

# **An Examination of Girls' Education Policies in Nigeria with focus on the Northeast**



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**CONNECTED DEVELOPMENT [CODE]**

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## About Connected Development

Founded in 2012, Connected Development [CODE] is a non-governmental organisation with headquarters in Abuja, Nigeria, with the mission of improving access to information and empowering local communities in Africa. The organization strengthens local communities through creating platforms for dialogue, enabling informed debate, and building capacities of marginalised communities so as to ensure social and economic progress while promoting transparency and accountability.

Its initiative, **Follow The Money** tracks, advocates and visualizes governmental implementation of capital funds that are intended for local communities in health, education and environment. This is to promote and ensure transparency, accountability and citizen engagement in governmental spending.

As at 2016 and through Follow The Money, CODE has impacted 26,811 rural lives especially women and children in ensuring that educational and healthcare appropriations meant for them are well spent. In education, the organisation has successfully advocated/tracked the implementation of funds for the construction of school blocks and other facilities in local communities and states in the country including, Eyele (Kogi); Gusau (Zamfara); Anka, (Zamfara); and Zurgurma (Niger State). CODE is currently tracking the implementation of World Bank's \$100 million for the improvement of girl-child education in five northern states, namely, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Sokoto and Jigawa.

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## List of Abbreviations

CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
DFID	Department for International Development
GEM	Girls' Education Movement
GEP	Gender Education Programme
IDP	Internally Displaced People
LGA	Local Government Areas
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEEDS	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
NGP	National Gender Policy
NMEC	National Commission for Mass Literacy Adult and Non-formal Education
PCNE	Presidential Committee for the North East
PINE	Presidential Initiative for Northeast Nigeria
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSI	Safe Schools Initiative
STUMEC	Students Tutoring, Mentoring and Counselling
TBTD	Teachers Development Pedagogy Module
UBE	Universal Basic Education
UNICEF	United Nations Children Emergency Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VSF	Victims Support Fund

## Executive Summary

The Universal Declaration on Human Rights which was adopted in 1948 provides for access to education as a fundamental human right. Over the years, literacy level which is being influenced by access to quality basic education became an elemental metric in rating countries on human development performance. Historically and globally, boys have had lesser bottlenecks than girls in accessing formal education. Following this, several researches started highlighting the correlation between the enrolment of girls in school and increase in life expectancy and literacy levels; gross domestic product; as well as reductions in maternal and child mortality rates in countries.

This has inspired debates on the enrolment of girls in schools as a large component of human capital investment in any country. Nigeria as a country has been rated as one of the countries with poor statistics in ensuring the education of the girl child. This has been despite several strategies that the country has employed to reverse such trend and counter gender disparity in education. These strategies encompass the 1991 establishment of the National Commission for Mass Literacy and Non-formal Education, 1994 Family Support Basic Education Programme, 1999 Universal Basic Education Policy, 2003 Strategy for the Acceleration of Girls Education in Nigeria and the 2004 Universal Basic Education Act, amongst others. Most of these policies were created in order to achieve the Education For-all goals as well as the Millennium Development Goals.

However, these policies were not able to achieve all their targeted results. Nigerian girls still have a considerable number of challenges in obtaining equitable access to education. The northeastern part of the country, especially the conflict-affected states has some of the poorest rankings regarding girls' enrolment. Apart from the headlining effect of conflict caused by the insurgency that became more adverse in 2010, northeastern states have been one of the lowest ranking states with regards to key education statistics such as enrolment, completion, attendance and literacy rates for girls due to the religious/cultural internal dynamics, economic and geographical inequalities, poverty, crisis in the implementation of national and state policies on education, as well as terrorism precipitated insecurity in recent times.

In the light of the foregoing:

- The Nigerian Government should incentivize girl-child education through the provision of scholarships around the country to enable poor parents and even those that have to consider sending boys to school over scarce resources to be able to send their girls to school.
- Follow up and implementation is necessary for the Universal Basic Education Act to be implemented in the country.
- There should be more emphasis on the promotion of girls' rights through the introduction of such teaching at all educational levels so as to foster awareness.
- The government should discontinue the concentration of teachers in the urban centres and ensure equal distribution of educational amenities in both the urban and rural areas to retain teachers.
- There should be coherent strategies to strengthen the enforcement of policies to enable pregnant girls and young mothers to stay in school and discourage child marriages.
- The respective government agencies should analyze and revive the curriculum and teachings in classes that are gender prejudiced.
- The government should also expand flexible and non-formal education options, and ensure safe and supportive learning environment for girls.
- Female leadership component is important in ensuring the success of policies and projects directed at improving girls' education.
- Ultimately, it's imperative that the government ensures that girls in IDP camps in north-east Nigeria have access to basic education.
- The reconstruction programme for the Northeastern part of the country post Boko Haram insurgency should encompass strategies to promote girl-child education at all levels in the sub-region.



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## Background (Overview of Girl-Child Education in Nigeria)

Over the past decades, improving gender equality in education has become a prominent topic of debate in most countries. In Nigeria, there have been humongous disparities between the education that boys and girls receive. Many girls do not have access to basic education after a certain age. The Nigerian girl-child faces significant obstacles in accessing proper education because of inherent traditional societal values placed on the boy-child over the girl-child. As a result, as at 2015, the female adult literacy rate (ages 15 and above) for the country was at 49.7% in comparison to that of male which was at 69.2% with a gender difference of 19.5%.<sup>1</sup> Such gap in literacy was precipitated by differences in education.

Table 1 [Net enrolment in primary school (%) (1995-2015)]

	1995	2001	2004	2005	2007	2011	2012	2013	Target
Net enrolment in primary school (%)	60	70	84	84	80	59	79	54	100

Source: Federal Ministry of Education (FME)

Nigeria was not able to achieve universal primary education, the goal 2 target of the Millennium Development Goals. As at 2013, net enrolment in the country was at 54%, a reduction by 4% since 1995, despite the implementation of strategies to achieve the goal (see table 1). On the ratio of girls to boys in primary education, as at 2013, table 2 shows that the ratio was 94/100 boys. Similarly, the ratio of girls to boys in secondary education was at 91/100 boys (see table 3).

Table 2 [(Ratio of girls to boys in primary education) (1991 – 2013)]

	1991	1995	2000	2005	2010	2012	2013	Target
Ratio of girls to boys in primary education (girls per 100 boys)	82	86	78	84	87	90	94	100

Source: FME

Table 3 [(Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education) (1991 - 2013)]

	1991	1995	1998	2005	2010	2013	Target
Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education (girls per 100 boys)	78	99	86	86	85	91	100

Source: FME

According to the United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) in 2015, 40% of Nigerian children, aged 6 – 11, do not attend any primary school with the Northern region of the country recording the lowest school attendance rate, especially for girls.<sup>2</sup> Despite an increase in net enrolment rates in recent years in the country, it

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015). "List of countries by literacy rate."

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF (2015). "Children Education in Nigeria." Find at 40% of Nigerian children, aged 6 – 11, do not attend any primary school

is estimated that approximately 4.7 million children of primary school age are still not in school.<sup>3</sup> Even when children register in schools, many do not complete the primary cycle (see table 4).UNICEF further estimated that 30% of Nigerian pupils drop out of primary school with only 54% transiting to junior secondary schools.<sup>4</sup> Reasons for this nanoscopic completion rate encompass child labour, economic hardship, early marriage for girls as well as political instability in the northeastern part of the country.In addition, as at 2013, primary school completion rate was also at 82%, an increment of 9% from 1993 (see table 4).

Table 4 [(Primary Six Completion rate) (1993 - 2013)]

	1993	1995	2000	2003	2005	2006	2007	2011	2013	Target
Primary Six completion rate (%)	73	69	85	94	78	89	78	77	82	100

Source: FME

The divergent trend in boys and girls educational enrolment figure can be historically explained to be as a result of the denouements of colonialism and rigidity in the core of Christianity over gender perceptions at that time which was imposed on Nigeria. At the amalgamation of the northern and southern Nigeria in 1914, the country had about 25 secondary schools with around 22 of them being for boys and the remainder for girls. This clearly showcases gender disparity in education at such infant stage of the country.<sup>5</sup> Most of these schools were managed by the missionary up until the early 1950s when education was placed under the control of regions. As at 1949, only 8, out of about 57 secondary schools were exclusively for girls. Then between 1950 and 1960, the number of secondary schools exclusively for girls increased to 14 whereas 61 for boys only.<sup>6</sup>

Following this, and as a contrapuntal, in 1961, the United Nations Educational Science and Cultural Organisation, as well as the Nigerian government established a target of achieving 100% universal primary education in the country by the year 1980.<sup>7</sup> It was believed that this would directly increase the enrolment of girls in primary education. To achieve this target, the Nigerian government introduced free and mandatory Universal Primary Education (UPE).<sup>8</sup> However, up till the late 1970s, more boys still participated in primary education than girls. One of the key explanations to this has been the native traditional philosophy that a woman's place is at home.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> AdetunjiOgunyemi (2015). "A Historical Reconstruction of the Colonial Government's Education Expenditure in Nigeria and the Place of the Girl-Child, 1940 - 1957". Historical Research Letter. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO (1961). "Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa Addis Ababa." Retrieved from [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0007/000774/077416e.PDF](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0007/000774/077416e.PDF)

<sup>8</sup> UNESCO (2003). "Gender and education for all: the leap for equality." Global monitoring report 2003/2004. Retrieved from <http://WWW.UNESCO/oc.UNESCO.org/education/eta-report/2003- PDF/chapter3.PDF>.

While the 1980 target was not met, international and domestic efforts resulted in increment over the visibility of girls' involvement in education as parents began to send and keep their girls in school.<sup>9</sup> From 1970 to 1990, the enrolment of girls in primary education continuously increased from 30% to 80%<sup>10</sup>, while there was not much progress in the enrolment of females in all levels of education. In the 1990s, the establishment of several programs<sup>11</sup> to further counter the divergent boy to girl educational enrolment figure in the country occasioned additional increment in females in primary education. Whereas more boys than girls were enrolled in 1991 with a difference of 138,000, by 1998 the difference was halved.<sup>12</sup>

Table 5 [Enrolment (2004) by gender from pre-primary to Secondary School]

	PRE- PRIMARY	%	PRIMARY	%	SECONDARY	%
MALE	937,997	51.13	12,273,046	55.12	1,567,011	56.54
FEMALE	896,522	48.87	9,994,361	44.88	1,204,623	43.46
TOTAL	1,834,519	100	22,267,407	100	2,771,634	100

Source: FME: Basic and Senior Secondary Eductaion Statis in Nigeria, 2004 &2005

Table 5 shows the 2004 enrolment trend from the primary to secondary school in Nigeria depicting disparity between male and femal learners in the 36 states of the federation, including Abuja.The combined gross enrolment for primary, secondary and tertiary education for female was 57% compared to 71% for males in 2002.<sup>13</sup> This resultantly led to having fewer women in certain economic activities with low percentages of female workers in some selected professions: architects, 2.4%; lawyers, 25.4%; lecturers, 11.8%; quantity surveyors, 3.5%; obstetricians and gynecologists, 8.4%; pediatricians, 33.3%; media practitioners, 18.3% etc.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, table 6 shows the trend of public primary and junior secondary school enrolments of boys and girls in Nigeria between 2006 and 2010. In the table, it could be observed that boy-child enrolment in public primary schools has been higher than that of the girl-child between 2006 and 2010. The same applies to the figures in public junior secondary schools.

<sup>9</sup> C. Kitetu (2001). Gender in education: an overview of developing trends in Africa'. CRILE Working paper, Egerton University, Kenya.

<sup>10</sup> Aromolaran, Adebayo B. (2004). "Female Schooling, Non-Market Productivity, and Labor Market Participation in Nigeria." Yale University Economic Growth Center Discussion Paper No. 879. Retrieved fromSSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=493763>

<sup>11</sup> Some of the programs include the 1991 establishment of the National Commission for Mass Literacy and Non-formal Education and the 1994 Family Support Basic Education Programme.

<sup>12</sup> C. Kitetu (2001). Gender in education: an overview of developing trends in Africa'. CRILE Working paper, Egerton University, Kenya

<sup>13</sup> Ojo, A. (2002). "Socio-Economic Situation", in Africa Atlases (Nigeria), Paris-France, Les Editions J.A., Pp. 126-127.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

Table 6[(Trends of boy and girl-child public primary and junior secondary school enrolment) (2006 - 2010)]

	PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS			% (F)	PUBLIC JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS			% (F)
	Male	Female			Male	Female		
2006	11,895,194	9,822,595		45.2 82.6	1,494,421	1,148,937	76.9	
2007	11,086,997	9,382,398		84.6	1,688,295	1,310,077	77.6	
2008	10,252,00	8,7728,395		85.1	1,899,060	1,552,018	81.7	
2009	10,154,860	8,663,684		85.3	2,081,305	1,676,788	80.1	
2010	10,215,179	8,826,988		86.4	2,260,585	1,,864,626	82.5	

Source: Federal Ministry of Education (2011)

### **Girl-Child Education in North-East Nigeria**

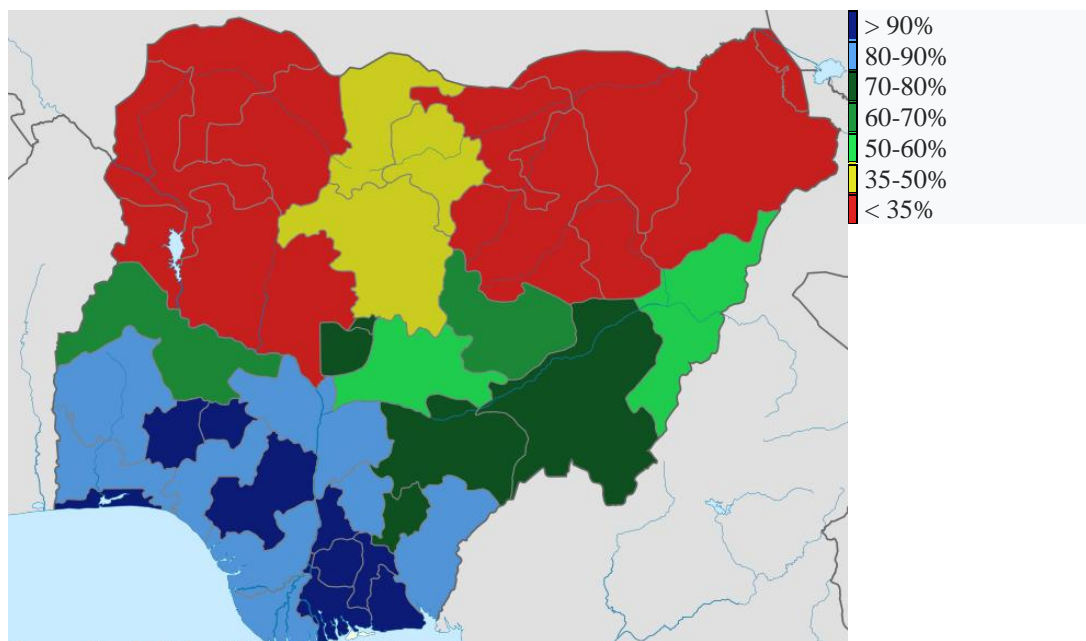
The gender disparity in education has been more visible in the northern part of the country for decades now. The gender gap has remained primarily wide and the proportion of girls to boys in school ranges from a girl to 2 boys to 1 to 3 in some states.<sup>15</sup> Reasons for this encompass the actuality that many northern children do not attend school since their labour is needed to either help at home or to bring additional income into the family. In addition, poverty universality in the northern part of the country has produced families which cannot afford the associated costs of sending their children to school. Most mothers have preferred street hawking and early marriage than sending their girls to school.<sup>16</sup>

For others in that part of the country, the distance to the nearest school is a major hindrance. Another reason for such minuscule enrolment is cultural bias, as most parents do not send their children, majorly girls, to formal schools but prefer to send them to Qur'anic schools. Figure 1 shows that the northwestern and northeastern parts of the country have the lowest literacy rates in Nigeria which is less than 35%. According to the latest Nigeria Education Data Survey, in 2010, the literacy rate of the northeastern region was 28% across Borno, Yobe, Gombe, Bauchi, Taraba, and Adamawa states. Other factors that have contributed to the high gender educational disparity in the northern part of the country include economic and geographical inequalities, as well as insecurity in recent times for the northeastern part.

<sup>15</sup>AbdulrazaqKayodeAbdulkareem (2015). "Girl-Child Education in Nigeria, Policy Issues and Challenges." DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.1.2022.1280

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

Figure 1 – Female literacy rate in Nigeria by state in 2013



Source: Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics

In the north-east, gender disparity in education is more predominant in Bauchi, Yobe, and Gombe states. These states have the highest female illiteracy and adolescent girl marriage. At the same time, these states have the highest number of girls not in secondary school.<sup>17</sup> In Bauchi for instance, the population is predominantly rural, Muslim and agricultural. Poverty has remained high and basic education indicators have shown that enrolment of girls in school, attendance and transition remain generally low. In 2009/10, girls' enrolment in public primary schools in the state was at 41.3%.<sup>18</sup> As part of a nationwide effort to improve girls' education, UNICEF initiated the DFID-sponsored Girls Education Project, which is recorded to have contributed to the continuous increase in girl-child enrolment.<sup>19</sup> However, since 2010 gender disparity in educational enrolment as well as generic enrolment started reducing over significant amount of unrest precipitated primarily by insurgency activities by Islamic fundamentalists. Normal school activities have been disrupted during crisis periods.<sup>20</sup>

Gombe State also has a majority of Muslim population with a sizeable Christian minority. Girls' enrolment in public primary schools has improved marginally from 41.7% in 2005/6 to 42.5% in 2009/2010.<sup>21</sup> However, complete primary enrolment figures for girls and boys reduced over the same period from 210,165 to 199,446 for boys and 150,018 to 147,585 for girls. In addition, girls' enrolment in public junior secondary schools

<sup>17</sup> Joseph A. Oluyemi & Muhammed A. Yinusa (2016). "Girl-Child Education in Nigeria: Issues and Implications on National Development." *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*. Volume 28 Number 1

<sup>18</sup> Para-Mallam OJ (2012). "Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania: Nigeria Endline Research Report." National Institute for Policy & Strategic Studies

<sup>19</sup> UNICEF (2011). "The Child's Rights Act UNICEF NIGERIA Fact Sheet." Retrieved from [http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO\\_Nigeria\\_Factsheets\\_CRA.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/wcaro/WCARO_Nigeria_Factsheets_CRA.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Para-Mallam OJ (2012). "Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania: Nigeria Endline Research Report." National Institute for Policy & Strategic Studies

<sup>21</sup> Federal Ministry of Education (2011). "FME." Vol. 23 No. 5, October, 2010. FME: Abuja.

increased from 31.7% in 2005/6 to 38% in 2009/2010<sup>22</sup>. To enhance rural school enrolment, in 2011 the state government recruited 1000 additional graduate teachers and posted them to rural areas with 40% of them being women. In the 2010 Nigeria Education Data Survey, 59% of parents surveyed were unable to read.<sup>23</sup>

Some mild progress made in improving even educational access in the region was majorly worsened by the Boko Haram insurgency. As at 2015, the region had about 1.3 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs) resulting in a severe humanitarian crisis. The security crisis has had a direct negative impact on girls' access to education, the availability of teachers and the availability of classrooms and materials. In July of the same year, in a discussion at the floor of Nigerian House of Representatives, the lawmakers argued that most schools in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states especially those in the most conflict-affected areas – had been closed for three years.<sup>24</sup> In the same year, schools were open in only eight of 27 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Borno.<sup>25</sup> Nigerian armed forces have used schools as military bases, resulting to more Boko Haram attacks on schools.<sup>26</sup> Schools buildings have also been used to host IDPs, further limiting girls' access to safe learning spaces.<sup>27</sup>

The security crisis also displaced a humongous number of teachers, and has occasioned the unavailability of qualified ones in the affected areas.<sup>28</sup> Children in displacement camps also have contracted access to education. Where schools are available in nearby host communities, parents were reluctant to send their children outside of the camps due to security concerns.<sup>29</sup> These manifestations have affected girls' education in the region.

Furthermore, in host communities, schools are overstretched and struggling to deal with the influx of IDP children.<sup>30</sup> Boko Haram began routine attacks on primary and secondary schools in 2012.<sup>31</sup> Between January 2012 and December 2014, more than 300 schools were totally damaged or destroyed and at least 314 school children and 196 teachers were killed<sup>32</sup>. The abduction of hundreds of children from schools has further deterred

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> National Population Commission (2011). "Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) EdData Profile 1990, 2003, and 2008: Education Data for Decision-Making." Washington, DC, USA: National Population Commission and RTI International.

<sup>24</sup> Temidayo Akinsuyi et al (2015). "Nigeria: Terror in North-East - Reps Want Schools Reopened." Daily Independent (Lagos). Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com/stories/201507310544.html>

<sup>25</sup> UN Children's Fund (2015). "Education amid conflict in Nigeria." Retrieved from <http://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/education-amid-conflict-nigeria>

<sup>26</sup> Human Rights Watch (2015). "Nigeria: At Least 1,000 Civilians Dead Since January." Retrieved from <http://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/nigeria-least-1000-civilians-dead-january>

<sup>27</sup> International Organization for Migration (2015). Retrieved from [http://nigeria.iom.int/sites/default/files/dtm/01\\_IOM%20DTM%20Nigeria\\_Round%20IV%20Report\\_20150630.pdf](http://nigeria.iom.int/sites/default/files/dtm/01_IOM%20DTM%20Nigeria_Round%20IV%20Report_20150630.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Relief Web (2015). "HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OVERVIEW Nigeria." Retrieved from <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HNO%20Nigeria%20-%20Final%20version%2015March%202015.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> OCHA (2015). "NIGERIA: Humanitarian Dashboard." Retrieved from [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA\\_NGA\\_Humanitarian\\_Dashboard\\_for\\_January-June2015.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA_NGA_Humanitarian_Dashboard_for_January-June2015.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> UNICEF (2015). "Missing Childhoods - The impact of armed conflict on children in Nigeria and beyond." Retrieved from [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Child\\_Alert\\_MISSING\\_CHILDHOODS\\_Embargo\\_00\\_01\\_GMT\\_13\\_April.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Child_Alert_MISSING_CHILDHOODS_Embargo_00_01_GMT_13_April.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

parents from sending their children to school.<sup>33</sup> In the 2014 Joint Humanitarian Needs Assessment, it was reported that parents prioritise basic needs such as food and shelter over education.<sup>34</sup>

Table 7 shows the education and literacy statistics of states in the region with Yobe state having the least (24.7%) primary school completion in the north-east as well as the whole country. Ultimately, rampant abduction of school girls in their dormitories and occasional kidnapping of school girls on their way to school have reduced their attendance in schools drastically.<sup>35</sup>

Table 7(Educational and literacy statistics of some of the states in the region)

	Literacy rate	Primary school completion rate (2014)	Never attended school (2010)
Adamawa	42% (54% for men, 51% for women (2010))	87.6%	32% of children 5 – 16
Borno	21%	32.3%	73%
Gombe	34%	36.5%	41%
Yobe	19%	24.7%	60%

Source: ACAPS Secondary Data Review 2015

## Nigeria's Policies on Girls' Education

Since Nigeria's Independence in 1960, the government has made concerted efforts in ensuring her citizens gain access to education. However, the focus on girls' education became more prominent in the late 1980s. The Blueprint on Women's Education and the Nomadic Education programme were both launched in 1986. The Blueprint on Women's Education was aimed at improving the chances of education for women.<sup>36</sup> The Nomadic Education programme was targeted at children in nomadic communities. This was in order to consecutively preserve the culture of the nomadic communities and ensure access to education for children born within the communities. The curriculum has been reviewed to merge with the 9-year basic education curriculum, with adaptable learning tools such as interactive radio instructions.

<sup>33</sup> Amnesty USA (2015). "Our Job is to Shoot, Slaughter and Kill": Boko Haram's Reign of Terror." Retrieved from <http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/reports/our-job-is-to-shoot-slaughter-and-kill-boko-haram-s-reign-of-terror>

<sup>34</sup> Humanitarian Response (2014). "North East Humanitarian Needs Assessment." Find at <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/nigeria/assessment/north-east-humanitarian-needs-assessment-may-2014>

<sup>35</sup> Fatima Mohammed Joda and OlowoseluAbdulrasheed (2015). "EFFECTS OF INSURGENCY ON GIRLS EDUCATION IN NORTH EASTERN

NIGERIA." European Journal of Education and Development Psychology. Vol.3, No.1, pp.44-50

<sup>36</sup>Dauda (2007). "Female Education and Nigeria's Development Strategies: Lots of Talk, Little Action?". Indian Journal of Gender Studies. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/097152150701400305>

In addition, to further ensure that the needs of women were further included as part of the nation's development priorities, the National Commission for Women was created to formulate a national policy for women and development in 1989. According to Adebore and Olumukoro (2015)<sup>37</sup>, this led to the creation of women education units at federal and state levels of improve access to education for women and girls at national and subnational levels. There is limited available statistics to show the enrolment rate or level of literacy within this era.<sup>38</sup> However, the success of this project can be felt with an increase in the enrolment rate of girls in primary school from over 32% in 1970 to over 86% in 1994.<sup>39</sup>

In 1991, the National Commission for Mass Literacy Adult and Non-formal Education (NMEC) was created to end illiteracy in Nigeria. Women and girls are well prioritized in the projects of NMEC. Other policies created in the 90's include the Family Support Basic Education Programme which was aimed at increasing access to education for girls living in rural areas. According to Dauda (2007)<sup>40</sup>, this programme made impressionable steps, including the construction of early childhood education centres as well as primary schools. It also constructed WASH facilities such as public toilets. In 1999, Universal Basic Education was revised, to reduce inequalities in education relating to gender and geography. As a result of these policies, the literacy rate for 15-24-year-old girls and young women increased from 62.5 in 1991 to 68.2% in 1999.<sup>41</sup>

To support global and local development frameworks including the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and the Millennium Development Goals, in 2004, the Universal Basic Education Act was an instrument enacted to ensure free compulsory qualitative education for all children. This led to the creation of the Universal Basic Education Commission. It addresses issues such as the role of the government at all levels and parents in ensuring children attend school. The Gender Education Programme (GEP) which also began in 2004 aims to reduce the gender disparity through different projects such as the Students Tutoring, Mentoring and Counselling (STUMEC), Mothers Association, Teachers Development Pedagogy Module (TBTD) and Girls' Education Movement (GEM).

These projects have recorded successes such as the training of stakeholders through the School-based management committee platforms for mentoring and training of students, and the establishment of the Mothers' Association which is a useful platform to mobilize women to take an interest in ensuring their girls go to school.

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<sup>37</sup>Adebore and Olumukoro (2015). "Influence of Literacy Education Programmes on Socio-economic Empowerment of Women in Edo and Delta States, Nigeria." US-China Education Review B, May 2015, Vol. 5, No. 5, 315-324. David Publishing. New York, United States. Retrieved from <http://www.davidpublisher.org/Public/uploads/Contribute/557693b675283.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Although these policies were created between 1986, the exact extent to which they impacted on the rise of girls' enrolment rate in primary school is hard to estimate

<sup>39</sup>Aromolaran (2004). "Female Schooling, Non-Market Productivity, and Labor Market Participation in Nigeria." Yale University Economic Growth Center Discussion Paper No. 879. Retrieved from <http://ssrn.com/abstract=493763>

<sup>40</sup>Dauda (2007). "Female Education and Nigeria's Development Strategies: Lots of Talk, Little Action?". Indian Journal of Gender Studies. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/097152150701400305>

<sup>41</sup> World Bank (2016) Database: Education Statistics: All Indicators. World Bank, Washington DC. Retrieved From [data.worldbank.org](http://data.worldbank.org)



Over 5000 Mothers' Associations have been created countrywide with workshops on entrepreneurship and income generating activities carried out to ensure women are empowered to participate in financial decision-making procedures in their households. GEP has also been instrumental in establishing Second Chance Centres which is targeted at girls who have dropped out of schools as a result of barriers such as early marriage and teenage pregnancy.<sup>42</sup>

The National Policy on Education was created in 2004 and revised in 2007.<sup>43</sup> It outlines the values of Nigeria and resonates with the fact that education is a tool through which Nigeria can be developed. It further aims to ensure all children are educated. It was revised to include early childhood education which is a key tool for improving the quality of education for both girls and boys. The National Policy on Gender in Basic Education was launched in 2007, the objectives are to promote equal access and participation in the basic enrolment of girls and boys, achieve high level of retention completion and performance rate, advocate for the support of key stakeholders, enabling environment for planning, implementation and achievement of the goals.<sup>44</sup> To support this policy, the Federal Ministry of Education further designed the National Framework on Girls and Women in Education which was aimed at increasing the quality of education accessible to girls through amongst other techniques, a rights-based approach.<sup>45</sup>

The National Gender Policy, created in 2006 aims to recognize the differences between men and women while addressing the inequalities between men and women. It highlights important actions such as cultural reorientation through sensitization and dialogues and ensuring strategic partnerships with important stakeholders such as the parliament at national and sub-national levels, civil society organizations, intergovernmental agencies as well as bilateral agencies.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>OSSAP-MDGs (2015) End Point Report on the MDGs

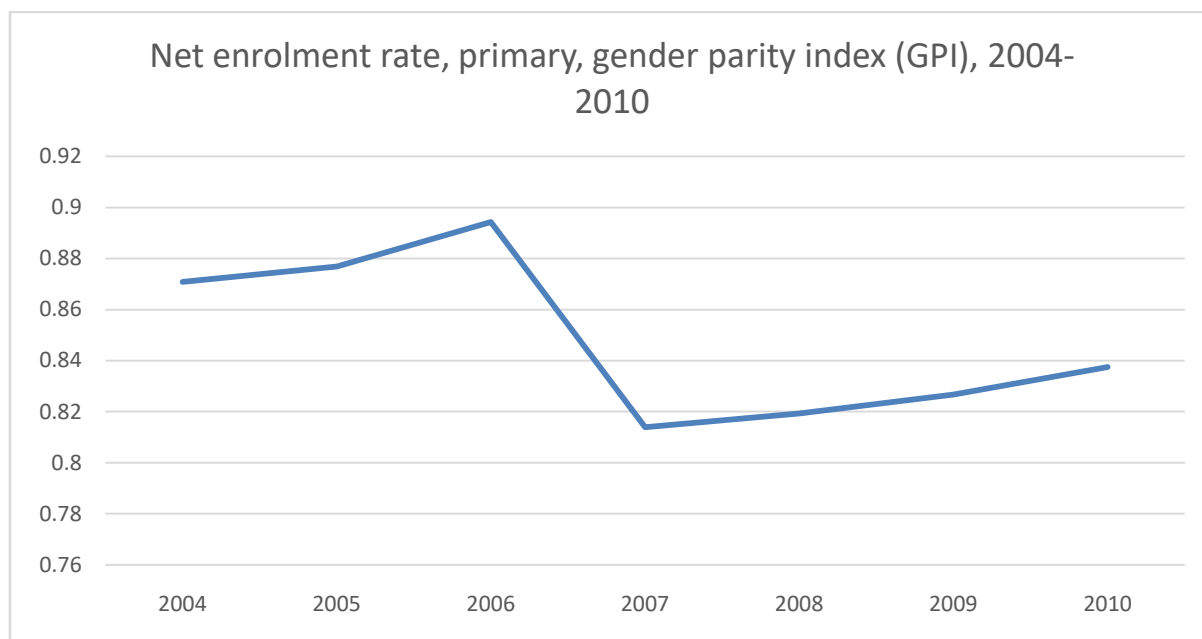
<sup>43</sup> The Federal Ministry of Education (2008). "The Development of Education National Report of Nigeria." Retrieved from [http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National\\_Reports/ICE\\_2008/nigeria\\_NR08.pdf](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/National_Reports/ICE_2008/nigeria_NR08.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> National Policy on Gender in Basic Education: Federal Ministry of Education: 2006

<sup>45</sup>Ukwuoma (2016). "Child Marriage in Nigeria: The Health Hazards and Socio-Legal Implications."

<sup>46</sup> Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (2008): National Gender Strategic Framework Implementation Plan. Federal Republic of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria

Figure 2 – Net enrolment, primary, gender parity index (2004 - 2010)



Source: <sup>47</sup>World Bank Database, Diagram: Authors

Between 2004 and 2007, when most of these policies such as the National Policy on Education, National Gender Policy, the Universal Basic Education Act and the National Policy on Gender in Basic Education were revised or created, the enrolment rate for girls in primary school grew from 61.47% in 2004 to over 63.24%<sup>48</sup> in 2006. The enrolment rate took a downturn to over 62.6% in 2007. It drastically reduced to 56.7 percent in 2008. This could be explained as a result of the 2007/2008 economic crisis (and Nigeria’s dependence on foreign aid for the implementation of education projects), and political transition and policy discontinuation. The enrolment rate gradually began to increase again in 2009 where it was 57.84% and approximately 58.1 in 2010.

Because the female enrolment is a controlling variable in the gender parity index, as can be seen from figure 2, there is a slow rise of the gender parity index for the enrolment rate from 2004 to 2006 (within the period which the national policy on education, National Gender Policy, the Universal Basic Education Act and the National Policy on Gender in Basic Education) after which there is a sharp decline from over 0.89 in 2006 to 0.81.

The number of out of school children which was near 4 million in 1999 was reduced to over 3.886 million in 2004, however, despite the efforts of the government through the above-mentioned policies and projects created to support them, the number of out of school children increased to over 4.07 million girls in 2007 from an estimated 3.88 million in 2006. It further increased to 4.87 million in 2008 and reached an all-time high of 4.97 million in 2010.

<sup>47</sup> World Bank (2016) Education Indicators. Retrieved from data.worldbank.org

<sup>48</sup> World Bank (2016) Education Indicators. Retrieved from data.worldbank.org

Other policies include the Child Friendly Initiative, federal female teachers' scholarship scheme amongst others. The Child Rights Act was adopted in 2003 by the federal government in 2003 and as of 2011, UNICEF<sup>49</sup> posits that the Child rights Act has only been adopted in 24 out of 36 states in Nigeria. From 2010 till date, other policies and projects to support these policies have been adopted. The Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme was also launched as part of a social protection measure to cater for vulnerable households. Pilot programmes ran in Kano (2010, assisted by World Bank)<sup>50</sup>, Katsina and Bauchi (assisted by DFID) states. One of the major objectives of this programme is to create incentives for households to ensure retention and enrolment of girls in school. However, because of limited data, it is difficult to measure the impact of these CCTs on improving access to girls' education in the three states.

### 3.1 Policies directly targeting girls and boys in the northeast

The Safe Schools Initiative (SSI) was created in 2014 after the kidnap of over 250 girls in Chibok, Borno state, Nigeria. The initiative was initially started with a \$10 million donation from international donors and a counterpart funding of also \$10 million dollars from the Federal Government of Nigeria. Basically, the funding is targeted towards the reconstruction and rehabilitation of schools as well as providing "safe learning environments" for children, especially girls. These safety measures are said to include their journey to and from schools as well as within the school environment.

The Presidential Initiative for Northeast Nigeria (PINE) was created during the tenure of the former President, Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. PINE was created to ensure the reconstruction and recovery of north-eastern Nigeria, especially in the three most affected states- Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states. In 2015, the new government of President Muhammadu Buhari merged PINE with the Victims Support Fund (VSF) into the Presidential Committee for the North East (PCNE)<sup>51</sup> to synergize actions towards the reconstruction and development of the northeast. This program will concentrate on the creation of new social amenities and reconstruction of existing or destroyed infrastructure such as roads, schools and housing.<sup>52</sup>

Intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations have also taken steps towards ensuring boys and girls in north-eastern Nigeria attend schools. According to UNICEF, there is a Humanitarian Country Team and Inter-Sector Working Group on the north east. UNICEF coordinates efforts relating to Education, WASH and Nutrition and child protection sectors. The Network of International NGOs also have a major focus on girls'

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<sup>49</sup> UNICEF (2007) Information Sheet: Child Rights Act. Retrieved from [https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/Child\\_rights\\_legislation\\_in\\_Nigeria.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/Child_rights_legislation_in_Nigeria.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> Overseas Development Institute (2012). "The Potential of Conditional Cash Transfers." Retrieved from <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7578.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> Human Rights Watch (2016). "They Set the Classrooms on Fire": Attacks on Education in Northeast Nigeria." United States. Retrieved from [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/nigeria0416web.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/nigeria0416web.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> The Presidential Committee for the North East (2016). "The Buhari Plan: Rebuilding the North East." Abuja, Nigeria. Retrieved from [https://pcni.gov.ng/?media\\_dl=263](https://pcni.gov.ng/?media_dl=263)

education. The Back to School campaign, run by UNICEF and the state governments has had positive results in enrolling over 170,000 children back in school, with over 45% of them being girls.<sup>53</sup> It has made this level of progress as a result of involving key stakeholders, using contextual society structures such as traditional and community rulers, informal education tools such as radio and extensive monitoring of school attendance through a strong partnership with sub-national ministries, departments and agencies.

At least, seven of the policies mentioned above are directly targeted at girls. Furthermore, the Safe Schools Initiative is the major policy directly targeted at girls living in the states highly affected by conflict in the north east, that is, Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states.

## **Present and Impending Challenges/Opportunities in North-East Nigeria for Girls' Education**

### **4.1 Challenges**

Completion rate: While effort was primarily placed on enrolment before, other issues such as low completion, drop-out and transition rates continue to plague the education sector, especially in some regions. From figure 3, it can be seen that as efforts were being made to increase the enrolment of girls in school between 2004 and 2006- of which progress can be seen for the peak of the enrolment rate gender parity in 2006 at about 0.89, the primary school completion rate gender parity index is at its lowest point- over 0.79.<sup>54</sup> In the North<sup>55</sup>, only 3% of girls complete secondary school according to the Presidential Committee on the North East.

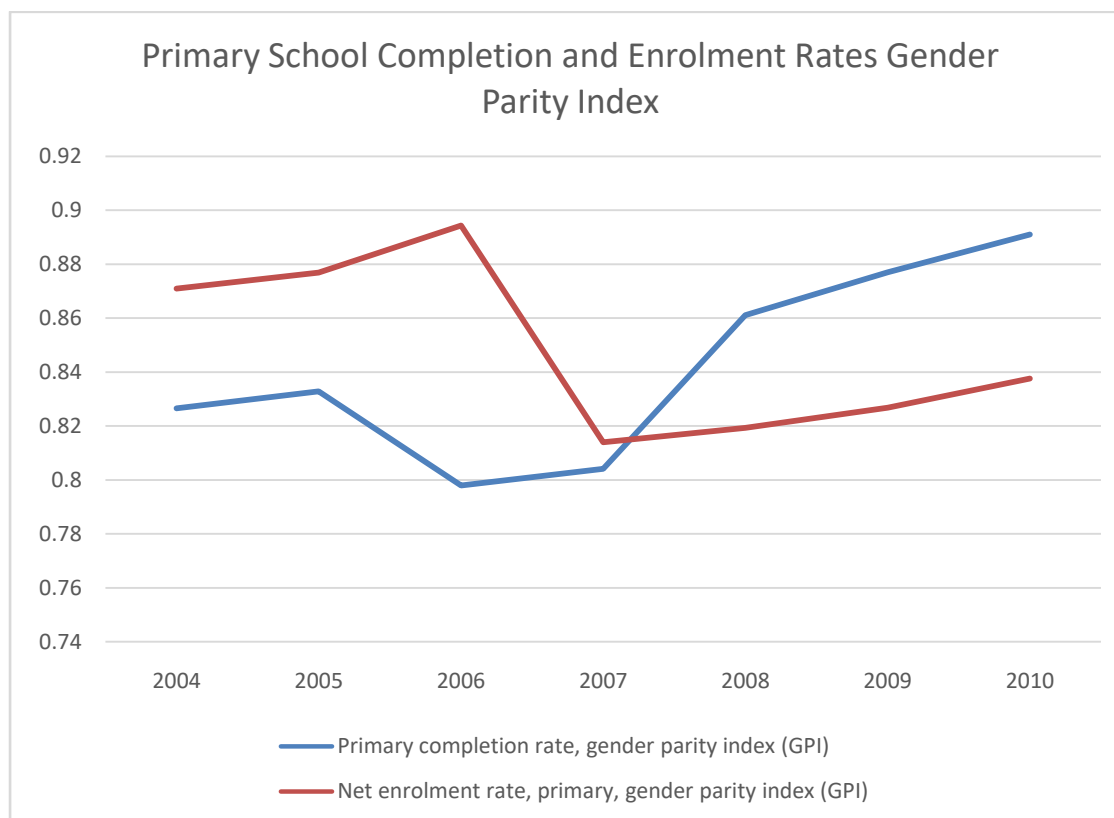
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<sup>53</sup> UNICEF (2015). "Nigerian Humanitarian Situation Report." Retrieved from [https://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/UNICEF\\_Nigeria\\_Humanitarian\\_SitRep\\_1\\_Nov\\_2015.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/UNICEF_Nigeria_Humanitarian_SitRep_1_Nov_2015.pdf) and [https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/UNICEF\\_Nigeria\\_Humanitarian\\_Situation\\_Report\\_-\\_4\\_Sept\\_2015.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/UNICEF_Nigeria_Humanitarian_Situation_Report_-_4_Sept_2015.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> World Bank (2016) Education Indicators. Retrieved from data.worldbank.org

<sup>55</sup> British Council (2012). "Improving the Lives of Girls and Women in Nigeria Abuja." Gender in Nigeria Report

Figure 3 – Primary School Completion and Enrolment Rates Gender Parity Index



Source: World Bank Database, Diagram: Authors

This has to do mostly with socio-economic barriers such as the household chore burden on girls, access to water and sanitation facilities, teacher’s absenteeism, high student to teacher ratios, corporal punishment, and infrastructural deficiency, amongst others.

Quality and Gender Stereotypes: Gender stereotypes remain a problem across schools. While the government has made concerted efforts into changing the curriculum and textbooks to ensure girls are presented in a more empowering form (for instance not only portraying them as working on house chores in text books), teachers are not well trained to limit gender stereotype in pedagogical styles.

Cultural/Societal Norms: Societal norms and harmful cultural practices have posed as a major barrier to accessing education for girls. Although efforts have been made towards combating these barriers, it remains a herculean task to achieve.

Poverty, hidden fees, and opportunity cost of sending children to school: Although education is free officially, hidden fees such as Parents Teachers’ Association and School Uniform fees pose as barriers to parents who cannot afford them. Also, in poor households, children participate in the labour market and earn income for the household resulting in child labour. This has negative impact on access to girls’ education as girls are not available to attend school because of hawking or performing household chores.

Governance/Limited Political will- implementation and ownership by state and local governments: while some policies are implemented at the federal level, there is a limited trickledown effect at the local level. This provides a huge gap that needs to be filled by the federal government and civil society. 10 states in Nigeria as of 2016 are yet to provide counterpart funding to access 30 billion Naira worth of funds to provide universal basic education. The counterpart funding enables ownership at the state level.<sup>56</sup>In addition, Nigeria has not been able to implement the UNESCO Declaration of appropriating 26% of its federal annual budget to the education sector.

Data: Availability of up-to-date disaggregated data acts as a barrier for policymaking, implementation and evaluation. This further brings out the problem of synergy between national and local levels of government and even international development partners.<sup>57</sup> The latest available data for analysis on important databanks such as the World Bank database for education indicators is for 2010.

Inequalities: Geographical as well as socio-economic forms of inequalities affect access to education for girls. Education indicators from 2012 show high disparities between the North and South of Nigeria. While states like Ekiti, Anambra show attendance ratios as high as 90, northern states show ratios as low as 19.7 (Yobe) and 32.2 (Borno) (OSSAP-MDGs, 2012).<sup>58</sup>

Supply Side Barriers: There is a need for at least 1.3 million teachers<sup>59</sup> to address the learning needs of girls and boys in Nigeria. Furthermore, there is a need for female teachers in particular as research shows that parents are more likely to send their girls to schools when they have female teachers. However, the deprofessionalism of the teaching profession remains a challenge. Because of the limited respect in the society,

Corruption: There have been reports about the limited accountability and transparency in implementing education projects. In particular, investigations are presently being carried out about funding allocated to take care of the needs of internally displaced persons in the North East. Accountability measures set in place to monitor these funds are low.<sup>60</sup> This has impeded on ensuring that vulnerable population have access to basic goods such as food and shelter, further impeding on their ability to access education.

Immediate versus secondary needs: There is a problem regarding balancing immediate and secondary needs. Basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter will be prioritized over education. It is key to ensure the

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<sup>56</sup>Ovuakporie and Agbakwuru (2016). "10 states yet to access N30bn UBEC funds —Reps". Retrieved from : <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/03/10-states-yet-to-access-n30bn-ubec-funds-reps/>

<sup>57</sup>UNICEF (2015). "Nigeria: Humanitarian Crisis Situation Report." Retrieved from [https://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/UNICEF\\_Nigeria\\_Humanitarian\\_SitRep\\_1\\_Nov\\_2015.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/appeals/files/UNICEF_Nigeria_Humanitarian_SitRep_1_Nov_2015.pdf)

<sup>58</sup>OSSAP-MDGs (2012) Millennium Development Goals Performance Tracking Survey Report. Federal Republic of Nigeria, Abuja.

<sup>59</sup> Education International (2012). "Nigeria: teacher gap must be addressed." Brussels, Belgium. Retrieved from [https://ei-ie.org/en/news/news\\_details/2344](https://ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2344)

<sup>60</sup> Edward and Yenda (2016) Boko Haram Insurgency, Internally Displaced Persons and Humanitarian Response in Northeast Nigeria. The International of Humanities and Social Studies ISSN 2321 -9203).

education needs of children. According to UNICEF, parents and caregivers were asked the ranking of their priorities and they ranked their basic and health needs over education, especially girls. It is important to ensure there is a balance between these needs.

Problems of confidentiality for security reasons versus information sharing for knowledge exchange and evaluation in the North East: information sharing is a bit tricky because development practitioners and organizations involved in humanitarian response have to be careful in sharing information due to the probability of attacks from insurgents. However, information sharing is important for learning experiences from organizations on the field and for other development actors who want to establish their presence in the north east. It is also important for the evaluation of projects which is vital for the reconstruction and rebuilding agenda of the north east region.

Access to education for host communities: This was a need identified by humanitarians in meeting the education needs of girls and boys living in host communities. Although efforts have been made towards this by the humanitarian coordination team<sup>61</sup>, more work still needs to be done in ensuring that these needs are met.<sup>62</sup>

Using Schools as Bases by Soldiers: When schools are used by soldiers as camps, it becomes a target for insurgents. This endangers the lives of the children, especially girls as they become victims of war crimes.

#### **4.2 Opportunities**

Levity of attention and aid for the north east: Ever since the unfortunate murder of young boys in BuniYadi, Borno State and the kidnapping of over 250 girls from their school in Chibok, Borno state, the global humanitarian world has placed a focus on the north-east region. However, while this may be of advantage in relation to funding and technical knowledge, it is important to build strong synergy between the government and strong local actors to ensure the humanitarian response provided by the global and national community of development actors concretely meets the needs of displaced persons, one of those needs will be girls' education.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The SDGs clearly places strong emphasis on girls' education. The international development framework also strongly highlights the guiding principle of "leaving no one behind. These goals set the agenda for the next 15 years, and like its predecessor, will set the tone for core development actions such as resource mobilization and strategic partnerships that can promote girls' education as well as increase opportunities for accessing education for girls, particularly those living in conflict-affected areas such as the North-East of Nigeria.

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<sup>61</sup> UNICEF (2015) Nigeria Humanitarian Situation Report

<sup>62</sup> Field Research by CODE

Civil Society Organizations: Civil society Organizations for over a century have played a strong role in ensuring access to education for children, especially girls. To this end, the creation process of the SDGs have further identified core civil society groups such as faith-based rulers, community-based organizations as well as the usual actor- the local and international non-governmental organizations who have participated in the making of the sustainable development framework. If these networks are maintained, they will play a strong role in combating numerous barriers to education for girls such as stereotypes, harmful cultural practices, including early marriage and the avoidance of radicalization which has inhibited the access to education children in the north east, especially girls.

Technology: Technology exposes us to a world of numerous possibilities. With the right tools, girls can easily access to schools learning materials from technology devices. They can even be connected to peers all around the worlds as well as volunteers and mentors who are available to teach. Furthermore, technology provides a platform through which other challenges such as accountability and transparency can be achieved.

Citizenship participation: More citizens are beginning to know their rights and want to engage in governance measures to improve access to education for girls and boys nationwide. Although this is still a growing number, the possibilities from this rising interest from the nation at large paves away for more accountability from the government, more volunteers in the education, especially in the northeast where help is highly needed.

## **Recommendations**

For Nigeria to make further political and socio-economic progress, ensuring equitable access to quality education for the girl child and countering gender disparity in education are very crucial. In the light of this, the paper proffers the following recommendations; first, the Nigerian Government should incentivise girl-child education through the provision of scholarships around the country. This would enable poor parents and even those that have to consider sending boys to school over scarce resources to be able to send their girls to school. For the northeastern part of the country, incentives such as cash transfers to parents would motivate them to send their girls to school. Although unconditional and conditional cash transfers have begun in a few states, social protection policies like cash transfers is an investment that will benefit the country in the long run.

Follow up and implementation is necessary for the Universal Basic Education Act to be implemented in the country. Inasmuch as the act makes girl-child education mandatory, monitoring and follow-through by the government is important. This calls for a stronger social work department at federal and state level. Based on the Nigerian context, this will entail strong coordination between the Federal Ministry of Education and the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development where social work is situated. It further calls for strong



partnerships with law enforcement agencies. In addition to this, the gender equality bill which has passed its second reading with the senate after its first rejection will further play a strong role in ensuring girls are not deprived of their education<sup>63</sup>. There should be more emphasis on the promotion of girls' rights. Teaching of this should be introduced at all educational levels so as to foster awareness. The seascape of Nigerians especially the conservationists need to be countered against the notion that boys are better than girls. Awareness should be created for parents on the fact that girls can perform as well as boys in schools if given equal opportunities. The government should strengthen campaigns on public service information and community advocacy on girl-child education. There should be collaborative efforts from the Government, Non-Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organizations and Human Right Groups Provision on the need for improved advocacy on the need for girl-child education.

Also, the government should discontinue the concentration of teachers in the urban centres and ensure equal distribution of educational amenities in both the urban and rural areas to retain teachers. There should be coherent strategies to strengthen the enforcement of policies to enable pregnant girls and young mothers to stay in school and discourage child marriages. In addition, the respective government agencies should analyze and revive the curriculum and teachings in classes that are gender prejudiced. The government should also expand flexible and non-formal education options, and ensure safe and supportive learning environment for girls. For the latter, the security of the girl-child is key as well as the provision of good toilet facilities in schools and sanitary conditions.

Furthermore, it is important to merge policies and politics. The continuation of policies depends on how the people can hold political candidates to their words before and after they assume offices. If the needs of the people are well addressed and there is a clear strategy that allows for policy continuation, this increases the likelihood of a positive political will towards social issues such as girls' education. Also, encouraging citizens; participation in a structural manner, promoting good governance and open data will help in addressing issues regarding corruption and promoting accountability and transparency in the nation as a whole, and in particular, the north-east.

In addition, a female leadership component is important in ensuring the success of policies and projects directed at improving girls' education. When women and girls are seen as key actors and not just beneficiaries, those projects are more likely to achieve successful results. However, the role of men and boys in improving access to education through sensitization and orientation should also be deepened.

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<sup>63</sup>Ogunmade (2016). "Modified Gender Equality Bill Passes Second Reading in Senate." ThisDay Newspaper. Retrieved from <http://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/09/30/modified-gender-equality-bill-passes-second-reading-in-senate/>

Ultimately, it's imperative that the government ensures that girls in IDP camps in north-east Nigeria have access to basic education. There is also a need for temporary learning spaces for displaced children. The reconstruction programme for the Northeastern part of the country post Boko Haram insurgency should encompass strategies to promote girl-child education at all levels in the sub-region.

## **Conclusion**

Education is elemental to national poverty reduction aspirations as it equips individuals to be able to contribute immensely to the socio-economic development of any society. Even access to formal education is the substructure for all development goals.<sup>64</sup> Until even numbers of boys and girls are in school, it will be impossible for Nigeria to build the knowledge necessary with which to counter poverty and hunger, combat disease and safeguard environmental sustainability.<sup>65</sup> Until then, millions of women and children in the country will continue to die needlessly.<sup>66</sup> It is extremely crucial that girls have access to education. Nigeria women with formal education would likely ensure their children are immunized, go for medical care, adopt improved sanitation practices and be better informed about their children's nutritional requirements.

For a country where there are about 1000 child and 145 women deaths on a daily basis, educating women would ensure higher survival rates for children.<sup>67</sup> The prevalent issue of child marriage outstandingly in the northeastern part of the country would be rolled back as an educated girl marries at a better age and makes a better choice in marriage.<sup>68</sup> Following the importance of education in national development, educated women are in a position to make sure that their children attend school.

Ultimately, a continuous learning environment for girls is one of the fundamental strategies in the reconstruction and peace-building efforts of the government and other international and local development partners. While conflict remains an overarching problem for the north-east, girls will still face major barriers in going to school. The usual challenges such as male preference, harmful cultural practices- including early marriage, unsafe learning environments that include vices such as child abuse, unsafe roads to school still exists. It is imperative for policymakers and stakeholders who plan these policies to take this into account during the creation and implementation of projects targeted at children living in north-east Nigeria, especially girls.

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<sup>64</sup> UNICEF - Goal: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women." Find at <http://www.unicef.org/mdg/gender.html>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> According to UNESCO, for every additional year girls go to school, they receive 20 percent higher wages and suffer 10 percent fewer child deaths.

<sup>67</sup> The World Bank estimates that an additional year of schooling for 1,000 women helps prevent two maternal deaths.

<sup>68</sup> UNESCO (2008). "Education for All by 2015: Will we make it?" Global Monitoring Report. New York, NY UNESCO/SS/1. Find at <http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/154743e.pdf>

The paper has examined the trend of girl-child education in Nigeria and north-eastern part of the country. It has also analysed several policies of the Nigerian government on ensuring equitable access to quality education for girls. It has further explored some of the factors that have influenced gender disparity in education in Nigeria and its north-eastern part. The paper concludes that for Nigeria to achieve the goal of being amongst the largest 20 economies in the world by 2020, she must rapidly educate the children, most of all, the girls. Educating girls results to mothers who are educated and will in turn educate their children, care for their families and provide their children with adequate nutrition.