



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

VOTES AND PROCEEDINGS

Thursday, 12 March, 2020

1. The House met at 11.24 a.m. Mr Speaker read the Prayers.
2. The House recited the National Pledge
3. **Votes and Proceedings**
Mr Speaker announced that he had examined and approved the *Votes and Proceedings* of Wednesday, 11 March, 2020.

The Votes and Proceedings was adopted by unanimous consent.

4. **Announcement**

Visitors in the Gallery:

Mr Speaker recognised the presence of the following:

- (i) Staff and Students of *Excellent Grade International Schools*, Kubwa, Abuja;
- (ii) Staff and Students of *Fountain International School*, Keffi, Nasarawa State;
- (iii) Staff and Students of *Wilson Matt Academy*, Nyanya, Abuja;
- (iv) Chairman *Zakat, and other Personalities from Bodinga/Tureta/D/Shuni Federal Constituency*, Sokoto State,
- (v) A team of four Staff of the *Parliament of Ghana*; and
- (vi) Staff and Students of *Master's Vessel Seminary School, Osumenyi*, Nnewi South, Anambra State.

5. **The Plight of Out-of-School Children in Nigeria**

Mr Speaker made the following Remarks:

Protocols:

Good morning honourable colleagues. I welcome you all to this special plenary session of the House of Representatives, and I thank you for being here this morning.

2. *We have come here today to consider the matter of the millions of children in our country who are out of school, and who as a result are denied their fundamental right to receive the training and skills acquisition opportunities that will allow them to have better lives than their parents before them, and provide a better future for their offspring.*
3. *We are here to consider the failures of policy development and implementation, the vagaries of culture and religion that have contributed to the plight of these young people. We are here to advance solutions to this problem.*
4. *We are here to act in the best interests of our people by ensuring that the solutions presented here today are formulated into actionable policy plans to be implemented diligently, with haste. This is a commitment that we made in our Legislative Agenda, and we will live up to this and all other commitments which we have freely made before God and the Nigerian people who have chosen us to represent them here in this hallowed chamber.*
5. *Over the last twenty years, the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has committed to a programme of educational reform that has resulted in the allocation of significant sums of money to fund basic education access in our country. These reforms have been intended mostly to address the availability gap by building new schools and providing teachers in previously underserved areas. These investments have not yielded the desired outcomes.*
6. *In too many parts of the country, the school attendance rates have not improved, and the quality of education being received by those who enrol and attend still falls far short of our most fundamental expectations. We must consider that perhaps the time for a massive course correction has come.*
7. *That process of course correction must begin first with a critical assessment of everything we have done so far, so that we can objectively determine for ourselves what works and what doesn't, what can be learned from reform efforts and what is necessary to ensure that no Nigerian child, born in this age will ever be denied the benefits of an empowering education.*
8. *Let no one be left in any doubt, we will not eradicate poverty from our land or meet the challenges of insecurity, we cannot defeat ignorance and strife or attract foreign investment in significant numbers to make a substantial economic difference until we have ensured for all our people access to a modern education that empowers them to participate fully in the 21st-century knowledge economy.*
9. *We have spent the past two decades building schools. It has not been enough. Now is the time to lift our ambitions to the consideration of bigger things and begin to build capacity for the future survival of our nation. The complex interconnectivity of modern life means that we cannot be satisfied with merely shoving more children into failing and failed school systems just so we can maintain the appearance of education access. We must aim for better.*
10. *An enlightened education gives hope and the confidence that through the studied application of the human mind and human ability, individuals can remake their existence and make their world better.*
11. *Education excellence calls for ongoing curriculum reform, and a broad embrace of technology in our schools. At the earliest possible stage of their education, we must begin to equip our young people with the skills they need to thrive in this technocentric new world.*
12. *It is not enough to build schools if we cannot also provide properly trained, suitably remunerated and passionately motivated teachers. We have a crisis of not enough teachers across the country today, a crisis so severe, that many of the schools we have built are at risk of becoming empty monuments. This crisis requires of us that we embrace unorthodox thinking and options we never considered before.*

13. *It is in that spirit, that I will seek legislation to amend the National Youth Service Act to allow the corps to establish a "Teaching for Nigeria" pathway which will allow for the identification, recruitment and deployment of willing, capable and promising young Nigerians to serve as teachers in underserved areas during their service year and for a number of years after, in exchange for a Federal Government commitment to fund their post-graduate education in addition to whatever allowances they might receive during their deployment.*

14. *Education excellence also calls for administrative accountability and a fair admissions process across the board. We cannot continue to relegate huge swathes of our national population to second class citizenship through the operation of an affirmative action system that is rooted in outdated ideas about our nationhood.*

15. *Lifting our ambitions to the consideration of bigger things requires of us that we commit ourselves to a determined and sustained effort to confront the cultural and religious beliefs and practices that influence decisions about education.*

16. *A child's gender should never determine whether they get an education or not. This should no longer be a controversial position to take. Our constitution guarantees all our children a right to basic education. We must now act to live up to that obligation. All our nation's children are God's children and we owe to each of them the same responsibilities regardless of their gender, the location or circumstances of their birth.*

17. *If we do nothing else today, let us all take advantage of this special session to tell ourselves the reality, so that we may liberate ourselves from the shackles of limited thought and through our collective efforts, achieve the vision of a nation where no child is left behind, where no child is forgotten and all God's children have the opportunity to fulfil the highest achievements of which they are inherently capable. That is the challenge. We intend to meet it.*

18. *Shortly, we will view a documentary on our nation's millions of out of school children. This is intended to serve as a visual and shocking reminder of why we are gathered here today. Afterwards, I will invite Hon. Wunmi Ogunlola, who will act on my behalf to bring a motion under the purview of Order Eight, Rule 4, matters of urgent public importance so that the House may commence debate on the subject matter, and take other actions as it may deem fit.*

19. *Honourable colleagues, this is the time for truth-telling but it is not an occasion for finger-pointing. This is not an arena for trafficking in destructive stereotypes or invitation to pander to the base instincts that have too often in the past stood in the way of development and progress in our national life. Truth-telling is an act of love and respect; love of country and respect for one another. Let all the submissions we make today be grounded in these eternal ideals.*

20. *I thank you all most graciously for your presence here today. God bless you all. And God bless our Federal Republic of Nigeria.*

Mr Speaker invited Hon. Omowumi Olubunmi Ogunlola to move a Motion of urgent public importance on the subject.

Need to Proffer Lasting Solutions on the Millions of Out-of-School Children in Nigeria:

Hon. Omowumi Olubunmi Ogunlola (Ijero/Ekiti West/Efon Federal Constituency) introduced the matter and prayed the House to:

- (a) consider and approve the matter as one of urgent public importance; and*
- (b) suspend Order Eight, Rule 4 (3) to allow debate on the matter forthwith.*

Question that the matter be considered as one of urgent public importance — Agreed to.

Question that the House do suspend Order Eight, Rule 4 (3) to enable it debate the matter forthwith — Agreed to.

Need to Proffer Lasting Solutions on the Millions of Out-of-School Children in Nigeria:

The House:

Notes that education is a source of knowledge which changes the immediate environment in particular and the world in general into something better as education can be used to uplift or elevate the social and economic conditions of the society;

Also notes that the importance of education can be likened to oxygen to the extent that a nation with a large number of her people lacking quality education is akin to a nation without life as education is the surest means of raising millions of people out of poverty and offering them a chance to live full lives of personal achievement in the 21st-century knowledge economy;

Further notes that the figure of out-of-school children in Nigeria as provided by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is evidence of a national crisis of a severe proportion that unless urgent action is taken, we are at risk of a lost generation of young people;

Disturbed that after years of expensive interventions by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the country has not achieved any sustained reduction in these dire statistics, and the possibility still exists that the numbers will get worse in the coming years;

Also disturbed that across the country, many children who are supposed to be in school are roaming the streets as beggars and petty hawkers; others are employed in menial roles whilst others become victims and perpetrators of crime;

Certain that millions of these children will age out of the criteria for consideration as children, without being equipped with the basic communication and arithmetic skills they need to pursue further education opportunities or to find and keep meaningful employment and will be forgotten, left to fend for themselves in a difficult marketplace with the obvious resultant effects being youth restiveness leading to more security challenges for the country;

Aware that the numbers of out-of-school children include those under the *Almajiri* system, as well as others who due to economic, cultural and social factors, including refugee status, are unable to take advantage of the educational opportunities currently available;

Conscious therefore that if the high number of out-of-school children in Nigeria is a result of either a failure of policy or a failure of implementation or both as assumed above, the country cannot keep doing the same thing and expect anything different: a correction is needed, and this process must begin first with a critical and unbiased assessment of what has been done so far, so as to understand why it hasn't worked and how to do better going forward;

Cognizant that by failing to ensure that these children are in school, Nigeria, in effect raising a generation of victims and victimizers, potential criminals and insurgents with the manifestations of the worst possibilities already being with us, and promise to become even more severe with time without immediate determined and urgent action;

Resolves to:

- (i) convene a special public hearing to receive and consider the views, submissions and concerns of stakeholders and citizens, on the matter of out-of-school children in Nigeria to identify the unique cultural, religious, social and economic factors that cause school dropout and failure to enroll children in school across the country;

- (ii) commence the process of amending the National Youth Service Corps Act to establish a programme to identify, recruit and train ,willing, capable and promising young Nigerians to serve as teachers in under served areas;
- (iii) mandate the Committee on Basic Education to carry out a holistic investigation into the matter of Nigeria's out-of-school children to ascertain amongst other things:
 - (a) the current figure of out-of-school children in Nigeria, including specific numbers in each state of the Federation,
 - (b) an assessment of total Federal Government expenditure on basic education over the last ten years to identify how and what these funds have been spent on, and
 - (c) the status of all ongoing capital projects by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) across the country;
- (iv) also mandate the Committee on Basic Education to report back within 4 (four) weeks (*Hon. Omowumi Olubunmi Ogunlola — Ijero/Ekiti West/Efon Federal Constituency*).

Debate.

Amendments Proposed:

- (i) *Leave out* Prayer (iii) (a) and *insert* as follows:
“collaborate with the State Governments and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to determine the current figures of out-of-school children in Nigeria” (*Hon. Babangida Ibrahim — Malumfashi/Kafur Federal Constituency*).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

- (ii) *Leave out* Prayer (iii) (c) and *insert* as follows:
“determine the level of intervention by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in the last five (5) years and the state of current interventions” (*Hon. Babangida Ibrahim — Malumfashi/Kafur Federal Constituency*).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

- (iii) *Insert* a new Prayer (iii) (d) as follows:
“review and streamline relevant legislations on basic education in Nigeria especially the mandate of UBEC as it relates to first line charge” (*Hon. Babangida Ibrahim — Malumfashi/Kafur Federal Constituency*).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

- (iv) In Prayer (iv), immediately after the word “within”, *leave out* the words four (4) and *insert* the word “eight (8)” (*Hon. Abdullahi Sa’ad Abdulkadir — Ningi/Warji Federal Constituency*).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

- (v) In Prayer (iii) and (iv), immediately after the words “Basic Education”, *insert* the words “and Labour, Employment and Productivity” (*Hon. Tajudeen Abbas — Zaria Federal Constituency*).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

- (vi) *Insert a new Prayer (v) as follows:*
“Urge the Federal Ministry of Education to liaise with relevant agencies to re-appraise all previous interventions meant to address the problems of out-of-school children and over-haul all the programmes” (Hon. Muhammad Umar Jega — Aliero/Gwandu/Jega Federal Constituency).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

- (vii) *Insert a new Prayer (vi) as follows:*
“Urge the Federal Government to develop a social recreation programme specifically on the issue of *Almajiri* and its negative impacts on children in the society especially in Northern Nigeria” (Hon. Aishatu Jibril Dukku — Dukku/Nafada Federal Constituency).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

- (viii) *Insert a new Prayer (vii) as follows:*
“Urge the Federal Government and its development partners to embark on aggressive campaign to discourage parents from sending their wards to distant places as *Almajiris*” (Hon. Aishatu Jibril Dukku — Dukku/Nafada Federal Constituency).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

- (ix) *Insert a new Prayer (viii) as follows:*
“Also urge the Federal Government to provide an all encompassing alternative system of education consistent with Western education” (Hon. Aishatu Jibril Dukku — Dukku/Nafada Federal Constituency).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

- (x) *Insert a new Prayer (ix) as follows:*
“Urge the Federal Government to amend the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) Act, to provide stringent punishment for parents who refuse to send their children to school” (Hon. Aishatu Jibril Dukku — Dukku/Nafada Federal Constituency).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

- (xi) *Insert a new Prayer (x) as follows:*
“Urge the Federal Ministry of Education to review the school curriculum to reflect the needs of the society” (Hon. Egberongbe Mufutau Adewale — Apapa Federal Constituency).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

- (xii) *Insert a new Prayer (xi) as follows:*
“Call on the Federal Ministry of Education to propose an amendment to the Universal Basic Education Act, to address the problems in its implementation” (Hon. Tolu Akande Sadipe — Oluyole Federal Constituency).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

- (xiii) *Insert a new Prayer (xii) as follows:*
“Mandate the Committee on Basic Education to conduct investigation on funds expended on basic education and infrastructure” (Hon. Tolu Akande Sadipe — Oluyole Federal Constituency).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

(xiv) *Insert a new Prayer (xiii) as follows:*

“Urge the Federal Ministry of Education to set up an agency to monitor children employed as domestic workers with a view to sanctioning their employers, to serve as a deterrent” (*Hon. Tolu Akande Sadipe — Oluyole Federal Constituency*).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

(xv) *Insert a new Prayer (xiv) as follows:*

“Urge the Federal Government to adopt Pondok Quranic education system, as practised in Indonesian and Malaysian where Technical, vocational and entrepreneurship skills, with numeracy and English/Arabic literacy are integrated into the Almajiri education” (*Hon. Shehu B. Kakale — Bodinga/Dange-Shuni/Tureta Federal Constituency*).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

(xvi) *Insert a new Prayer (xv) as follows:*

“invite; traditional leaders, religious leaders, the Ministry of Education, UBEC, Health/Youth, Agriculture, women affairs, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Bank of Industry (BOI), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Water Resources, Humanitarians Affairs and Social Investment to participate in a public hearing” (*Hon. Shehu B. Kakale — Bodinga/Dange-Shuni/Tureta Federal Constituency*).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

(xvii) *Insert a new Prayer (xvi) as follows:*

“Mandate the Committee on Basic Education to create a Sub-Committee on out-of-school children with specific terms of reference” (*Hon. Shehu B. Kakale — Bodinga/Dange-Shuni/Tureta Federal Constituency*).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

(viii) *Insert a new Prayer (xvii) as follows:*

“Mandate each Member to use the last weekend of March 2020 to organize a town hall meeting on the importance of education” (*Hon. Alhassan Ado Garba — House Leader*).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

(ix) *Insert a new Prayer (xviii) as follows:*

“Urge the Federal Government to propose an amendment to the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Act, to encourage teaching by Youth Corpers during their service year” (*Hon. Alhassan Ado Garba — House Leader*).

Question that the amendment be made — Agreed to.

Question on the Motion as amended — Agreed to.

The House:

Noted that education is a source of knowledge which changes the immediate environment in particular and the world in general into something better as education can be used to uplift or elevate the social and economic conditions of the society;

Also noted that the importance of education can be likened to oxygen to the extent that a nation with a large number of her people lacking quality education is akin to a nation without life as education is the surest means of raising millions of people out of poverty and offering them a chance to live full lives of personal achievement in the 21st-century knowledge economy;

Further noted that the figure of out-of-school children in Nigeria as provided by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) is evidence of a national crisis of a severe proportion that unless urgent action is taken, we are at risk of a lost generation of young people;

Disturbed that after years of expensive interventions by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the country has not achieved any sustained reduction in these dire statistics, and the possibility still exists that the numbers will get worse in the coming years;

Also disturbed that across the country, many children who are supposed to be in school are roaming the streets as beggars and petty hawkers; others are employed in menial roles whilst others become victims and perpetrators of crime;

Certain that millions of these children will age out of the criteria for consideration as children, without being equipped with the basic communication and arithmetic skills they need to pursue further education opportunities or to find and keep meaningful employment and will be forgotten, left to fend for themselves in a difficult marketplace with the obvious resultant effects being youth restiveness leading to more security challenges for the country;

Aware that the numbers of out-of-school children include those under the *Almajiri* system, as well as others who due to economic, cultural and social factors, including refugee status, are unable to take advantage of the educational opportunities currently available;

Conscious therefore that if the high number of out-of-school children in Nigeria is a result of either a failure of policy or a failure of implementation or both as assumed above, the country cannot keep doing the same thing and expect anything different: a correction is needed, and this process must begin first with a critical and unbiased assessment of what has been done so far, so as to understand why it hasn't worked and how to do better going forward;

Cognizant that by failing to ensure that these children are in school, Nigeria, in effect raising a generation of victims and victimizers, potential criminals and insurgents with the manifestations of the worst possibilities already being with us, and promise to become even more severe with time without immediate determined and urgent action;

Resolved to:

- (i) convene a special public hearing to receive and consider the views, submissions and concerns of stakeholders and citizens, on the matter of out-of-school children in Nigeria to identify the unique cultural, religious, social and economic factors that cause school dropout and failure to enroll children in school across the country;
- (ii) commence the process of amending the National Youth Service Corps Act to establish a programme to identify, recruit and train, willing, capable and promising young Nigerians to serve as teachers in under served areas;
- (iii) mandate the Committees on Basic Education, and Labour, Employment and Productivity to carry out a holistic investigation into the matter of Nigeria's out-of-school children to ascertain amongst other things:
 - (a) the current figures of out-of-school children in Nigeria in collaboration with the State Governments and FCT,

- (b) the total Federal Government expenditure on basic education over the last ten years and identify how and what these funds have been spent on.
 - (c) the level of intervention by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in the last five (5) years and the state of current interventions, and
 - (d) the mandate of UBEC as it relates to first line charge and also review and streamline relevant legislations on basic education in Nigeria especially:
- (iv) also mandate the Committees on Basic Education, and Labour, Employment and Productivity to report back within eight (8) weeks;
 - (v) urge the Federal Ministry of Education to liaise with relevant agencies to re-appraise all previous interventions meant to address the problems of out-of-school children and over-haul all the programmes;
 - (vi) urge the Federal Government to develop a social recreation programme specifically on the issue of *Almajiri* and its negative impacts on children in the society especially in Northern Nigeria;
 - (vii) also urge the Federal Government and its development partners to embark on aggressive campaign to discourage parents from sending their wards to distant places as *Almajiris*;
 - (viii) further urge the Federal Government to provide an all encompassing alternative system of education consistent with Western education;
 - (ix) again urge the Federal Government to amend the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) Act, to provide stringent punishment for parents who refuse to send their children to school;
 - (x) also urge the Federal Ministry of Education to review the school curriculum to reflect the needs of the society;
 - (xi) call on the Federal Ministry of Education to propose an amendment to the Universal Basic Education Act, to address the problems in its implementation;
 - (xii) also mandate the Committee on Basic Education to conduct investigation on funds expended on basic education and infrastructure;
 - (xiii) further urge the Federal Ministry of Education to set up an agency to monitor children employed as domestic workers with a view to sanctioning their employers, to serve as a deterrent;
 - (xiv) still urge the Federal Government to adopt Pondok Quranic education system, as practised in Indonesian and Malaysian where Technical, vocational and entrepreneurship skills, with numeracy and English/Arabic literacy are integrated into the *Almajiri* education;
 - (xv) invite traditional leaders, religious leaders, the Ministry of Education, UBEC, Health/Youth, Agriculture, Women Affairs, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Bank of Industry (BOI), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Water Resources, Humanitarians Affairs and Social Investment to participate in a public hearing;
 - (xvi) further mandate the Committee on Basic Education to create a Sub-Committee on out-of-school children with specific terms of reference;

- (xvii) mandate each Member to use the last weekend of March 2020 to organize a town hall meeting on the importance of education;
- (xviii) urge the Federal Government to propose an amendment to the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Act, to encourage teaching by Youth Corpers during their service year (**HR. 104/03/2020**).

6. Adjournment

That the House do adjourn till Tuesday, 17 March, 2020 at 11.00 a.m. (Hon. Alhassan Ado Garba — House Leader).

The House adjourned accordingly at 4.20 p.m.

Femi Hakeem Gbajabiamila
Speaker