

**Press Statement on the Flag off Ceremony of the ‘School In My  
Community’ Initiative for Adolescent Girls in Commemoration of the  
International Day of the Girl-Child.  
October 10, 2020.  
Abuja, Nigeria.**

Ladies and Gentle Men,

**Introduction**

Welcome and thank you for joining us on the flag-off ceremony of the School in My Community initiative on this International Day of the Girl-child.

As we all know, the world has been battling the Covid-19 pandemic for more than 6 months. Although everyone has been impacted by the pandemic in one way or the other, adolescent girls are the most affected group of people. I stand here today to speak on behalf of adolescent girls whose needs are often not recognized. I will tell you why!

The pandemic increased adolescent girls’ vulnerability to sexual and gender-based violence because the lockdown of schools brought girls closer to their abusers and limited their chances of seeking help. The pandemic worsened period poverty for girls as most parents struggled to put food on the table and therefore consider the provision of sanitary pads as a luxury but unfortunately, the period doesn’t stop for the pandemic.

The pandemic also created learning gaps for girls following the continued closure of schools. Due to school closure, girls are unable to learn. Even though there are several online courses, limited access to technology, and the inability to create time for study are two major learning barriers girls experienced during this period.

According to the Malala Fund, more than 20million secondary school-aged girls may not return to school after the pandemic as a result of a total loss of interest in learning, child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and child labor. As a country that has more than 13 million out-of-school children before the pandemic, we can’t afford to have more girls drop out of school, this will threaten our prosperity as a nation and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, globally.

As schools prepare to re-open in Nigeria, we are calling on the Nigerian government to consider this as an opportunity to rebuild strongly by ensuring that nothing stops girls from returning to school and from learning; not menstruation, not violence. We are also advocating Nigerian parents to prioritize providing sexual and reproductive education to their

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children and to do all that is within their power to ensure girls return to school. When girls are educated, they change the world.

### **School in My Community (SIMC) Initiative**

The Teenage Network believes that strong girls build strong communities. The School in my Community project is designed to bridge the learning gap by creating learning opportunities for adolescent girls during and during the post-COVID-19 era. The Teenage Network will commence classes for 60 selected adolescent girls who have been offered a scholarship to participate for 8 weeks. The first edition of the School will be held in Nyanya and Kukwaba communities.

The program will adopt an abridged Mathematics and English Language Curriculum for Junior and Senior Secondary Schools. During the session, students will learn Mathematics and English Language to enhance their academic performance as they prepare to return to school. Within the 8 weeks, participants will go through rigorous leadership development courses using the Teenage Leadership Manual. The leadership courses are practical courses designed to equip girls to fully actualize their leadership potentials by solving problems in their communities and contributing to national development. Also, the School will equip participants with practical skills in recycling and encourage them to own their businesses.

Finally, the school will serve as a safe space where girls can interact and receive support on issues related to their sexual and reproductive health. The School in My Community project is supported by Share Yourself and GAD Studio.

### **About Teenage Network**

The Teenage Education and Empowerment Network (TEENAGE NETWORK), is a youth-led non-profit organization that improves access to quality education and health for adolescents in Nigeria. The organization equips adolescents with 21st-century leadership skills and harnesses their skills and talents towards nation-building.

Through research, advocacy, community engagement, and school-based initiatives, the Teenage Network has demonstrated over time its strengths in amplifying adolescents' voices and building safe spaces for adolescent girls in Nigeria. The organization has impacted over twenty thousand adolescents across five states in Nigeria.

During the lockdown, Teenage Network implemented gender-based violence sensitization programs across 13 communities in the Federal Capital Territory and provided 350 girls with facemasks, soap, and sanitary pads for two months. The Teenage Network has designed the School in My

Community Project to provide learning opportunities for girls in the  
Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.  
Thank you all for your kind attention.

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**[www.teenagenetwork.org](http://www.teenagenetwork.org)**