Beyond Assumptions

EDOREN and the popularisation of evidence-based data and research in Nigeria’s education system

Motunrayo Alaka, Alan Penny, Pius A I Obanya

22.06.2018
Preface / Acknowledgements

Special thanks goes to the EDOREN team led by Professor Oladele Akogun and Florian Friedrich for the confidence reposed to deliver on this project.

The team gave the needed support from the commissioning of the project to the end. Their commitment to service shone through as they made themselves available for guidance and clarification even at odd hours and on weekends.

It is to the credit of their painstakingness that we were able to complete the project.

Special appreciation is due to the various EDOREN partners from across Nigeria and outside who made themselves available to be interviewed.

Their insightful contributions are all the report is about. Thanks are also due to the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) and Oxford Policy Management’s education portfolio for wider support.
Executive summary

The generation of verifiable and usable data for policy making and strategic development is possible. Education Data, Research and Evaluation in Nigeria (EDOREN), has proven this in five short years.

This report is a compilation of stories of various persons and their impression of how EDOREN has worked over five years to demonstrate this to various stakeholders through capacity building in the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of going beyond relying on assumptions to gather, sort, analyse, test and apply evidence-based data. It is an account of how knowledge and evidence interventions in the education sector in Nigeria have led to tangible and sustainable impacts in the sector.

EDOREN has over time been able to present the narratives of the realities of people, places, and events through rigorous research. These have influenced the application of thorough research to inform practice and policy direction. It has brought tangibility to the generic questions around the number of schools, the number of students and teachers, teachers’ effectiveness, issues of educating the girl child, persons living with disabilities and other inclusivity matters.

One clear conclusion from this is: EDOREN has moved stakeholders in several Nigerian states’ education sectors, as well as several federal education sector organisations, from the point of working on assumptions to a point where the supply and demand of evidence-based data is popular. The organisation achieved this through rigorous stakeholders’ involvement.

At the end of five years, impressions have changed, capacities have been built, collaborations forged, while practices and policies formulated impacted the community with needs. Despite this massive success, there is still a need for a successor to EDOREN to work on a continued strategy for knowledge management, dissemination, and engagement, so that the result of its works extends from an immediate stakeholders group to a larger public circle.

This may be achieved through an elaborate media campaign for the programme’s impact as it closes. It is also necessary for EDOREN to ensure that it finds an accessible warehouse for its many publications so that it continues to be a valid reference point for developing education in Nigeria.

For Nigeria, EDOREN’s essence remains a need that is begging to be sustained as a national policy and culture for education and all other sectors.

The capacities EDOREN has built in individuals and organisations, the examples it has shown, the successes it has recorded, the lessons it has learned, and the gaps revealed would continue to show a blazing trail that others can follow and improve on for years to come.
Table of contents

Preface / Acknowledgements i
Executive summary ii
List of tables and figures v
List of abbreviations vi
1 Context and Background 1
   The Project 1
   Purpose of the Report 2
   Methodology 2
   Table 1 Institutions consulted and persons interviewed 3
2 THE EVIDENCE 5
  2.1 Revelations from Documentary Sources 5
  2.2 Key themes emerging from interviews with the Wider Partnership Community 6
     2.2.1 EDOREN 6
     Table 2 EDOREN’S Key Inputs in DFID (N) Funded Projects 6
     2.2.2 DFID 9
     2.2.3 Other Partners: The World Bank, UNICEF, FME, UBEC, the British Council, USAID, Mott MacDonald (TDP) and OPML 10
  2.3 Testimonies by Project Beneficiaries 11
     2.3.1 STRIKING IMPRESSIONS ABOUT EDOREN 11
     EDOREN and evidence-based research 11
     i. The absolute need for EDOREN 12
     ii. Stakeholder empowerment 12
     iii. Perception of change 13
     iv. Perception change 15
     2.3.2 CAPACITY STRENGTHENING FOR EVIDENCE GENERATION AND USE 16
     i. The exposure 16
     ii. Improved capacities 17
     2.3.3 USE OF DATA: DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF EVIDENCE 18
     i. Data cannot be faulted 18
     ii. Data collaboration 19
     iii. Creating the platform for real change 20
     iv. Collaboration and policy formulation 20
     2.3.4 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND DISSEMINATION 21
     i. Some distance to effective knowledge management and dissemination 21
     ii. Sharing research results 22
     iii. EDOREN website as a repository of research work 22
     iv. Carrying stakeholders along 23
     v. Strategic engagement 23
     2.3.5 TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR EVIDENCE UPTAKE 24
     i. Policy Formulation 24
     ii. A useful government resource 25
     2.3.6 RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSIVENESS 26
     i. Unique leadership and team 26
     ii. Ability to Change 27
     2.3.7 EDOREN AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OBJECTIVES 27
     i. Enduring partnerships 28
     ii. EDOREN and its enduring work 28
     2.3.8 INFLUENCE AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT 29
3 CONCLUSIONS 32
   3.1 General Impressions 32
4 Recommendations 34

© EDOREN
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ON A FINAL NOTE</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX A  THE CASE RECORD--Extracts from Annual EDOREN Review Report</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.1 EXTRACT from the 2013/4 Annual Report</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.2 EXTRACT from the 2014/5 Annual Report</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3 EXTRACT from the 2015/6 Annual Report</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3.1 Evaluations and reviews</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3.2 Independent studies on key basic education issued in Nigeria</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3.3 Education database, EMIS, and ASC work</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.3.4 The production and support of derived knowledge and dissemination products</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of tables and figures

Table 1 Institutions consulted and persons interviewed ............................................. 3
Table 2 EDOREN’S Key Inputs in DFID (N) Funded Projects ........................................ 6
# List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEEPEN</td>
<td>Developing Effective Private Education in Nigeria, Research and Evaluation in Nigeria</td>
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<td>ESSPIN</td>
<td>Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria</td>
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<td>FME</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>FTTS</td>
<td>Female Teacher Training Scholarship Scheme</td>
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<td>ICAI</td>
<td>Independent Commission on Aid Impact</td>
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<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Area</td>
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<td>NAEC</td>
<td>National Annual Education Conference</td>
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<td>NCCE</td>
<td>National Commission for Colleges of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NOUN</td>
<td>National Open University of Nigeria</td>
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<td>NTI</td>
<td>National Teachers Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>NUT</td>
<td>Nigeria Union of Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLWD</td>
<td>Persons Living with Disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEND</td>
<td>Special Education Needs and Disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRCN</td>
<td>Teachers Research Council of Nigeria</td>
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<tr>
<td>UBEC</td>
<td>Universal Basic Education Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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1 Context and Background

The Project

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) Education Data, Research and Evaluation in Nigeria (EDOREN) project generates new evidence and understanding of how best to support equitable access and improved learning outcomes for all Nigerian children through innovation and sustainable education systems development.

The project has a national geographic scope but focuses on states with other education projects, mainly in the north of Nigeria. The beneficiaries are policy makers, government officials (national, state, LGA level), researchers/research institutions, education projects, students, teachers, head teachers. Its specific focus is on basic education.

To conceptualise its aims, EDOREN follows a Theory of Change (ToC) and associated Logframe. Part of EDOREN’s own monitoring consists of assessing its contributions towards the Higher-Level Outcomes outlined in the Logframe. EDOREN’s two central objectives are:

- To embed research, evaluation and learning in DFID’s education sector support in Nigeria. This requires adding value to, and improving the performance of, DFID Nigeria’s current basic education sector portfolio of four projects
  
  - Girl’s Education Programme (GEP3),
  
  - Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN),
  
  - Developing Effective Private Education in Nigeria (DEEPEN) and
  
  - Teacher Development Programme (TDP) up to 2018 (depending on the timeline of the individual projects themselves).

  it also involves informing DFID Nigeria’s education strategy (in the medium term, post-2016) by synthesising and interpreting the evidence and knowledge gained from current projects, from EDOREN’s independent research and advisory work in Nigeria, and by drawing on relevant comparative research.

- To enhance national capacities to generate and use quality educational data, research and evaluation for policy and strategy making.

  This objective requires all EDOREN activities, whether in support of the DFID Nigeria education portfolio, or separately, to apply well-articulated approaches to the development of individual and/or organisational capacity.

  The process involves working with stakeholders and partners to increase both the demand and the capacity to supply high-quality educational data for policy making. This is underpinned by EDOREN’s support and initiatives for improved data collection and management across a range of stakeholder programmes. Its combined ToC/logframe concept focuses on capturing the overarching objectives in two higher-level logframe outcomes:

  - Improved DFID education portfolio performance; and
  
  - Improved education policy development and implementation.

These outcomes can be related to the three intermediate outcomes:
1. EDOREN outputs are used by DFID and DFID education portfolio programmes to improve portfolio design and implementation;

   1. EDOREN outputs are used by state and federal governments to improve education policy design and service provision;

   2. Education data collection and analysis in Nigeria is improved in key states.

Purpose of the Report

This report is intended as a coherent collection of “contribution stories”, that is, qualitative, mainly interview (or where suitable, focus group) based case studies on the contributions EDOREN’s work has made over the entire programme period (with a stronger focus on the most recent year) towards achieving its outcome goal of “improved education policy development and implementation” in selected Nigerian states and at the Federal level.

It is the outcome of a study aimed at shedding a critical view on the topic, encompassing both successes and failures, such as possible missed opportunities, or failed engagement. It is intended as a rich and detailed narrative, capturing a broad range of organisations, contexts, and individuals who may have experience of EDOREN’s impact. There is a particular focus on influences achieved on policy makers’ and policy implementers’ decisions and work practices as results of data, evidence, advice, capacity strengthening, or other direct influence provided by EDOREN.

The work is a compilation of stories of various persons on their impression of how EDOREN has worked over the last five years to demonstrate this to various stakeholders through capacity building in the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of going beyond relying on assumptions to gather, sort, analyse, test and apply evidence-based data. It is an account of how ‘ordinary’ people intervened in the education sector in Nigeria and this led to tangible and sustainable impacts in the sector. EDOREN has overtime been able to present the narratives of the realities of people, places, and events through rigorous research. These have influenced the application of thorough research to inform practice and policy direction.

Methodology

The study was undertaken by two Consultants. In one case, the process began with a strategy meeting between the researcher and the EDOREN team during which a mapping of the prospective respondents was done. The respondents were selected to fit into broad groups of policy makers, collaborators, state actors, civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations and others.

The groups eventually included representatives of the Federal Ministry of Education, State Ministries of Education, State Universal Basic Education Board, British Council, United States Agency for International Development, Universities across the states, DEEPEN, ESSPIN and other individual researchers and persons from non-governmental organisations.

A total of twenty-nine (29) respondents drawn from Abuja (Federal Capital Territory), as well as from Adamawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Lagos and Sokoto states were contacted, using a structured open-ended questionnaire. It was a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews. The respondents were allowed to speak freely, in order to generate broad and in-depth responses. Background information was sought in all the cases.

1 This document is a consolidated report based on the work of two Consultants: Motunrayo Alaka and Alan Penny
The interview questions were structured to elicit responses related to the extent to which EDOREN’s ultimate goals of “Improved DFID education portfolio performance and Nigeria’s education policy development and implementation” and its main objectives to embed research, evaluation and learning in DFID’s education sector support in Nigeria and enhance national capacities to generate and use quality educational data, research and evaluation for policy and strategy making, were achieved.

The procedure in the second case was in two parts:

- Documentary analysis (EDOREN reports and studies, DFID reports and studies, and any directly relevant Ministry reports) and,
- Interviews with key stakeholders; with EDOREN staff, DFID officials and development partners and ministry officials

Seventeen (17) persons from eleven development partners were interviewed. An open-ended, semi-structured interview schedule was used. DFID(N)’s Education Portfolio was used to identify EDOREN’s interventions. In-depth interviews were held with relevant DFID(N) officers and with the EDOREN staff (see Table 1). Shorter more focused interviews were held with officers from the other nine organisations. In addition, relevant review reports on EDOREN’s work by DFID(N) and reports produced by EDOREN itself were read and analysed²

### Table 1 Institutions consulted and persons interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Contact person</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World Bank</td>
<td>Dr Olatunde Adekola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The British Council</td>
<td>Louisa Waddingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls’ Education Programme</td>
<td>Teija Vallandringham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Development Programme</td>
<td>Emma Mba, Ina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Laura Brannelly. Esohe Eigbike</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Basic Education Council (UBEC)</td>
<td>Aleshin Mayowa, Wadatau Madawaki.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>Croshelle Harris-Hussein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEPEN</td>
<td>Ilusanya Gboyega</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Elizabeth Omotowa, Magdalene Anene-Maidoh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Ministry Cabinet Support Office</td>
<td>Carol Nelson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oxford Policy Management Ltd</td>
<td>Dayo Arogundade, Toun Ajala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDOREN</td>
<td>Oladele Akogun</td>
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The following generic questions were asked:

- What is the Story (Case) about?
- How did it work (who and what were the drivers)?
- Why did it work in these ways?

² See the Appendix for extracts of selected documents
What lessons were learnt (and by whom)?

How were these disseminated (and to whom)?

How were they taken up, if at all (and by whom and why)?

**Sample Questions** included:

- What constitutes a ‘story’; a term used in the log frame?
- EDOREN’s role – how was it conceived, how did it change, how were expectations managed?
- What were DFID(N)’s information needs? What were DFID(N)’s programme needs?
- How did DFID(N)’s education portfolio change, if at all? What were the drivers of this? How did these changes impact on practice, if at all?
- How can the EDOREN project’s *raison d’être* be sustained?
- What kinds of research gaps existed within DFID(N); within the partner community; within the host Nigerian context/community (Ministry etc)?
- What were the Ministry’s information and programme needs?
- What processes occurred from the identification of need, to data collection, to dissemination? What ‘feedback loops’ existed – both formally and informally?
2 THE EVIDENCE

2.1 Revelations from Documentary Sources

At the formal level, key statements from DFID(N)’s Annual Review report on EDOREN, dated 17 June, 2017, provide a clear picture of a Programme that has contributed strongly to all anticipated information outcomes. These relate to improvements in DFID(N)’s education portfolio (Higher-level Outcome 1) and improvements in education policy development and implementation in Nigeria (Higher-level Outcome 2). That report stated:

- All milestone activities have been met; EDOREN has carried out large-scale research and evaluation work for all four DFID Nigeria education programmes (GEP3, TDP, DEEPEN, ESSPIN) and, in addition, EDOREN has delivered independent thematic research, support and capacity strengthening to Nigerian education research, policy making, and data-gathering activities, as well as a wide range of derived knowledge products to serve the Nigerian education sector.

- The high technical quality of EDOREN’s work was consistently recognised by all stakeholders. Partnerships with other DFID programmes and the broader research and policy-making communities have further expanded and deepened over the last year.

The 2017 Annual report further notes the following areas in which EDOREN made a significant contribution:

- Baseline report delivered for GEP3, detailed preparations for GEP3 midline ongoing. Dissemination activities around GEP3 baseline agreed with UNICEF, and ongoing.
- Formative Research Report on TDP’s Output 1 (In-Service Teacher Training Activities) completed.
- DEEPEN Public-Private Sector Comparison (“P4”) study delivered.
- DEEPEN annual review, TDP mid-term review and ESSPIN PCR contracted, co-ordinated, and organised.
- Thematic Research into the Identification, Recruitment, and Deployment of Effective Teachers (“TR3”, “Teacher Effectiveness Study”) completed.
- Thematic Research into Primary school attendance in the wake of conflict in Borno (“TR4”, “Conflict Study”) completed.
- Wide range of capacity strengthening workshops and mentored research completed in the context of Thematic Research, which also demonstrated acceptance of EDOREN research findings as useful for policy and practice of teacher recruitment and deployment.
- Capacity strengthening workshops around the use of data delivered (In-depth workshop for Jigawa, Kano and Kaduna staff; ISD+ three workshops on basic use Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa).
- Delivered Out of School Children Assessment based on an evaluation of NEDS 2010 and 2015 Data.
- School interventions database and EMIS/ASC data linking for 15/16 and updating for 15/16 for Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa, and continuous support and coordination to EMIS data collection for the Annual School Census.
- Strategic advice and inputs delivered to DFID for the Business Case of DFID Nigeria’s next education sector support programme (PLAN/PLANE).
- Strategic advice and inputs delivered to the FME on the Ministerial Strategic Plan.
- Successful second annual education conference (NAEC: 2016 – Nigeria’s Annual Education Conference) attended by the Vice-President of Nigeria and organised with the Federal Ministry of Education. EDOREN see it as a major success that the annual conference has been endorsed by the Presidency of Nigeria, and has been instituted as a regular budget line by the FME.
Here, then, is a highly successful project, positively assessed by DFID(N) and perceived to be offering value for money. This is a major story in itself, but it also reveals an organisation (EDOREN) that has a clear vision of its research and capacity building role; its confidence in its technical skills to undertake its work, possessing the intellectual intelligence to undertake high level conceptual work and the enthusiasm and energy to engage fully the national scene to raise the level of consciousness about research. What is also endorsed is its raison d’être; that any and all development is founded upon rigorous, high quality independent research, and the need to underpin any development intervention with good quality research evidence. Indeed, it goes unchallenged.

However, there is a major omission in DFID(N)’s annual report. With EDOREN shortly to end as a DFID(N) project, the challenge to DFID(N) as to how to sustain the gains from this programme, is generally ignored in this and, indeed, in other DFID(N) documentation consulted.

2.2 Key themes emerging from interviews with the Wider Partnership Community

2.2.1 EDOREN

Interviews with EDOREN staff took the DFID(N) portfolio as its agenda. The general point made by them was that whilst all DFID(N) projects are intervention projects, EDOREN is not an intervention project per se, but primarily a service provider of high quality research. EDOREN would be tasked with research relating to the other programmes, to make recommendations and provide more detailed evidence. Indeed, early on in EDOREN’s existence, this role came to the fore as a result of difficulties experienced with GEP3 by its project implementation group, UNICEF.

In addition, EDOREN was required to undertaken thematic research. This involved research aimed at creating new bodies of knowledge. One condition placed on this research was that it should have, as a necessary outcome, application to policy and strategy at a Federal and State level across the education sector.

For example, the challenges posed over the dissemination of findings actually led to raising the profile of the research enterprise. Such was the quality and impact of EDOREN’s research that it gave rise to the creation and establishment of an annual national education conference endorsed by the Federal Ministry of Education (FME). The conference was subsequently institutionalised and given a budget line in the FME’s budget. This has become one of the success stories of the EDOREN project.

EDOREN was particularly commended for researching and evaluating DFID(N)’s funded interventions, as outlined in table 2.

Table 2 EDOREN’S Key Inputs in DFID (N) Funded Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DFID(N)’s funded Projects (listed by value)</th>
<th>EDOREN’S Key Inputs</th>
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• Advice on how ESSPIN’s ‘products’ (publications, teaching materials, books etc) could be sustained.  
• EDOREN Teaching Fellowship Programme. |
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<tr>
<th>DFID(N)’s funded Projects (listed by value)</th>
<th>EDOREN’s Key Inputs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support to the National Training Institute.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Support to the National Open University of Nigeria</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Increased ESSPIN’s visibility through EDOREN’s Project Advisory Committee³.</td>
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<td>2. Girls’ Education Project (GEP3)</td>
<td>From March, 2013,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>GPE3 baseline and mid-line studies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Four studies:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Female Teacher Training Scholarship Scheme (FTTSS).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Teacher supply and demand in Katsina.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• A study on the evaluability of GEP3, establishing how to enable progress to be measured leaving the contractor to undertake on-going monitoring and evaluation.</td>
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<td>• A political economy analysis.</td>
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<td>3. Teacher Development Programme (TDP)</td>
<td>From 2013,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Design and execution of the baseline survey.</td>
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<td>• Design of the Evaluation framework.</td>
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<td>• Advice and support to TDP on M&amp;E framework.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Engaged with the TDP annual review.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Led on DFID(N)’s drive to harmonise the measurement of learning outcomes.</td>
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<td>• Advice and support on EMIS in TDP state.</td>
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<td>4. Developing Effective Private Education (DEEPEN)</td>
<td>From 2013,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Drafted the DEEPEN evaluation framework.</td>
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<td>• Advised on the DEEPEN monitoring and results measurement approach.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Supported the development of the DEEPEN evaluation baseline survey design.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Conducted DEEPEN’s annual review.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>In addition</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Conducted an ex-ante, theory-based review of DEEPEN</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Levered synergies between GEP3, TDP and DEEPEN and drove the move to harmonise the management of learning outcomes across all DFID(N) projects.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Engaged the research divisions in the FME and SUBEBs on research and monitoring and evaluation.</td>
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<td>5. Other related engagement.</td>
<td>• Initiated a new, dedicated Policy Impact work stream to strengthen the achievement of planned project outcomes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Capacity building associate with all inputs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Contributions at conferences, holding workshops, providing leadership and inputs for political economy analysis processes.</td>
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³ EDOREN’s Project Advisory Committee (PAC) concerns itself with all Education Sector stakeholders and agencies involved with supporting the FME and SUBEBs. Membership includes DFID(N), USAID, The World Bank, the FME, UNICEF, ESSPIN, the British Council. It is chaired by a retired Director of Education.
Of particular interest in terms of the ‘story’ narrative were the areas catalysed by EDOREN’s work on ESSPIN. These areas included advice on how ESSPIN’s ‘products’ (publications, teaching materials, books etc) could be sustained; the creation of the EDOREN Teaching Fellowship Programme; support to teacher education through the National Teachers’ Institute and the National Open University of Nigeria and in providing capacity building in areas of research methodology and data interpretation. In addition EDOREN supported the three ESSPIN composite surveys and the Project Completion Report. All activities increased ESSPIN’s visibility beyond EDOREN’s formal terms of reference.

The discussion with the EDOREN team on the Girls’ Education Project (3) was particularly illuminating. In 2013 DFID(N) had awarded the implementation of GEP3 to UNICEF. DFID(N) saw it as a flagship project, whilst it fitted strongly with UNICEF’s international mandate. Nonetheless, the project soon ran into difficulties. The circumstances surrounding its near collapse highlighted the level of interest in girls’ education internationally. A visit to the project by the UK Independent Commission on Aid Impact in 2013 found that the GEP3 plan contained serious design flaws. No performance baseline had been established which meant that there was no way of assessing the impact and progress of the interventions. As a result the ICAI recommended the closure of the programme. The political, reputational and credibility consequences for both DFID(N) and UNICEF were considerable. EDOREN was brought in to try to provide the necessary research foundation, which, in the view of all those interviewed during this assignment, they did by setting up systems and mechanisms which enabled the collection of valid and reliable data that could be measured and used to inform both policy and strategy thereafter. In Professor Oladele Akogun’s words (EDOREN’s director and lead researcher) “There was the roofing but no foundation and EDOREN had to attempt to provide this foundation so as to make sure that the entire edifice didn’t collapse. That was the birth of EDOREN”. As a result, EDOREN became a separate DFID(N) project in its own right.

It also led to a major shift in the way in which DFID projects were designed. Various evaluations and studies led by EDOREN have followed, including the operational study of the GEP3 female scholarship programme, on the basis of the findings of which, DFID(N) subsequently withdrew its support following on-going concerns over its management, effectiveness and expense.

What is evident from the interviews across the donor partner community and within Government is that EDOREN’s professional input at the time when the GEP3 was in crisis helped DFID(N) and UNICEF avoid a potentially embarrassing political and professional situation; one in which the institutional reputations of both could have been seriously damaged.

In the discussion with EDOREN staff a wider discussion was initiated on the appropriateness and evaluability of the indicators, the increasing cost to DFID(N) of independent evaluation activities and issues in Teacher Development. More generally, EDOREN believed it was necessary to encourage DFID(N) to recognise and manage to its own advantage the benefits arising out of possible tensions that can emerge, especially when these are related to the management and implementation of projects.

From what was said, it was evident that EDOREN has consistently prompted DFID(N) and through them, their implementing agencies, to use rigorously independently obtained research evidence for strategic planning and for making informed implementation decisions.

The issue of value for money was another area of creative tension, especially as EDOREN wished to emphasise the distinction between independent research and analysis on the one hand and regular monitoring and evaluation on the other. It was evident in the interviews with DFID(N) that this distinction was not fully appreciated, nor necessarily the consequences of failing to do so.
The ‘story’ here, therefore, is how a professional research organisation not only informed a development agency about research by undertaking rigorous research to inform that donor partner’s practice, but also ways of thinking and understanding over development practice and the political economy involved.

2.2.2 DFID

In an interview with two senior DFID advisers, it was learnt that there are three audiences for EDOREN’s work; an internal DFID audience in progressing DFID’s programme; the implementer audience (UNICEF in the case of GEP3, Mott Macdonald in the case of ESSPIN and TDP); and the stakeholders in the Federal and State Governments. Both interviewees concurred that for each ‘audience’, independent, high quality research data and evidence were fundamental to their respective work, starting with identifying gaps, and then proceeding to research them. The study on Teacher Supply and Demand in Katsina was given as one such ‘gap-addressing’ study. Another was that on the Female Teacher Training Scholarship Scheme (FTTSS), whilst the study on the evaluability of GEP3 established how progress was to be measured. They believed that the political economy analysis study had had far-reaching impact and that it had informed the development of the DFID business plan.

Both interviewees argued that DFID(N)’s role was primarily one in which it created the meetings at which priorities and the Logframe were visited and revisited and programming and implementation reinforced or amended.

EDOREN’s role: One Advisor put it as follows: “EDOREN is unique in how it was taken into our operations. The first few years the budget was pretty well mapped out, but in the latter years, with more flexibility, the project grew. The result is that with EDOREN we have this amazing resource which enables us to have a conversation that is much ‘bigger’ than one we might ordinarily have. There was learning between and across programmes. It was empowering.”

Asked about the relationship of EDOREN’s work to individual project monitoring and evaluation teams, and the possibility of tension between them, it was argued that EDOREN ‘...was in a better position, through its consultation work with the states, to assess and evaluate how stakeholders at the policy and strategic level were using their data. DFID adviser said, “data and their analysis ... it was specific in detail and illuminative in the caveats behind that data”.

What is also evident here is that EDOREN was central to decisions taken on the evolution of the DFID portfolio, but also, through their work, they were contributing to the evidence on the take up of research evidence by policy makers.

The message coming through was that DFID and the programme staff too were learning a lot from EDOREN, “We became better at giving EDOREN space. They were better than we were at consulting with the Government and, indeed, led the way. And of course, as relations changed, so did expectations. We were increasingly able to identify evidence gaps and priorities.”

Having up to date data and evidence had an impact institutionally within DFID, and across partner organisations too. “Across the office it was really useful to have our own generated research coupled with robust analysis to champion education.” That extended to the annual DFID education advisers’ retreat too: “I think there was quite a bit of interest in the room when we presented what we were doing and how we were doing it! At times we had to acknowledge that what EDOREN was producing created a steep learning curve for all involved, technical teams, ourselves and ministry officials.”

Both discussions reflected back on the significance of EDOREN’s role in ‘saving’ the GEP3 project and on how its research activities had changed the ‘nature of the discourse’ both within the projects and within the partner community itself. Mention was made of EDOREN’s role in bringing together that community, how it had raised the profile of not only DFID(N)’s portfolio but also the role of research. The role of the
EDOREN director in facilitating contact and developing relationships with ministry people at Federal and State level was also noted with appreciation.

In the pending conclusion of the EDOREN Project, what was not said was probably more significant in view of EDOREN’s interpretation of events recorded earlier. On reflection, it is possible to suggest that a deeper ‘story’ exists here, namely, one that concerns pressure from DFID London to foreground issues relating to value for money. No mention was made as to whether the EDOREN project represented value for money, or the decision not to replace the EDOREN Project, kind for kind. It is perhaps wrong to suspect that there can be a trade-off between high quality research and development.

### 2.2.3 Other Partners: The World Bank, UNICEF, FME, UBEC, the British Council, USAID, Mott MacDonald (TDP) and OPML

The World Bank argued that this is especially true in a context where civil society (in Nigeria) is weak and accountability is poor. In order to provide improved accountability, WB interviewee argued for greater harmonisation between development agencies (and called for a coalition) on the one hand and the regular provision of good quality data, independently gathered and transparently disseminated on the other. The observation was also made that with the imminent closure of EDOREN, there was a risk of development partners going back to undertaking research and collecting data ‘on their own’ with all the additional costs and reduced dissemination involved. In this regard mention was also made by all those interviewed of the ‘invaluable work’ in getting people around a table by and through EDOREN’s Project Advisory Committee. The education adviser summed up the views of all interviewees when he said: “EDOREN is a gem; it has a special construction and culture”. Asked to explain, the rigour of EDOREN’s work, the added value and synergies it has provided to the work of development partners were glowingly elaborated. This was considered as the ‘knowledge investment’ that EDOREN has facilitated.

This was a generally held view with each interviewee arguing that EDOREN’s research practice and work, together with the allied capacity building it is providing, has placed independent research, data and evidence at the centre of thinking at both the federal and state level. In so doing, they each believe that the discourse in education management and development has changed. They also believe that this in turn has introduced the notion of value for money based on high quality research evidence more strongly into Federal and State level government thinking.

All interviewees spent time discussing how EDOREN’s work has been instrumental in institutionalising the annual national education conference. Nigeria’s Annual Education Conference has been endorsed by the Presidency of Nigeria, attended by the Vice President of Nigeria and organised by the Federal Ministry of Education supported by EDOREN. Of significance is that the FME has introduced a regular budget line for this purpose.

Commenting on the ending of the EDOREN project, the general belief is that the demand for high quality research and data will continue, although the risk now exists that duplication of effort in research, analysis and data gathering is more likely.

In summing up the stories emerging from these interviews, it is possible to conclude that EDOREN provided:

- A unifying, coordinated oversight story of DFID(N)’s education development portfolio. It is a story that has been written through the discourse of research and reflects the way research, data collection and analysis has informed policy, strategic and implementation decision-making and practice. [Hard evidence for this is contained in DFID(N)s annual EDOREN reports (annex 1)].
• A research discourse that has been established and injected across the Federal Ministry and State Ministries of Education and other development agencies. (Hard evidence – The Annual Education Conference which is now institutionalised).

• A story of survival of a project (GEP3) and of institutional reputation (DFID and UNICEF). (As confirmed in the anecdotal evidence provided to the interviewees).

• A greater awareness of the context of development work in Nigeria and, in particular, of the political economy. (As evidenced in EDOREN’s study reports).

• A multi-faceted story of capacity building; both explicitly and implicitly, but especially in disseminating the values underpinning research and its application.

But probably the most important story that is being told by EDOREN and through its work is that its work constitutes Research on Nigeria by Nigerians.

2.3 Testimonies by Project Beneficiaries

The perceptions of the key beneficiaries of the EDOREN project fall into the following broad headings

– Striking impressions about EDOREN evidence-based research
– Capacity strengthening for evidence generation and use
– Collaboration for demand and supply of evidence
– Knowledge management and dissemination
– Technical support for evidence uptake into policy and practice
– Relationship management and responsiveness
– Sustainability of EDOREN’s accomplishments
– Influence and impact assessment

2.3.1 STRIKING IMPRESSIONS ABOUT EDOREN

EDOREN and evidence-based research

Generally, the impression of the respondents is that EDOREN produces high quality work that is intended to contribute to knowledge and impact on policy direction. The respondents agree that EDOREN has been a trailblazer for the popularisation of the importance of evidenced based data for the development of education in Nigeria. They also say EDOREN’s processes for the work that they do are well thought-out and that the organisation makes a painstaking effort to carry a wide group of stakeholders along while doing its work. The type of research EDOREN does is the type that changes the way things are done, they say.

It is also widely stated that EDOREN’s engagement, especially with field researchers is more of a capacity-strengthening programme as the respondents are able to conduct the researches on their own afterwards. Some say that the initiative has been able to cover grounds in critical areas in the education sector that the Nigerian government has been neglecting. Respondents were of the impression that EDOREN does their background work before reaching out to stakeholders and this makes the engagement more meaningful.
Some respondents however complain that EDOREN fails to carry them along after achieving their set aim and they are unaware of the final results of their intervention.

i. The absolute need for EDOREN

Another respondent, a Professor of Education and retired Director of the Ministry of Education believes that the whole idea of EDOREN data-based research is really something that Nigeria lived too long without and there is a need to sensitis policy makers to make their policies on the basis of evidence. Supporting this view, a respondent who works with EDOREN as a research consultant on disability issues says:

“I think I am actually happy that EDOREN came into being here in Nigeria. The volume of research done and the data collect are going to be very useful in many years to come in doing further researches and also implementing policies in the education sector. I think they will be leaving a great mark on the education sector in terms of the volume of data and information they would be leaving behind for us to work with.”

The level of involvement of stakeholders, which brings about a sense of ownership for the process as much as for the data generated, is a recurring trend in the response of most of the persons interviewed. Respondents from collaborating organisations in particular, appreciated the fact that EDOREN usually seeks out those who have been doing the work, whether they are researchers, policy makers or collaborators and engage them towards finding better ways to positively impact the education sector.

One of such, a staff of a partner international development organisation, emphasises what she calls “EDOREN’s convening power”. In her words: “…One thing that has stood them out is their convening power; they are able to bring in other partners. So, I think for an implementation partner having that convening power, it is one thing that stands them out.”

Another, the most senior management member of a government education agency supports this opinion by saying EDOREN is unlike other organisations who call stakeholders to only validate their work at dissemination stage, EDOREN would involve stakeholders from the conceptualisation of the research to the point of dissemination and that is unique. “…The unique thing about EDOREN is the fact that it is evidence based and it is also participatory. ...EDOREN provides opportunity for using individual competencies”, he says.

One of those who work with a major development partner tells of a time he was invited to lead a panel during one of the editions of the international conference. According to him, there was a guideline provided for him, which made participants to really be focused on the issues rather than being left to derail. To this respondent, this showed that the handlers of EDOREN were putting the huge investment made on the initiative to good use. His opinion is that EDOREN engages the Federal Ministry of Education in such a way that the later will be able to sustain the conference on its own.

ii. Stakeholder empowerment

One respondent, a doctorate student of a school in the United Kingdom, tells of her impression of EDOREN like this:

“I recall most vividly my first one on one engagement with EDOREN...I scheduled to have a meeting with the Country Director and even from our first interaction, his easy engagement was something that was striking to me and quite different. The impression I got is really one that has continued to prove to be true...EDOREN produces high quality work that is intended to contribute to knowledge...why are we doing this? That is what EDOREN makes me ask all the time.”

Another who works at the Taraba State Ministry of Education had this to say:
“The research conducted by EDOREN was so interesting that we were able to know the kind of teachers that we have been engaging with and our effectiveness based on the kind of teachers we have.”

A lady who participated in six of the research activities shares her thoughts saying that her engagement with EDOREN has made her see the importance of data and realise that there is a research that is necessary to prepare for every type of work.

On the other hand, the respondents who work on disability issues note their pleasure in the fact that EDOREN became inclusive by extending its research to cover the neglected department of Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND), they however also say that EDOREN commenced the gathering of data on issues relation to SEND quite late in the day. One of such respondents opined thus:

“My best comment about the previous researches is that it has not necessarily mainstreamed issues of disabilities although they have done a lot of work on teacher recruitment and deployment, girl child education and so many others.” – Research Consultant working on disability issues.

Tolling the line of the disability respondents, others felt that the initiative should have stayed longer especially because they only got to be aware of its last year.

A former Director of the Ministry of Education has the impression that EDOREN is a very serious establishment. Supporting this view, another senior staff of the Federal Ministry, puts it more specifically when she says that what she finds striking is the fact that the Team Leader for EDOREN, is meticulous and thorough. She further mentioned that her contact with EDOREN helped to change some misconceptions she had about the data and the education sector in Nigeria. According to her:

“I found that every step that was taken was revealing... There were certain misconceptions I had about how things can be done in the country but working with EDOREN, I found out that it is possible to get data, it is possible to make inferences from data and it is possible to put things right where the will is there...” – Senior Staff of Ministry of Education, Nigeria

iii. Perception of change

An EDOREN Fellow, a University Lecturer now serving in the State Ministry of Education, said:

“We in the University have a different impression about the ministry, that many are just there sharing money, carrying files from one office to another. But on coming...I realised that the ministry is doing its best in terms of accessing or demanding for evidence.”

The EDOREN project has also created a pull of ‘ambassadors’ who make it their duty to emphasise the need for evidence-based data. For example, a respondent who participated in workshops in Kano, Kaduna, Jigawa and Bauchi, Zamfara, Katsina and Niger simply affirms that EDOREN has institutionalised evidence-based planning saying.

“When you train a planning officer and that planning officer trains officers in a Local Government Area (LGA), the whole planning in that LGA will change.”

The creation of awareness on the challenges of the education sector in Nigeria through evidence-based data is one that a number of respondents who are involved in policymaking agreed on as their impression of EDOREN. A Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education of one of the states visited has this to say:

“What is very striking about what EDOREN is doing is that it exposes the weakness of the Nigerian education system and to be specific the north-western part of Nigeria. Until the coming of EDOREN not many policy makers were aware of the problems in the education sector in terms of quality
teachers, instruction materials and learning outcome. The coming of EDOREN has opened up many of these issues.”

The richness of EDOREN’s research projects is yet another impression that the respondents find striking. To them, it is the indisputability of the type of data that EDOREN generates that make them catch the attention of the policy makers who have come to respect the initiative a whole lot.

Confirming that EDOREN’s intervention leads to some form of immediate action with the various stakeholders, a former Permanent Secretary of the Education Ministry of another state gives account of how as a result of the findings of EDOREN in a particular LGA, they were guided on how to have effective teachers and all those that were not effective were shown the way out. According to him, this has now been extended to other 22 local government areas of the state. He further states that the EDOREN research team was involved in the process of coming up with policy on education for the state based on the benchmarks of the national policy.

The use of local persons and content to achieve its aim is also one that a number of the respondents highlighted. The team head of one of the international development organisations was succinct about this:

“I have observed the fact that they use local content. They had to build the capacity of the local people who are going to work with them on this research – those who are in school and who know the terrains very well and those who are in government who know what is going on. So, to some extent, the main stakeholders in the education sector are really part of the process. This is fantastic.”

Speaking in like manner, another respondent said:

“What impressed me is their linkage with the grassroots at local government level, state level and even organisational level and even some of the private organisations were involved. EDOREN provided a platform where policy makers not just at the level of the federal ministry sit together to discuss issues and provide evidence based on the research carried out.”

In the same vein, a consultant with a partner International Development Programme with similar education support interest in Nigeria says he commends EDOREN’s openness to allow other partners have a role in their programmes. Sharing a story of a time he was asked to lead a panel on teacher reform using the northeast case study at the conference. According to him, the outcome was very great because at the federal ministry of education level; the input was brought in from people who have experience on how teachers have been accepted largely in the northeast. “The fact that EDOREN looks at research from a holistic point of view, from those who give the money to those who practice and to those who do the work makes the difference.” he stated.

Virtually all the persons interviewed were of the view that EDOREN had helped to build their capacity one way or the other. While some said they learnt new skills. Others spoke about being exposed to new aspects of existing skills. Yet others, mostly collaborators, testified that EDOREN helped make things they had been doing for quite a while much better.

The comments gathered were as much about the ‘what’ as they were about the ‘how’. Respondents spoke about the exposures to training and they also spoke about EDOREN’s style. One of the researchers and an EDOREN Fellow based in Kano talks about the passion that EDOREN exudes and teaches in this manner:

“The passion they have is like that of a teacher who would want to see his students grow, achieve and perform... I have worked with other organisations before and they don’t go through much trouble to build your capacity and mostly those ones do it in order for you to do their work and it stops at that but with EDOREN, you could see the passion. I think they see you as a little baby who they need to see grow and achieve.”
She cited the example of the first workshop by EDOREN she was involved in saying rather than just collect resumes to shortlist fellows, EDOREN went ahead to train all participants and got an independent team to shortlist those who would become fellows. In her opinion, the fact that even participants who did not make the shortlist were trained shows EDOREN’s commitment to capacity development of actors in the sector.

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2.3.2 CAPACITY STRENGTHENING FOR EVIDENCE GENERATION AND USE

Almost all the respondents were of the view that EDOREN had helped to build their capacity one way or the other. While some said they learnt new skills. Others spoke about being exposed to new skills. Yet others, mostly collaborators, testified that EDOREN helped make things they had been doing for quite a while much better.

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i. The exposure

They also spoke about how the exposure they had empowered them to be able to carry out research from start to finish without necessarily consulting those with specialised skills they hitherto believed they lacked. For most, these lessons came with interaction with other participants who had better knowledge in some areas of the work.

“Experiences I acquired during the research with EDOREN is so vital that I can now on my own conduct a research and also proffer solutions towards certain problems as far as teacher quality, the deployment of teachers, recruitment of teachers, analysis and need assessment is concerned.” – EDOREN Researcher and Staff of a State Ministry of EDUCATION

A researcher on a doctoral degree programme in the UK told of how EDOREN helped her learn better people skills and build her capacity to organise through the opportunity to coordinate a panel during the National Annual Conference. According to her, she was exposed to various stakeholders on the topic she was given, organised the panel, coordinated the participation of other panellists and produced a report afterwards. She at the end was able to properly appreciate how to design events with outcomes in view, how to deliver and communicate goals, how to listen and receive information and share all of that with a larger audience. In her words:

“I learnt how to inquire. I spent most of my life trying to inquire but I doubt it has ever been as effective...I think that has largely to do with the past three to four years that I spent with EDOREN. There is a genuine curiosity that they have when they try to answer your question.” – EDOREN Consultant Researcher
On the impact of EDOREN’s capacity development, one of the respondents, the former Chairman of the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) shares an interesting case in point. In his words:

“With the experience I acquired working with EDOREN I was able to commence a private college with two campuses – one for male and the other for female ...We also introduced oral English; with this, we were able to fish out the highly intelligent students and the average ones from the low ones.”

Other respondents talked about gaining writing and reporting skills. One of the Fellows in Kano speaks about how the exposure to data makes her write more because she now has so much information she feels obliged to share with a larger audience. Hence, she writes more articles for her institute’s journals as well as international publications based sometimes on researches she conducts. Through the work she is able to participate in international conferences and share some of her findings. She also says that EDOREN requires her to write so many reports so that writing reports now comes naturally to her. According to her:

“I would say with EDOREN and because I am a fellow, I have had reasons to write reports. At least in a month...I write about six to ten. I think it has boosted my report writing skills... before the fellowship, I used to write report but each time I write it, I feel stressed but now, I do it with ease. Constant practice of writing has made things easier.”

ii. Improved capacities

A respondent spoke on improved capacity to negotiate, which she has developed through contact with EDOREN:

“My skill of negotiation has improved via working with EDOREN because there are times you need to really convince the country director about what you want to do and whatever you want to do...You are allowed to think and be creative. He likes asking lots of questions and you must convince him. The desire to want to give result at the end of the day has also improved me.”

The respondent further spoke about the fact that she has also been able to pass down knowledge gained to confront new challenges at work and teach her subordinates at work. She narrated how she was moved to another department to an area she had little or no knowledge about and had wondered but her experience with EDOREN helped her to face the challenge and to succeed.

“When I was taken there I was saying I am not a scientist neither I’m I a mathematician and I asked what I was going to be doing there but something told me that EDOREN has involved me in several researches that I didn’t know anything about until my involvement and I was able to throw myself into it, learned about it and here I was doing a great wor and learning as well.”

Learning how to gather, process and use data is by far the most outstanding lesson the respondents mentioned. This again points to EDOREN’s delivery on its core purpose. A number of the researchers particularly mentioned the way EDOREN helped them with extending their knowledge in qualitative research. They spoke of how engagement with EDOREN practically built the capacity of researches to do what they referred to as very meaningful qualitative research that helped those involved find solution to problems. The respondents highlighted the opportunity to have been exposed to step-by-step training in this regard; the development of the protocols, interview guides, collecting the data, transcribing them, printing them, and report writing.

The level of involvement of all stakeholders was highlighted through the responses of most of the respondents. One of those interviewed, a lecturer at a Federal College of Education in one of the states of focus shared her views:
“Most times before the teams go to field, we always do a kind of training and the instrument to be used is discussed thoroughly and digested by members of team. So, it is like everybody goes to the field ready for the work. It is not done blindly, materials are not sent to us, it is always discussed and the questions are fine-tuned by team members before going to the field...most of us that have participated in EDOREN’s training, our capacities have been built in these areas so much that when we go back to our places of work, we serve as resource persons...Most of us that have participated in EDOREN work stand out...It is like you have more information to provide and that confidence that you can deliver and that you have an edge over your colleague is always very glaring.”

2.3.3 USE OF DATA: DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF EVIDENCE

i. Data cannot be faulted

The use of the data and skills provided by EDOREN were amongst other things many of the respondents talked about. A former director at the Federal Ministry of Education in Abuja spoke about how engagement with EDOREN affected virtually most of the work they do as EDOREN generated-data is now used in all proposals and memos.

Another respondent, a university personnel mentioned that capacity to appreciate and collaborate with policy makers so that implementation is built into research had been developed. According to him, the researchers are able to put into consideration the challenges that the policy makers go through while trying to implement policies that are a result of researches made as well as the latter’s mind-set.

Some respondents talked about the capacity being built through gaining consciousness of the need to engage in certain ways due to exposure to data. Two such respondents, one with a media background and another a consultant researcher, both of who are also Persons Living with Disability (PLWD) said, their engagement with EDOREN “awakened” them to the need for a dedicated policy on Special Needs Education and Disability (SEND) in order to have a rallying point for giving voice to PWLDs to make demands of government.

Proposal writing and the ability to compete with others for grants are other capacities respondents say EDOREN helped them build. A director of a gender-based research university institute in one of the states where EDOREN works speaks about how she was able to give instructions from her sickbed for a proposal the institute had to write and how her organisation won the grant and is currently conducting the research. She credits her competency to get the task done despite her inability to write the proposal by herself to the capacity strengthening by EDOREN which she says gave her the skills, ability and confidence to believe that there is no grant that can be too technical in any part of the world for her organisation to compete for. “There is nowhere in the world that you cannot go and advocate for an issue”, she says.

A lecturer in one of the Universities in Northern Nigeria was sure his capacity has been strengthened in terms of administration through his posting to the State Ministry of Education as a fellow working in the position of an Assistant Director. According to him, he has never had experience in administration but his current exposure at the ministry affords him the opportunity to serve in the capacity and learn. He says he values this especially because his next position at the University would require competency in administration.

Respondents have also had their capacities built in other specific subject areas like teacher development, knowledge about out-of-school children, effective public presentation with the use of Power Point, communications, learning to operate a computer, recruitment, deployment and retention of teachers, special needs education, and the education of internally displaced persons.
ii. Data collaboration

That EDOREN is able to bring synergy between diverse groups working on different yet related parts of the education sector is a clear thread from all the responses gathered. Respondents talked about how EDOREN has been able to bridge gaps between stakeholders on the demand and supply side and bring an appreciation of the need to collaborate for better results.

Respondents from International Development Partners and the Ministry of Education were particularly sure that EDOREN has taken the lead in terms of ensuring that all stakeholders are in the room together to collaborate on the education sector. For instance, they make reference to the leading role of EDOREN to ensure that the annual education conference has now held regularly for three consecutive years. As mentioned earlier, some say EDOREN has an overwhelming “convening power”.

A benefit of this, pointed out by some respondents, is that stakeholders from the private sector, international development organisations, government agencies from the states and federal level, representatives of non-governmental institutions, members of the academia and even independent researchers are able to know what various individuals and groups are doing towards the development of the sector.

The networking capacity this collaboration builds is considered profound my many of those interviewed. They speak to the fact that EDOREN has helped them build contacts across the country and various issues. A lot of them mentioned that resolving issues in areas that they once had no contacts in is now only a call away. The collaboration with stakeholders is “opening doors” for them, they comment. One of them has this to say:

“If I am to go to Kano now for any reason, I can call the Kano team leader and just request what I want and I am sure if I give her 24 hours to do what I want, that would be done and I see that as collaboration... I have five states like that that I can easily call on anyone and make request. I have 80 percent assurance that my request would be granted because of EDOREN’s influence.” – Respondent from International Development Partner

Another respondent while supporting this mentioned that:

“As a Director in the National Institute, I had reasons to interact with some sister organisations and many people but EDOREN has opened more doors and has put me in a position where I can just lift my phone and call anybody and request for what I want.”

One interviewee speaks about how as a Teacher Development Fellow she has been able to push for EDOREN’s main objective by bringing the people on the demand side and those on the supply side together to create awareness about the existence of this knowledge product, its source, the access it gives and to create a thirst for wanting to use it. According to her, the fellowship afforded her to go around to meet stakeholders with high impact on teacher education – the Nigerian Teachers Institute (NTI), National Open University (NOUN), Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Nigerian Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) and others to establish contact.

Afterwards, she and her team, along with EDOREN, came up with a knowledge market fair that had various partners come together to display their products, interact, share experiences, ask questions and get answers, towards developing Nigeria’s education sector. She reports that some of the engagements have continued after the fair.

A respondent who works with an international development partner that was at the fair, emphasises the fact that his organisation considered the fair a good opportunity to show case what they have been doing which led to getting more people interested in what the organisation does. According to him, that exposure gave his organisation what he referred to as, “a little bit of lift”. He was particularly impressed about the fact that EDOREN was comfortable with sharing their platform and showcasing other partners.
iii. Creating the platform for real change

Highlighting the sense of ownership EDOREN builds, a respondent from the Teachers Research Council of Nigeria (TRCN) opines that: “EDOREN carries everyone along and participation creates ownership. They use bottom-up approach and the ownership is there.”

He speaks about how he was included to participate during the development of the Teacher Policy for Kano State thus:

“They started from interviewing stakeholders and from there, they gathered the initial data, they collected the data and did situational analysis...and developed the Draft Policy. They went further to call people to critique the draft policy...EDOREN exposes their work and that is very good. It is something that other organisations need to copy.”

The applicability of the knowledge that EDOREN gives was raised by some of the respondents. A researcher interested in the issue of ‘Almajiris’ and girl-child education shared that the experience he acquired working with EDOREN helped him put his thoughts together and he now owns a private college of education with separate campuses for both the male and the female. Hear him:

“Females refuse to come and train in the conventional colleges of education and polytechnics...because of the experience I had with EDOREN, I was able to differentiate the female campus and the male campus because that is the culture of this environment. The situation of that campus has now made it possible for many of the married women and the girl children with people of conservative minds who say their daughters will never attend schools have been able to do so.”

The plethora of resource persons that EDOREN fields at various meetings was highlighted by a respondent as a display of EDOREN’s capacity to relate with various persons with divergent competencies across board and still be able to stand as a unique component of the group.

Another respondent, a former Director at the Federal Ministry of Education however emphasises the fact that although EDOREN creates platforms for collaboration, this can hardly stand as an end in itself. According to him, the policy makers for instance, have to decide whether to make use of the evidence or otherwise. “So, they (EDOREN) are really working but the institutional discipline, people-orientation and focus are lacking in our education system especially at the basic education level”, he says.

Another respondent from the ministry was of the opinion that the collaboration especially on the annual conference was useful to the ministry in terms of the provision of needed resources. The respondent noted that the federal ministry of education normally works in collaboration with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), civil society, and other related stakeholders but what EDOREN does is to help facilitate the needed regular consultation with the federal ministry of education on the driver seat because the latter is handicapped sometimes by the lack of resources.

Yet another level of collaboration enabled by EDOREN shared by one of those interviewed, is about having parents of Special Education Needs and Disability children decide to find a platform to mobilise themselves to make demands for issues concerning them. The respondent told a story of a parent who asked for permission to address other parents based on the report disseminated by EDOREN. This according to her has led to a situation where the parents come together to contribute money to encourage other parents with children that have disabilities who are unable to enroll their wards due to shortage of funds.

iv. Collaboration and policy formulation

The respondents note that the type of collaboration enabled by EDOREN is result oriented as various stakeholders come together and participate for instance in policy development. The data provided by
EDOREN they say are driving them to do something to correct the anomalies they find in the education sector. One, the Director of a Gender Institute of a University, talks about how the engagement on their part created the additional pressure that led to the establishment of the committee to develop a teacher policy in her state that puts into considerations issues like recruitment and deployment of teachers which are missing elements of the national policy.

Another participated at a meeting organised by EDOREN and saw that it included the head teacher and the Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT chairman), this partnership encouraged the respondent as he saw that education was not left to government alone. The team lead of a sister DFID programme in Kano states the effect of the type of collaboration EDOREN enables elaborately:

“In the recent time, as a result of the findings of EDOREN and the collaboration we have had over time, Kano State government has inaugurated a committee to domesticate the National Teacher Education Policy Document to reflect the peculiarities of Kano and to see how that could be implemented. One of the issues tackled by the document is recruitment, deployment and retention of teachers. When government inaugurated this committee, they found it very useful to invite EDOREN to come and speak to them about it. EDOREN speaks from evidence in Kano and neighbouring states.”

2.3.4 KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND DISSEMINATION

i. Some distance to effective knowledge management and dissemination

This is one issue where respondents had the most divergent views and were mostly uncertain. It appears therefore that EDOREN’s would have benefitted from stronger links and a stronger mandate to engage with state-level decision makers from the outset. One of the respondents, a retired Education Secretary at Local Government in Nasarawa State opines thus:

“I think most of the evidence and the data they produce are normally issued out the ministries and the boards not directly to the LGAs because we are the Local Government Education level. At our level, we don’t have enough information about the evidences gathered.”

Although some respondents were able to point to stakeholders meetings they were invited to for the purpose of the dissemination of findings, quite a number were unable to recall if the final outcomes of researches they were initial a part of were disseminated to them. One of these who worked with partners on the teacher education policy for his State says: “I can’t remember if it was disseminated. We are still awaiting the outcome of the research study.”

The next set of four quotes supports the earlier statement on challenges with dissemination of EDOREN’s work; they relate in part to EDOREN’s earlier strategy of working via existing DFID programmes, which did not always reliable reach its audience:

“Unfortunately, I did not know them until they got in touch with me even though I have been related to DFID programmes…. When I eventually met with EDOREN, I had to go their website to check some of their works and I was very shocked at such tremendous level of work that they had done in the number of years that they have existed...maybe a little publicity would have helped us to know more about them...

“The only study that I am aware of that EDOREN carried out was the Teacher Recruitment and Deployment process but unfortunately, I am not sure I have that report with me...”
“I might not be able to comment on that because I don’t know how they use the end product eventually but I know that they expose their work to a lot of people…”

“Do I really know how they do it? I am not too sure…”

ii. Sharing research results

Supporting the view that EDOREN’s work through DFID’s programmes as been less effective than desired, another respondent who is a Permanent Secretary believes this is one of the shortcomings of EDOREN. He comments like a number of other respondents that he did not see any of EDOREN’s publications and researches until he had contact with them. He affirmed that he was aware that EDOREN has a website but asks rhetorically - “How many people know they have a website?” He suggests that EDOREN involves the media in what it does. He explains further:

“As far as I am concerned...only those of us that are in education sector are aware of even the programme they have. But education too is a very serious area that more and more people should be aware of that portal for various publications that they have. This is a country where we have 36 states with about 180 million people out of which 45% are within the school age...when more people are aware of the portal that would also contribute in enhancement of education.”

iii. EDOREN website as a repository of research work

For those who believe that EDOREN’s communication and knowledge management methods were effective, most of them point to the website as the most accessible source of information and platform for dissemination of knowledge produced in terms of report. The respondents talk about the fact that the reports are numerous, very accessible to people and easy to use. They say the website provides a public platform for dissemination of EDOREN’s research findings.

A research consultant for EDOREN with background in health who at one time helped to review the website however envisions a time where the EDOREN platform will be a major education resource like the PubMed where information on all issues on education may be accessed. According to her, that does not apply to education right now and the EDOREN website is yet to really reach the public.

Another respondent said:

“I think their strategy is successful in terms of how they promote through media but the biggest impact they have had in terms of their strategy is with the participants of their research... If you speak with anyone who has participated in other research, they will tell you exactly what they have learnt... they will have the curiosity, they will have the recognition that the work that they have produced has to be useful and they want to go on to inform their work and their environment and they try to share it.”

Some respondents are particularly convinced that the regular stakeholders meeting that EDOREN holds is a good platform for knowledge management and dissemination of report results to the persons who are directly concerned with the work. They talk about how elaborate the stakeholders meeting can be saying it is an innovative knowledge management approach.
iv. Carrying stakeholders along

These respondents report that EDOREN uses the stakeholders meeting platform to get feedback from others and incorporates the thoughts shared into the final report. This avenue according to them also serves the purpose of getting the buy-in of all including the policy makers who validate the report and therefore feel a sense of responsibility to implement the results.

One of the respondents who worked with the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) puts it succinctly:

“In terms of dissemination, I would say if I am to rate them between one and ten, I would I say eight and a half in the sense that when these researches are conducted, they come back to the stakeholders. They gather stakeholders and asking relevant questions on who would be influenced by the outcome of these findings, who needs to know? ...The researcher will be there, some of the people they also interviewed or collected data from will also be available, key government officials who need to know about this will also be around and also programmes within education sector governance will be around. Their type of method makes stakeholders conscious of what is going on in the education sector within the environment and collectively brainstorm on what to do about those facts.”

For some, who had been previously exposed to working with a variety of stakeholders from the demand and supply side of things, the engagement with EDOREN has been useful to help strengthen existing relationships and relay the consistency of some of the stakeholders who find that they are able to meet various sets of persons and different meetings hereby confirming the passion and dedication of such persons to the mission to achieve better education in Nigeria.

One of the Fellows further stated how the results of one of such researches included high-level advocacy, which made herself and her team to see the State Governor, commissioners, head of service, permanent secretaries of the ministry and the State Universal Basic Education Board to share the findings. “So, the information did not just stop with us, it was growing”, she concludes.

v. Strategic engagement

Yet another thing flagged by quite a number of respondents is that they see that EDOREN’s knowledge management and dissemination strategy with stakeholders actually commences from the moment they decide to conduct a research. They tell how EDOREN brings the various stakeholders including policy actors together to be a part of the preparation for the research, data collection and all parts of the processes. This according to them creates a sense of ownership from the beginning.

In this regard, some of the respondents from collaborating organisations mention that there are times when EDOREN fails to carry those who helped with collecting data and were pivotal to the success of their evidence-based research report along when they are at the stage of presenting the results of the research at a stakeholders meeting. These respondents feel left out and believe this should change.

Other respondents highlighted EDOREN’s policy briefs, which are useful to researchers as well as those who wish to engage the government with facts. One of the respondents, a Professor of Education, however highlighted the fact that a challenge to EDOREN’s efforts at disseminating information is that persons who are in decision-making positions do not last on their job.

According to him: “The turnover is so high that when you think you have influenced an individual or you have a cohort on the need to use evidence, within a short time, those people would have been moved out of the place and now you have another crop of people who do not have the experience and they continue to make policies without references to data.”
Leaning towards the previous respondents, a former Education Director argues that EDOREN’s knowledge management and dissemination approach is not effective at all because the policy makers hardly value the information given and fail to act on it. In his words:

“...The problem we are having is the people we are giving the information...whether they actually value it. ...The problem is that many of our institutions do not utilise these evidences very well. Another thing is this, when the evidence is presented, everybody agrees that it is true but what follows next is not EDOREN’s work. It is not EDOREN that will enroll the children...it is not EDOREN that employs the teachers, they are not the ones that train the teachers. They have provided evidence on these three aspects and they have disseminated it very well to the stakeholders and they are aware. “

Other platforms for dissemination recognised by respondents include annual conference, workshops, information fliers, posters and brochures regularly printed by EDOREN. Those interviewed spoke about available documents from researches on various topics ranging for teachers effectiveness, annual school census, state school policies, girl child education to mention a few. One of the respondents however insisted that it is too early to talk about the effectiveness of EDOREN’s knowledge management and dissemination method.

“We are yet to see how effective it is, we can’t measure that yet. It owns the potential of being effective because we hope that with the website they have created, which is a hub for all the researches they have done and the fact that all actors and stakeholders were involved all parts of the works ensures that when we depart to our various places, we have taken the knowledge, skill and experience with us.”

2.3.5 TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR EVIDENCE UPTAKE

i. Policy Formulation

“I will say EDOREN has really impacted positively on our thinking and they have been pushing for reform in education not only in this part of the country but nationally. ...It was EDOREN that gave us a stimulation to work towards developing a policy on teacher education...Just last Saturday we conducted a screening test for teachers to be employed on basic education. Honestly, we were not doing this before. Some of these issues that are exposed in some of these researches have really touched the conscience of many people... It is a reform that is very timely. “

The above statement above made by the Permanent Sectary of a State Ministry of Education which reflects the almost immediate translation of the type of evidence-based research reports that EDOREN produces to implementation by various stakeholders including policy makers was apparent in stories told by a good number of those interviewed.

A lecturer at a State University in northern Nigeria speaks also of how his state government has been using the data generated through his EDOREN fellowship engagement to make some of its policies. According to him before now, the State Government did not have any recruitment and development policy but when it saw the outcome of the research by EDOREN, it quickly bought into it so there would be improvement in the employment and deployment of teachers in the state.

Another, while supporting this says some of the researches EDOREN has done are already having impact in policy formulation, particularly the one on identifying an effective teacher. According to her, the rate at which it was taken up and used by a particular local government was so fast. She concluded that the type of research EDOREN is doing is such that actually changes the way things are done.

Other examples of technical uptake of data to policies abound. One respondent speaks about the case of increasing the number of ‘Almajiri’ children from very low numbers of to significantly higher ones by the use
of data. Another spoke to how they conducted a research and found that only 19 teachers were effective and how the Commissioner for Education in the state has now suggested that the budgetary allocation should vote substantial amount for capacity development for teachers. The commissioner also directed the drafting of a good recruitment and deployment policy for the state. EDOREN has therefore as far as he is concerned helped to inform policy direction for the state.

The fellowship exchange programme between members of the academia and policy makers from the ministry was particularly in the mention has being a radical step towards ensuring that results of researches feed into policy making in the states involved. The respondents laud this strategy saying that by so doing, the two parties were able to really understand how both sides can support each other.

The impression of the respondents is that EDOREN is in fact intentional about ensuring that their data feed into policy making as they seek to get commitment from relevant government quarters that the results of the researches which the later participate in from the beginning will be put to good use. They observe that all other stakeholders including other development partners, non-governmental organisations and even parents are also made to pledge their commitment to support the government to achieve the set goal of ensuring the findings are implemented.

ii. A useful government resource

A respondent from the Federal Ministry of Education says that EDOREN is actually helping to meet a vital need of the government. She is convinced that without the support of EDOREN, the ministry would not have evidence and would find it difficult to properly mobilise support from other stakeholders. She told of how EDOREN to a very large extent, provided technical support to special needs and even teacher development in Nigeria through this means of engagement. Another respondent from the ministry at the director level corroborates this saying, “There is a relationship, which has impacted the direction of policy discussion in the last two years.” Other respondents from the ministry also agree with this and believe this impact has been more through the annual education conference.

One of the respondents from one of the northern states, a high-ranking civil servant, narrates how engagement with EDOREN translates to employment of more effective teachers and the emergence of a policy in this regard:

“The outcome of rigorous exercise, transparent, based on actual interaction with people in the state were used, understanding the weakness and strength of these things, based on evidence that you cannot deny because its clear. So we have no cause to doubt that evidence and it influences many policies in the state. ...Whenever we are looking for quality teachers; we know what to look out for as a policy."

Other respondents who work in and outside the government also talked about how their engagement with EDOREN dovetailed into implemented projects and policy level decisions in their organisations. A respondent who works in a government agency that trains teachers tells of how he filed a report in his office based on research findings shared by EDOREN, was asked to develop his report into a proposal and was able get approval to conduct a training programme for teachers. Yet another mentioned that the policy uptake due to EDOREN’s research was also happening at local government level, as the directors of schools are utilising evidence given to them to assist their process of carrying out their policies.

One of such respondents, a University Professor and former State Universal Basic Education Board Executive, shares a remarkable story:

“Since I operate locally, the evidence generated is used here. When I was at the primary board, there was a time we visited the school where we had no children in the school and when I asked why, they said they went for Almajiri programme in other places. So, I used the office money to introduce
feeding. I introduced feeding in five schools. When we went to the first school, we found nine pupils, the other one 18 and the highest we had was around 30. The introduction of the school breakfast feeding helped. Where we had nine students; I left almost 313 pupils. The school where there was nobody, we were able to generate over 400 pupils. So, that is where I was able to use the evidence to promote education in those schools.”

A collaborator from one of the development partner organisations rated EDOREN’s technical support for evidence uptake into policy and practice as 100%. His reason was because EDOREN’s reports provides interpretation and also brings together those who will use the results. He shared his experience on how EDOREN brought the Director in charge of recruitment of teachers from a state to a research meeting. According to him, the fact that the director was there and able to give the agencies testimony was like bringing a champion to the field in order to help others to imbibe or emulate what that person has been able to achieve.

### 2.3.6 RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND RESPONSIVENESS

#### i. Unique leadership and team

Overwhelmingly, all respondents agree that there is something unique about EDOREN’s leadership and its team. Cordial, responsive, dynamic, polite, courteous, mutual respect, friendly, open, willing to share, welcoming, articulate, encouraging, accommodating, and cooperative are some of the recurring words used by the respondents. About all of them agree that the EDOREN team is very responsive.

Most of the respondents commented that the team is the secret behind the success of the EDOREN vision. They particularly commended the choice of Professor Akogun as the head of the team. “There wouldn’t have been a better choice than Prof. Akogun”, says one of them.

A respondent from one of the partner DFID programmes however mentions that the relationship did not go well initially due to the lack of proper coordination of communication channels but that this has since been resolved as both parties chose a point person to handle differences.

One of the research consultants explains EDOREN’s responsiveness to resolving issues by telling of a time when there were differences based on misinformation between members of teams across the five states that were conducting the research. She speaks fondly about how putting the team of about 50 members from different backgrounds and categories together and managing it was a huge task but this was well handled by the EDOREN team. In her words:

“One thing I have noticed is that there is no ego struggle where one person will say he is superior to another person. There has never been such in any of our meetings to the extent that there was a day I was telling some of the team members that I am going to talk to Prof and then they were asking me who Prof was. I said Prof. Akogun and they said, you mean Ola? Is he a Prof?”

A number of the respondents commended the prompt payment of fees after activities and the fact that rules are clear. Two others however complained that the payment sometimes takes quite a long time to process and researchers in particular are unhappy with having to wait for so long for reimbursable after sometimes expending their own resources and completing the assignment.

One of the research team members talks about how members of staff at EDOREN are always willing and patient to teach participants basic skills including the use of computers. Others also say that they are usually carried along and allowed to share experiences and ask questions. One respondent says theirs is a “…learners-centred approach.”
ii. Ability to Change

Supporting the previous narrative, one of the female fellows shares about EDOREN’s willingness to adjust to changes based on prevailing circumstances. She mentioned that an on-going research was meant to have ended in December 2017 but this became difficult due to the recent reforms in the education sector of the state. The team decided to take advantage of the opening and help guide the teacher recruitment process in the state. According to her, despite the fact that this was not in the initial plan, EDOREN has been supporting the team and assisting them to achieve their aim of working with the state government.

Again, those interviewed speak about the fact that EDOREN team members are always very accessible and how this affects how others value the work that they do. In one of the respondents words:

“The truth is that even if it is on Sunday that I call them or send an email to them; instantly, there is response. I think it is what makes one value them.”

Still on accessibility, another respondent, a research consultant talks about the fact that the EDOREN office is also always made available for use for various stakeholders and consultants as may be necessary and the team provides security and mobility for consultants on duty. It is quite interesting to find that many of the respondents were of the impression that EDOREN’s responsiveness is more of a culture that pervades the entire organisation from the country director to the drivers. A particular respondent who serves as a director in a research institute on Education, talking about the team spirit of the EDOREN members of staff says he finds the support staff “intriguing”. Hear him:

“I see it as a friendship kind of relationship in the office not boss-subordinate and I think it has to do with the personality of the leadership. I see Prof. Ola Akogun as a humble person that relates properly and I also see the support staff also being cooperative and not taking advantage of his humility to run him over or run him down. I think the relationship is close to perfect.”

Other comments around the responsiveness of EDOREN bordered around the tenacity with which the team follows up prospective participants for their events and activities with calls and relate easily with all stakeholders. This many more the respondents say adds to the organisation’s convening power.

2.3.7 EDOREN AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OBJECTIVES

The methods of EDOREN, in gathering data, seeking evidence, conducting researches and ensuring that all these flow into implementable practices and policies, have clearly been adopted by many of those who came in contact with the initiative. This would be the most outstanding guarantee of sustainability that EDOREN has according to the respondents.

“If we follow the pattern of the research conducted by EDOREN, we can sustain the conduct of the activities performed by EDOREN.” – EDOREN Research Team Member, Dutse

Yet another respondent says:

“The research I am doing now, the way it has worked, I might as well have completely stayed in the EDOREN’s office. I think my whole approach now, the methods I am using, the time I have spent with stakeholders on ground trying to understand the issues; have greatly been shaped and informed by the time I spent with EDOREN and in a very concrete way; the EDOREN’s team in some ways are like my mentors because I learnt so much and I aspire to have high quality of work that matches what they have been able to do and the best way to do that is from learning from their experiences. So, I think their work will definitely continue...”
The respondent, a researcher, talked about how other stakeholders that she had interactions with on projects in Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa manifest the traits of genuine curiosity to produce good work that EDOREN is known for and have been able to pass this to their colleague who were not a part of the training.

Many more respondents raised the usability of EDOREN’s research as a reason its objectives will continue to be met. One of the respondents puts it this way:

“The research tools they used can be utilised. The kinds of questions they used, we can continue utilising it to even continue with other schools. The skills introduced can be used to follow up the deployment even up to the classrooms. We can utilise the knowledge that we gain from EDOREN and continue with their activities.”

The huge evidence-based data repository that EDOREN has generated on Nigeria’s education sector is yet another thing that respondents say will live long after EDOREN. Some of the partner DFID organisation and other donor organisations spoke about how it would be critical to be able to transfer ownership and sustain the website after the programme ends.

i. Enduring partnerships

Again, respondents mentioned that the relationships and partnerships that have been forged by the organisation’s engagement over a period of five years would continue after it. Some say the fact that EDOREN engaged with stakeholders at the very top level will help sustain its vision even if it closes. They emphasise that the idea of the importance of evidence-based data for ensuring positive change in the education sector has caught on with those who make the decisions and it will only be a matter of time before policies become a function of gathered evidence.

A respondent from Kaduna speaks about the fact that EDOREN’s objectives are already sustainable because some of their engagements have resulted into laws. According to him all 4,254 primary schools in the state will have school based management committees while all the 541 secondary schools, will have school based management committee or school management board. He added that funding will come directly from government and every stakeholder will be involved in the committee.

The annual conference is another part of the EDOREN work respondents are sure will continue even when EDOREN has stopped being available to lead it. One of the respondents who works with a partner international development partners says he is putting together a proposal to ensure the initiative continues which he will submit to his organisation.

Some of the respondents say they have already made sure to include components that will ascertain sustainability in their programmes. One of such, a fellow, gave example of how the knowledge market fair they introduced was designed on a lean budget to ensure that it is affordable without EDOREN’s support. She adds that, “Whatever happens later, we cannot forget that it was started by EDOREN...Even if EDOREN leaves today, EDOREN will continue to live through us because we cannot just talk about ourselves without mentioning our experience in EDOREN’s fellowship.” She further emphasises that part of the sustainability plan is to document some of the things that have been done to make this available to others.

ii. EDOREN and its enduring work

Most of the respondents are sure that the type of data that EDOREN has gathered will help develop policies that would affect future plans for the development sector. Confirming this, a respondent from the Ministry of Education, talking about Special Education Needs and Disability issues mentioned that the ministry has now gone around some states on its own to ensure that teachers are trained on how to handle people with disabilities. Regarding infrastructure for inclusiveness she also mentioned that the ministry is looking at
including the cost in its budget for next year to ensure that infrastructure for the person with disability is put in place in most schools.

Another respondent who runs a non-governmental school focused on special needs says that she has already started incorporating lessons from EDOREN into her school and will sustain this. Other respondents are sure they will continue with the advocacy that EDOREN started and make sure that government acts on the demands that EDOREN helped them make from it.

There are however respondents who say that it would be difficult to sustain the work that EDOREN has done due to lack of capacity especially in terms of availability of funds for such a work. An example of this according to a respondent is the difficulty surrounding the publication of the Education Digest due to lack of funds. He opines that:

“Government does not have the capacity in terms of personnel and financial strength to embark on these far-reaching researches.”

He nevertheless says that the ministry will continue some activities that it was engaged in before the advent of EDOREN like the annual school census. Another respondent who works with the Kaduna state government says the community participation that EDOREN introduced will be sustained. The way out of this according to a DFID partner organisation respondent would be for EDOREN to continue for a while to support further. He highlights the fact that leaving locals to handle EDOREN’s focus area with what is on ground is quite enormous. He gave an example of a State in Northern Nigeria where there are 44 local government areas, the land space is so big and wide and the existing 7,000 schools are distances away from one another arguing that there is so much more that needs to be done considering that there are states with many more schools.

2.3.8 INFLUENCE AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Perhaps the most profound statement made on the impact of EDOREN was from a respondent who is a senior civil servant in Kaduna. Hear him:

“Whenever the history of Kaduna State will be written regarding the recruitment and deployment of effective teachers, the name of EDOREN will be written in gold.”

As EDOREN plans to close in March 2018, the respondents are sure the initiative will be missed. According to them, the closing of EDOREN will leave a massive gap in Nigeria’s education sector. These respondents say this is because of the huge influence the programme has had on individuals as well as organisation capacity strengthening. The following quotes represent some the things the respondents agree have been of greatest impact on them and they would therefore miss the most:

- “I will miss the work that they have produced because I reference it. I use it a lot and having that kind of data that you can be confident in, readily at your fingertips is no joke... I will miss the dynamic team in the office...” – EDOREN Researcher

- “I will miss their evaluation. The annual independent view on our project will be missed.” – DEEPEN Representative

- “I will miss the capacity building a lot. I will also miss going to the field. EDOREN’s research will be missed because it gave me opportunity to go to states in Nigeria that I had not seen.” – Respondent from Yola

- “We will miss the publication that they have been making except they are continued, if not, those rich publication would be missed. Those facts that can support or influence education policy will be missed except they have been handed over... We will miss the collaboration, the joint outcome or
communiqué that goes out to government and the good people that have been working with EDOREN.” – DFID initiative representative, Kaduna

- “The opportunity it provided me to meet with various people from various institutions.” – Professor of Education

- “The research outcome, information gathering and the bringing together of eggheads for discussion... We have in ministries the department of planning, research and statistics but no one is doing such but this is what EDOREN is presenting. I think this is one thing I will miss.” – USAID Funded Programme Representative

- “We will all miss their approach of research in education.” – EDOREN Research Consultant

- “EDOREN’s comprises of local and international personalities and they have exposed us to some techniques of data generation, implementation and execution.” – A Permanent Secretary

- “I think it is the collaboration on that conference because we were just beginning to gain and then seeing the strong need and importance of the conference. People were just beginning to see the need for the conference and the need for participation, so that role EDOREN played would be missed...” – International Development Partner

Other things respondents say they will miss about EDOREN include; capacity strengthening and mentoring, relationship, exposure, collaboration, involvement in research and data. A handful of the respondents found it difficult to understand why EDOREN should end. Rather than state what they miss, they spoke to the things they hoped they would not have to miss and the justification for this.

- “I wish EDOREN continues because the issues on education sector are inexhaustible. We need so much work to be done in terms of tertiary education, teacher education especially with people with disabilities. There isn’t much that has been done in these areas and we really need to do so much more.” – EDOREN Research Consultant on disability issues

- “If I have my way, I would advise that they don’t close but if they must, other agencies like them should continue where they stopped.” – Retired Education Secretary

- “Not so many people want to invest in teacher related issues or data-gathering issues. What Nigeria is lacking is data...and that is the gap EDOREN is filling. I think some of us will speak with the Minister...to sustain that organisation through one means or the other. It is not good to allow EDOREN to die. They are doing a good job that is of tremendous benefit to this country.” – Government agency representative

- “As an organisation; when you come to a country, the best thing is to ensure that your system has caught on very well before leaving. I am not very happy to see EDOREN wind up so quickly. I feel DFID should allow it reincarnate and sustain it for another four or five years...” – Former Director of Ministry of Education

Yet others believe that EDOREN has made enough impact such that when it closes, others will be able to carry on.

“They have made their mark. There has been conscious effort to institutionalise what they do. They would be sorely missed but I am sure the system would adjust because their structure is already in place.” – Ministry of Education Representative
3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 General Impressions

The EDOREN project has the overarching high level objectives of:

- Improvement in DFID education portfolio performance, and
- Improvement in education policy development and implementation

The field evidence, produced almost verbatim in the foregoing section, shows that these objectives have, to a very large extent, been attained. There is also overwhelming evidence that EDOREN has become effectively visible with partners, stakeholders and a broad spectrum of beneficiaries, through its research, capacity building and partnership strengthening undertakings. The positive impact of its field activities are a tangible proof a full realisation of the intermediate outcomes on the project’s logframe, namely:

Use of EDOREN outputs DFID and DFID education portfolio programmes to improve portfolio design and implementation

Use of EDOREN outputs by state and federal governments to improve education policy design and service provision

Improvement in Education data collection and analysis in key states

This success story conclusion is supported by the conclusions of the consultants who conducted this study, as well as by the perceptions of partners and beneficiaries. One consultant, after analysing available reports on EDOREN and interacting with partners, concluded that all milestone activities have been met; EDOREN has carried out large-scale research and evaluation work for all four DFID Nigeria education programmes (GEP3, TDP, DEEPEN, ESSPIN) and, in addition, EDOREN has delivered independent thematic research, support and capacity strengthening to Nigerian education research, policy making, and data-gathering activities, as well as a wide range of derived knowledge products to serve the Nigerian education sector. The high technical quality of EDOREN's work was consistently recognised by all stakeholders

A development partner representative summed up the high rating by his group of the work of EDOREN in the following words:

"EDOREN is a gem; it has a special construction and culture"...not only the rigour of its work, but the added value and synergies it has provided to the work of development partners...this is the ‘knowledge investment’ that EDOREN has facilitated

The consultant who dwelt more intensively on in-depth interviews with a wide range of EDOREN project beneficiaries was impressed by the positive impact that the project has made on Nigeria’s education system, has faithfully captured the deep appreciations of beneficiaries in the following series of ‘what I will miss’ statements, reproduced in box 1 below.
What can be considered a heart-warming observation on the impact of EDOREN on the education system and technical support processes in Nigeria is captured as follows: The lessons for other organisations to learn from EDOREN according to the respondents include clear focus, understanding of local context, maximisation of limited resources in terms of time and money, creation of a dynamic team, linking research to results and policies, thematic research, and continuation of the fellowship programme. Some say that it would in fact be important for EDOREN to pass on the knowledge it has to other organisations and do step down trainings before it exits.

**BOX 1: BENEFICIARIES ARE SURELY GOING TO MISS A LOT**

- *I will miss the work that they have produced because I reference it. I use it a lot and having that kind of data that you can be confident in, readily at your fingertips is no joke... I will miss the dynamic team in the office...”* – EDOREN Researcher

- “*I will miss their evaluation. The annual independent view on our project will be missed.”* – DEEPEN Representative

- “*I will miss the capacity building a lot. I will also miss going to the field. EDOREN’s research will be missed because it gave me opportunity to go to states in Nigeria that I had not seen.”* – Respondent from Yola

- “*We will miss the publication that they have been making except they are continued, if not, those rich publication would be missed. Those facts that can support or influence education policy will be missed except they have been handed over... We will miss the collaboration, the joint outcome or communiqué that goes out to government and the good people that have been working with EDOREN.”* – representative of a DFID project in Kaduna

- *We will all miss their approach of research in education.”* – EDOREN Research Consultant
4 Recommendations

From the stories from a wide range of stakeholders, it is clear that EDOREN’s two central objectives of embedding research, evaluation and learning in DFID’s education sector support in Nigeria and enhancing national capacities to generate and use quality educational data, research and evaluation for policy and strategy were met outstandingly.

Also, the related intermediate outcomes of ensuring the use of EDOREN outputs by DFID and its education portfolio programmes – Girl’s Education Programme (GEP3), Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN), Developing Effective Private Education in Nigeria (DEEPEN) and Teacher Development Programme (TDP) to improve portfolio design and implementation was achieved.

In the same vein, state and federal governments are deploying EDOREN outputs and service provision for the sector to improve education policy design, even as the capacity for Education data collection and analysis in Nigeria has been improved in key states where EDOREN worked with many of the stakeholders stating their confidence in their sense of ownership to sustain EDOREN’s objectives.

Yet, there remains a very large as yet unserved pool of stakeholders who may be targeted with future and ongoing dissemination. The website is an impressive knowledge bank. Engaged researchers, policymakers, international development partners, non-governmental organisations and representatives of the academia find it extremely useful. There is however, a larger percentage of similar persons and groups, the media and indeed other concerned members of the general public that need to be aware of the resources and learn from the possibilities with data it portends.

Despite this challenge, a good number of the persons interviewed expressed great appreciation to the DFID and EDOREN for creating such an impactful initiative saying it has worked to surpass its target. Two quotes from the respondents capture the entirety of the thoughts expressed by contribution stories about the influence and impact of the EDOREN five-year sojourn in Nigeria.

“Aside being a consultant with EDOREN if I were on the other side, on the side of the beneficiary, I will say EDOREN has done what Henry Ford has done to the automobile industry – made it available to all. EDOREN has made data available to users.” – EDOREN Consultant and Polytechnic Lecturer

“It has been five years of EDOREN, five years that are really worth it.” – EDOREN Fellow

ON A FINAL NOTE

EDOREN may be formally closing but its legacies of business unusual in institutionalising the use of research with reliable data to guide the national education development process, developing local capacity for that badly needed function, and carrying a broad spectrum of development partners and stakeholders along should remain enduring. The major message to Government, Civil Society and all partners therefore is

WHILE EDOREN MAY OFFICIALLY CLOSE, LET’S KEEP IT ENDURING LEGACES ALIVE
ANNEX A  THE CASE RECORD--Extracts from Annual EDOREN Review Report

A.1 EXTRACT from the 2013/4 Annual Report

Summary of headline EDOREN results

EDOREN’s first year after the end of the project inception phase was marked by uncertainty about the future of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF’s) Girls’ Education Project phase 3 (GEP3). This had a significant impact on EDOREN operations, both because of the importance of GEP3 in our planning and because relations with GEP3 required particular care and management effort. However, we were able to successfully deliver a broad range of activities throughout the year, and efforts from both sides have resulted in very solid and trusting relations with UNICEF. The key results of this cooperation are two studies relating to UNICEF’s Female Teacher Training Scholarship Scheme (FTTSS) programme, a study of teacher supply and demand in Katsina, a political economy analysis study, numerous EDOREN inputs for GEP3’s strategy and planning documents, ongoing and very active support for the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) and the Annual School Census (ASC) in GEP3 states, an evaluability study of GEP3 during that programme’s Project Improvement Plan phase (and most significantly of its budgetary implications), as well as progress towards the anticipated completion in November 2014 of a solid evaluation framework and design for baseline surveys for GEP3.

In parallel, we have engaged with the Developing Effective Private Education in Nigeria (DEEPEN) project, in order to conduct an Annual Review of DEEPEN, to advise DEEPEN on their monitoring and results measurement approach, to draft DEEPEN’s evaluation framework, to conduct an ex-ante, theory-based review of DEEPEN, and to support DEEPEN’s evaluation and baseline survey design and preparations.

During the reporting year our remit with respect to the TDP was widened, to include the design of an evaluation framework, as well as the design and execution of a baseline survey for the TDP. In addition and as originally planned, we have provided advice on TDP’s monitoring and evaluation framework, and we are currently preparing for the upcoming TDP Annual Review, commencing in November 2014—with the aim of delivering a final draft at the end of January 2015.

The work we carry out in support of GEP3, DEEPEN, and TDP is tightly integrated within EDOREN, so as to leverage synergies and lessons learned, as well as to enable us to keep a tight focus on the management, harmonisation, and quality of data. In addition, we hold regular meetings of the entire project portfolio, to share experiences and discuss opportunities for cooperation. Most recently, this has resulted in EDOREN support for DFID Nigeria’s drive to harmonise the measurement of learning outcomes. As an extension of our ongoing advice to strengthen EMIS in GEP3 states we have designed and started to populate a comprehensive database of DFID-funded interventions in Nigerian schools, which offers the possibility of making historical comparisons of data on individual schools, and which is enriched by geo-location data that we expect will significantly strengthen sampling for all project evaluation surveys planned by EDOREN and other projects. In addition, given Nigeria’s population growth and the challenges faced by its education system, case studies based on the progress of individual schools can add rich data and a more thorough understanding of project interventions to the more general indicators provided by large-scale surveys.

Beyond the DFID project portfolio, EDOREN has further refined the literature review of basic education in Nigeria, which had been developed during the inception phase up to September 2013. We received feedback from a variety of stakeholders, as well as an endorsement from the Ministry of Education, and produced the final version at the end of June 2014. We are continuing efforts to disseminate this unique piece of work as widely as possible, with plans to publish it in book form in early 2015. As the most significant dissemination effort to date, we have launched the “Nigeria Education” website, with enthusiastic support from the Ministry of Education. Nigeria Education is a one-stop repository of research, researchers, and organisations that are relevant to the sector.
Based on strong and continuously growing connections to educational researchers and policy-makers in Nigeria – not least through invaluable networking contributions from members of the Project Advisory Committee, which was constituted this year – we have also engaged in a thorough process of stakeholder consultation to identify four focus areas for EDOREN’s own, independent thematic research. Two of these pieces of research are currently under way: the studies look at teacher deployment and management, and at wider evidence relating to universal basic education reforms in federal states, with a view to, in the next stage, investigating the specific Nigerian case. We have also engaged with the research division of the Ministry of Education and with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in a series of workshops and consultations to improve data harmonisation, both by providing these bodies with support in their database work, by updating the relevant sections of the statistical compendium, and by providing in-depth secondary analyses of existing household survey data.

A.2 EXTRACT from the 2014/5 Annual Report

EDOREN’s second project year (September 2014-August 2015) was marked by a significant expansion of activity, notably in planning and conducting large-scale surveys for the evaluation of projects in DFID Nigeria’s education portfolio. In addition, there has been some restructuring of EDOREN to align it more closely with a revised logframe and theory of change, building on the experience of the first two years.

Against a background of political uncertainty and insecurity associated with the 2015 Nigerian general elections, EDOREN delivered a range of products in close cooperation with DFID, its education projects, and other partners.

- For the UNICEF managed GEP3 programme, EDOREN contributed to the ongoing project redesign, and developed an evaluation framework and baseline survey design, both now in use.

- EDOREN merged a separately contracted evaluation of TDP into EDOREN’s work plan. Although the initial quantitative survey of TDP was conducted separately, from June 2015 the qualitative component was undertaken by EDOREN. The synthesis report is underway. EDOREN also completed the annual review for TDP’s second year.

- EDOREN conducted the annual review of DEEPEN in June and July 2015, and has worked closely with DEEPEN and its independently contracted survey provider to design, quality-assess, and analyse their baseline survey, carried out up to February 2015.

- EDOREN acted responsively to undertake a study to assess ESSPINS’s impact on capacity development from June to August 2015.

- EDOREN completed two significant, independent pieces of thematic research: one on teacher deployment and management; the other is an international comparative study of basic education reform in Federal States. The latter provides a basis for continued work on Nigeria’s Universal Basic Education reforms with the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC).

- EDOREN contributed significantly to new strategies for Nigeria’s education management information systems (EMIS), coordinated with ESSPIN, GEP3, state stakeholders, and NEMIS, the Nigerian body responsible for EMIS implementation. This includes active support for the transition to a new software system. The 2014/15 annual school census was supported too, plus the design and population of a comprehensive database of DFID project interventions in schools, linked to EMIS data.
EDOREN initiated a new, dedicated “Policy Impact” work stream to strengthen the achievement of planned project outcomes. This defines – in close cooperation with DFID – the streamlining and more precise definition of EDOREN’s budget and work plans, the tightening of its logframe and theory of change, and establishing a detailed Value for Money strategy. As part of this strategy, EDOREN carried out a range of dissemination activities, increasing the reach of the Nigeria Education website, making significant and extremely well-received contributions to international conferences, holding workshops with policy makers, DFID project staff, and other stakeholders, and providing leadership and inputs for political economy analysis processes, including on transition strategies around the general election for DFID and its project portfolio.

The Federal Ministry of Education, EDOREN is initiating a new annual conference on education in Nigeria (November 2015). This is designed to forge closer links between researchers and policy makers.

EDOREN is contributing to DFID’s developing strategic vision and new operational plan for education (2016-2020), with a particular focus on filtering and interpreting lessons from the synthesis of research across EDOREN’s entire activity range. To this end, we delivered inputs from the secondary analysis of household surveys, an analysis of levels and trends of aid to education in Nigeria, and ongoing advice through individual meetings and larger workshops.

Work in support of GEP3, DEEPEN, TDP, and ESSPIN is tightly integrated within EDOREN, to leverage synergies and to cross-reference lessons learned. This enables the project to keep a tight focus on the management, harmonisation, and quality of data. In addition, there are regular meetings of the entire DFID education project portfolio, to share experiences and discuss opportunities for cooperation. In this context, EDOREN plays a leading role in DFID Nigeria’s drive to harmonise the measurement of learning outcomes, including through intellectual and practical contributions in the project’s survey work.

EDOREN continued to build increasingly close and trusting relations with DFID and its education portfolio programmes. During the reporting year, the DFID education adviser responsible for EDOREN, Emily Oldmeadow, left DFID Nigeria, and her role was taken on by Laura Brannelly, with whom we had worked closely before. From EDOREN’s perspective, the transition has been smooth, as DFID Nigeria’s and our own vision and ways of working remain closely aligned. Both sides are aware that the meaning and impact of most past and current EDOREN work depends crucially on a set of activities outside the current contract, for which a budget amendment for the financial year 2016/17 will be negotiated. It also depends on the continued existence of EDOREN beyond 2017, for which a new contract is required, in order to complete the evaluations of GEP3, TDP, and DEEPEN; to deliver on our thematic research and capacity strengthening agendas, and to translate EDOREN’s outputs into sustainable impact.

A.3 EXTRACT from the 2015/6 Annual Report

EDOREN’s third project year (September 2015 – August 2016) represented its first full year operating with the revised workstream structure, and a largely finalised logframe, which was developed in several rounds until January 2016, and has remained fundamentally unchanged since. This has allowed existing processes to stabilise, ways of working to become more reliable and structured, and the to focus fully on a wide range of activities that fell broadly into four categories, mirroring logframe outputs:
A.3.1 Evaluations and reviews

a. During this year, one of EDOREN’s longest-planned achievements, the baseline school survey for UNICEF’s GEP3 programme, was carried out and completed; we are currently awaiting SEQAS feedback;

b. The TDP and DEEPEN consolidated baseline reports were produced and finalised;

c. Relatively large-scale formative research in support of the Teacher Development Programme (TDP), at a budget of nearly £300,000 was conceptualised, planned, and carried out at short notice between April and August 2016;

d. A study to replace the originally planned midline survey for DEEPEN was planned and carried out, to compare student achievement at primary 4 level between public and private schools;

e. A teacher supply and demand study in Jigawa and Zamfara, mostly funded under a separate contract with the TDP, was started and is nearing completion;

f. A study mostly carried out in the previous year, on ESSPIN’s impact on capacity strengthening, was completed;

g. The annual review for DEEPEN was carried out under DFID direction by a team subcontracted under EDOREN;

A.3.2 Independent studies on key basic education issued in Nigeria

a. A new Thematic Research agenda was developed in close cooperation with DFID and other stakeholders;

b. Both studies planned under the new agenda were designed and launched; one investigates how to identify, recruit, and deploy effective teachers; the other looks at education in conflict settings in the North-east of Nigeria;

A.3.3 Education database, EMIS, and ASC work

a. The EDOREN team continued to develop the School Intervention Database (SID);

b. The Annual School Census (ASC) in GEP3 states continued to be supported, with a shift from direct technical assistance to capacity strengthening and handing over more aspects of the relevant activities to local teams;

c. The team led a range of data quality and consolidation activities, including linking schools lists from the ASC to NEDS data, and a joint ASC data validation survey with ESSPIN.

A.3.4 The production and support of derived knowledge and dissemination products

a. The first annual national education conference was initiated and organised in substantive parts by EDOREN with large inputs from DFID, the FME, the British council and other stakeholders; it took place in Abuja on 7 December 2016. Since then, the FME has taken a more central role in establishing the conference under its new title “Nigeria’s Annual Education Conference” (NAEC) as a regular event. NAEC:2016 will take place on 8 November 2016, still with substantial EDOREN inputs and guidance both in the organisation, and in terms of conference contributions and content;
b. EDOREN continued to pursue its online strategy, maintaining a Twitter account, the Nigeria-education.org website and its databases, and creating blog posts throughout the year;

c. The team developed and started to deliver on a detailed dissemination plan, creating professionally designed policy briefs and other summary materials on a wide range of topics emerging from EDOREN research

In parallel to delivering specific outputs, the EDOREN team has continued to deepen and intensify close working relationships with stakeholders across the Nigerian education research and policy space. There is now a particularly good connection to officials from the Department of Educational Planning, Research and Development (EPRD) of the Federal Ministry of Education (FME), and we have recently been asked to contribute to the development of costing and M&E frameworks for the Ministry’s new Ministerial Strategic Plan (MSP).

Over the years, EDOREN’s intensive, open, and trusting working relationship with DFID Nigeria and its portfolio of education programmes continued. A substantial budget amendment to cover EDOREN activities that had not been planned initially was signed between DFID and OPM in May 2016, enabling us to continue to deliver high quality work in a very flexible and adaptive fashion. DFID is aware that the usefulness and impact of nearly all past and current EDOREN work depends crucially on a set of planned activities beyond the current contract (ending in March 2017), in order to complete the evaluations of GEP3, TDP, and DEEPEN; to deliver on our thematic research and capacity strengthening agendas, and to translate EDOREN’s outputs into sustainable impact.

Early in the reporting year, the Minister for Education, Adamu Adamu, the Minister of State for Education, Professor Anthony Gozie Anwuka, and the Permanent Secretary for Education, Dr Folashade Yemi-Esan, were finally sworn in on 11 November 2015, with a long delay after the new government of President Buhari took office. For EDOREN and its partners, this ended a period of uncertainty, but the late appointment made planning the first Annual Conference more difficult than intended. However, the conference was widely considered very successful, leading to the Ministry’s decision to make NAEC a regular event, as outlined above.

We expect education and security to remain central themes of concern for Nigerian federal and state policy debates in coming years. With an increased focus on campaigns for equality of access to education and safety in schools, governments and development partners will depend even more on quality data, credible information and timely evidence for their decision-making. Given the current level of interest from DFID Nigeria education sector projects and from government agencies in using EDOREN capabilities, we experienced a continued increase in the demand for EDOREN support and collaboration in evidence generation and capacity strengthening in the year leading to greater involvement in high profile functions of government such as the launch of the teacher professional development in June 2016. This has attracted media attention, such as print media interviewing the Country Director on issues concerning education (see The Guardian, 22 September 2016, Page 40).