work opportunities targeting the adult Almajiris will be mobilised, such as through the Great Green Wall initiative, etc. These proposals in particular address consensuses that emerged during UNDP’s pilot research. With limited or no skills and earning half of the mandated minimum wage, the respondents expressed desire for a second chance at secular education as well as employment opportunities and dignity in work. Interventions for this group will be aimed at ensuring vulnerabilities do not coalesce to perpetuate security risks in the country. Simultaneously, this targeted strategy will assertively halt the considerable number of Nigerians destined for extreme poverty and transform them into active and productive citizens. Maintaining the current status quo would be to risk to peace, security, and development in the country.

**OPERATIONALISATION OF THE STRATEGY:** The above proposed interventions outline initial thoughts around a holistic modernisation strategy. They are put forward as a starting point for further discussion and fine tuning. Likewise, specifics, such as whether a pilot round will be required, would need deliberation. Given the sensitive nature of the challenge at hand, for the strategy – or any related work - strongly hinges on the *moderniser* to lead the *modernisation* strategy itself. Accordingly, the President’s ownership and leadership, followed closely by local and state level leadership, is absolutely indispensable for its success and in impressing upon all stakeholders that the strategy is not a means of abolishing the system but rather a corrective measure to bring the Almajiri system back to its true essence – to *accumulate knowledge*.

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#### IV. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The PIP will be managed by UNDP under the overall oversight of the UNDP Resident Representative and programmatic guidance from the Deputy Resident Representative in charge of Programme. The project development and management team will comprise of UNDP Rule of Law and Human Rights Advisor (as the focal point); relevant colleagues from Communications Unit, HR, Finance and Procurement. The Special Advisor to the President on Social Investments will represent Government on the Project Management Team and a slot will be availed to a representative from development partners. A pool of individual consultants or consulting firm will be contracted to provide specific services during the implementation phase. UNDP PMSU will provide quality assurance and monitoring support of the PIP.

During the PIP, a temporary Project Board will be constituted with the mandate of providing policy oversight and strategic direction. This board will be chaired by the UNDP Resident Representative and the Special Advisor to the President on Social Investments or his delegate.

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**V. MONITORING**

UNDP Regular Monitoring procedures will be applied to ensure effective monitoring of the PIP. PMSU will provide quality assurance support while UNDP Focal Point of the Project will be responsible for the production of regular briefing and progress reports.

## VI. ANNUAL WORK PLAN

Period<sup>1</sup>: 1 January 2021- 31 December 2021

| EXPECTED OUTPUTS<br><i>And baseline, indicators including annual targets</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                       | PLANNED ACTIVITIES<br><i>List activity results and associated actions</i>                                                                                                                                               | TIMEFRAME |    |    |    | RESPONSIBLE PARTY | PLANNED BUDGET |                                                                   |        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----|----|----|-------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Q1        | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |                   | Funding Source | Budget Description                                                | Amount |
| <b>OUTPUT 1: Overall framework and Project Document (with funding architecture) developed</b><br><br><b>Baseline:</b> concept note developed<br><br><b>Indicators:</b> launch of new programme<br><br><b>Targets (2021):</b> development of framework and programme doc and launch | <b>Activity 1:</b> development of programme framework and fund framework                                                                                                                                                | X         | X  | X  |    | UNDP              | UNDP           | Consultancy services, technical assistance, and professional fees | 70,000 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Activity 2:</b> support to implementation/ oversight unit at Special Advisor to the President on Social Investments supporting setting up of systems, outreach to key stakeholders and initiation of this initiative | X         | X  | X  | X  | UNDP              |                | Consultancy services, technical assistance, and professional fees | 50,000 |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Activity 3:</b> launch of programme and outreach                                                                                                                                                                     |           |    | X  | X  | UNDP              |                | Travel, DSA, workshops, communications                            | 50,000 |

<sup>1</sup> Maximum 18 months



|                       |                                               |  |  |   |   |      |  |                                                                  |                  |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|------|--|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
|                       | Activity 4: initiation of priority activities |  |  | x | x | UNDP |  | Consultancy services, technical assistance and professional fees | \$100,000        |
| <b>OUTPUT 1 TOTAL</b> |                                               |  |  |   |   |      |  |                                                                  | <b>\$270,000</b> |