The Impact of COVID-19

On Girls' Education in Nigeria's NorthEast

A Case Study of Adamawa State

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▶ **OUR VISION**

We envision a world where all people – even in the most remote areas of the globe – can hold their government accountable.

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To empower marginalized communities.

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- Increase people's access to information through whatever technological means they choose.

- Increase and share innovative approaches to information exchange through experimentation, research, and technology.

- Develop innovative platforms for coverage of social, environmental and governance issues.

- Increase the adoption and implementation of international development laws and policies.

"Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher, can change the world."

Malala Yousafzai

List of Abbreviations

BH - Boko Haram

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease

DFID - UK Department for International Development

ECCDE - Early Childhood Care Development and Education

FG - Federal Government

FGM - Female Genital mutilation

FME - Federal Ministry of Education

ICT - Information and Communications Technology

IDP - Internally Displaced Persons

LGA - Local Government Areas

LHP - Learning at Home

MDA - Ministries, Departments and Agencies

NBS - National Bureau of Statistics

NCDC - Nigeria Centre for Disease Control

NE - North East

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OGP - Open Government Partnership

SARC - Sexual Assault Referral Centres

STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

PPE - Personal Protective Equipment

PTA - Parents Teachers Association

SUBEB - State Universal Basic Education Board

SBMC - School Based Management Committee

UBEC - Universal Basic Education Commission

UN - United Nations

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Emergency Fund

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

WASH - Water Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

The North-East (NE), Nigeria has had a considerable number of development challenges for several years including poor human capital. On education specifically, the region has 60% of Nigeria's over 13 million out-of-school children and the least literacy rate across the country at 34%. Girls are the most marginalised when it comes to education and are often faced with several challenges that hinder them from completing primary and secondary education. Traditional and cultural barriers; early marriage; continuous insurgency in the region; issues of affordability, availability and accessibility to schools; as well as the lack of proper toilet and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, to mention a few, are some of the challenges.

> **COVID-19 has further worsened the challenges on livelihoods and education**

As the region battles low human development and terrorism, the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) advent has further worsened these challenges especially on livelihoods and education. Schools, for instance, were closed throughout the country between March and September 2020, including in the NE, further worsening learning outcomes, most specifically on retention of pupils/students. There are concerns that some girls would be married off during such schools' closure. To ensure continuous learning amidst schools' closure, the Nigerian government launched the Learning at Home Programme (LHP).

Following this background, Connected Development [CODE], through the support of the Malala Fund investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls' education in the NE using Adamawa state as a case study. The Study interrogates how social norms and perceptions affect girls' continued learning during a pandemic. It also assesses the effectiveness of the Federal Government's LHP in relation to girls' education in the region.

The research adopted empirical and secondary data gathering to assess the state of girls' education in the North East, specifically, Adamawa State. Some of the issues assessed were access, infrastructure, enrolment, disparity, completion, promotion, drop-out, transition and barriers to girls' education, including the effectiveness of the LHP programme during the lockdown necessitated by COVID19.

Primary data was collected from 146 respondents in the 6 North-East states and 10 Local Government Areas in Adamawa State and the respondents included the State Universal Basic Education Boards' (SUBEB) Executive Chairs; Commissioners of Education and Information and Communications Technology; School Based Management Committee (SBMC)/Parents Teachers Association Chairs/Secretaries; Development Partners; Education Secretaries; Community leaders; Women leaders; Parents/Caregivers; Teachers; and Girls. The percentage of female respondents in the study is 45.21%.

"The future of our world is a deliberate investment in the younger generation, particularly girls. To educate girls is to empower a nation".

Hamzat Lawal
CODE's Chief Executive
Malala Fund Education Champion

Findings

- Adamawa state's female adult literacy rate has fallen by 5.2% from 55.8% in 2012 to 50.6% in 2017. As of 2020, out of 519 public secondary schools in Adamawa state, 17 are girls-only secondary schools. This poor statistics requires an immediate redress.

- Gender disparity for learners in Adamawa state shows that the proportion of girls to boys in school are almost the same. Percentage of girls in primary school is at 48.5% and 48.8% for junior secondary.

- The percentage of public primary schools with toilets in Adamawa state is at 50%, which is more than the regional average of 44%. In the same vein, public junior secondary schools have 76% compared to the regional average of 73%. Similarly, for potable water, Adamawa has 32% more than the regional average of 26% for public primary schools; and 47% more than the regional average of 45% for public junior secondary schools.

- On the certainty of returning to school post-COVID-19 in Adamawa, 5% of the girls interviewed had doubts that they would be allowed to continue their education; 85% of caregivers agreed to return their girls to school, 5% were unsure and 10% were certain that the girls in their care would not be returning to school.

- Respondents agreed that challenges that have affected girls' education in the state are sexual harassment linked to gender-based violence, child marriage, harmful norms, inadequate teachers, poor WASH facilities, insurgency, poverty, and post traumatic stress disorder from the insurgency. These challenges are exacerbated by the pandemic and there is a risk of more girls dropping out of school due to an increase in the incidences of teenage pregnancies, child labour and gender-based violence.

- Only 60% of teachers were in contact with their students for continuous learning during the pandemic. The LHP was deployed across the states using radio, television and the internet.

- The LHP was deployed across the states using radio, television and the internet. On the reach, only 48% of the girls interviewed were aware of the programme. More alarming is the level of awareness amongst parents which was a meagre 15%. The stakeholders who have a high level of awareness about the LHP in the state are education secretaries and teachers.

- Planning and implementation gaps are also evident in the fact that a substantial proportion of education secretaries at local government (municipality) level (30%) and teachers (25%) are not aware of the LHP in Adamawa.

- From respondents across LGAs in Adamawa State, only 28% of the girls interviewed participate in the LHP. Moreso, parents' perception of their girls' participation in the LHP is much lower at 15%. This implies a low utilization of the LHP programme in the state.

- Across Adamawa, girls from low income homes, living with disabilities and those in rural areas and IDP camps are excluded from the LHP. This might be the same across the region.

- Responses from women leaders, SBMCs and PTA Chairs show limited participation in the creation of the LHP. Only 20% of women leaders and 30% of SBMCs or PTA Chairs were involved in the planning process of the LHP.

- There is a challenge to digital learning in Adamawa considering the low internet penetration - only 25% of the girls and 30% of parents interviewed had access to the internet.

5% of girls doubt they will be allowed to return to school

Challenges that affect girls' education

- *Sexual harassment*
- *Gender-based violence*
- *Child marriage*
- *Harmful norms*
- *Inadequate teachers*
- *Inadequate/lack of WASH facilities*

Recommendations to Research Findings

Improve Access to Education for Girls during the COVID-19 Schools' Closure

The study recommends local awareness raising at community level to increase girls participation in the LHP; flexible timing for the LHP following the timing for house chores and other responsibilities at home for girls; involving relevant non-state actors in future planning, implementation and monitoring of the LHP at community level; knowledge sharing and collaboration across states; addressing the gender digital divide; complementary interventions such as social protection and psychosocial support; inclusion of girls with disabilities, from low income homes, IDP Camps and rural areas in the programme; and putting structures in place by the government and civil society actors to address gender based violence and early forced marriage.

Tackle Existing Barriers to Girls' Education

What harmful social norms exist in the region? Gaps in WASH related infrastructure in schools must be identified and filled; establishment of a participatory education budgeting approach that enables key demand-side actors to routinely ensure that basic and secondary education budgets are gender-responsive and reflective of schools' priorities; establishment of supply-side transparency and accountability measures, and effective public oversight on government education spending. It is important to mention that tackling the impact of conflict and the insurgency contribution of appropriate political will by the government can improve a more favourable atmosphere for girls to attain education in the states. Following the latter, the NE state governments should increase advocacy that leverages key local stakeholders, implement a compulsory and free 12-year education for the girl-child, provide more funds for education and ensure every community has a female secondary school.

> " Government must provide more funds for education and ensure every community has a female secondary school. "

Establish a Gender-Responsive Resumption Plan

This should factor in concerted and augmented sensitization and awareness for schools' reopening; provision of COVID-19 compliant infrastructure and facilities such as hand wash points, PPE, adequate WASH facilities and social-distant set up in classrooms; adequate inclusive planning for vulnerable groups; as well as automatic grades promotion for girls.

Implementing these would entail coordination and cooperation with MDAs focused on education, security, social protection, healthcare and others, while factoring in the contextual needs of communities and states. The education of every girl and boy is relevant to sustainable development, therefore, it is important for all key actors to effectively play their role in ensuring every girl and boy, including those living in emergencies are in school and learning.

Contents

Chapter 1

An Overview

1.1 Background to the Study

Nigeria's North-East (NE) has remained one of the least developed and educationally retrogressed regions in the country. As of 2019, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, the poverty rate in the region was above 71%, the highest in the country. Similarly, as of 2020, 60% of Nigeria's 13 million out-of-school children are from the region. The NorthEast also has the lowest literacy rate across the country at 34%. Girls are the most affected in the region education-wise. Most of them are out of school and cannot complete primary and secondary education following so many factors including inherent traditional and cultural barriers; early marriage; continuous insurgency in the past decade; as well as issues of affordability, availability and accessibility to schools. Considering the latter, in most rural areas, girls have to walk considerable distances to reach the nearest school. Perceived safety of the journey to school and restrictions on women's mobility (in mostly northern Nigeria) aggravate these factors that affect girls' educational participation, and poor completion and enrolment rates. For girls who do attend school, many experience the lack of proper toilet and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities which puts them at a particular disadvantage.

> " The poverty rate in NorthEast in 2019 was above 71%, the highest in the country. - NBS "

The sluggish pace of development in the NE is exacerbated by the Boko Haram (BH) insurgency as part of which economies and livelihoods are devastated, poverty has metastasized and many are internally displaced. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of 2020, over 3.4 million people have been displaced from the instability, including an estimate of 2.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region- over 684,000 IDPs in Cameroon, Chad and Niger and 294,000 refugees in the four countries. A year earlier, the United Nations (UN) agency estimated that some 3.5 million people remain food insecure in the Lake Chad Basin region as part of the BH crisis, and will depend on assistance.

While the region battles insurgency and its resultant consequences on poverty and education, the advent of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) has further exacerbated issues in the region with the education sector being one of the most affected. The COVID19 pandemic situation in Nigeria just like in many other parts of the world severely affected economic and social activities. Many states in the country were on total and partial lockdowns, and inter-state travels except for essential sectors were banned across the country until June 2020. Schools have been closed throughout the country since March 2020, including in the NE. First, the closure of schools have had a great effect on not just learning outcomes but specifically on retention of pupils/students especially the girl-child. Moreover, there are concerns that the girl-child might be married off during such schools' closure or immediately after resumption of schools and complete normalization of social and economic activities. This risk is more pronounced in the northern part of Nigeria.

> "There are concerns that the girl-child might be married off during schools' closure or immediately after resumption of schools"

Several months of education could be lost as a result of the pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on family incomes and livelihoods might also affect the ability of parents to send their kids to school when schools reopen. Parents might need these children, especially girls to contribute economically through street hawking, farming etc. as against going back to school. Furthermore, a bid to find alternative means for economic sustenance, teachers may quit the profession for higher income jobs. However, to mitigate the negative effects of COVID on continuous learning in the country, the Federal Government (FG) launched the learning at home (LHP), amidst several digital deficiencies. The essence of the LHP was to ensure that learning is not interrupted for pupils and students during schools' closure.

> "Parents might need these children, especially girls to contribute economically through street hawking, farming etc."

In the LHP, lessons covering primary years 1 - 6 and junior secondary years 1 - 3 are aired on radio and television stations, while some are uploaded on dedicated websites. In the same vein, assignments are given during classes and students are expected to complete and submit them online.

According to the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), many children across the country are benefiting from the LHP. In addition, while the programmes have been running smoothly in some areas, others are facing challenges such as poor internet connectivity, stunted level of parents' literacy, poor electricity supply, teaching and learning resource limitations, distractions, and high levels of poverty. However, data from UNICEF also show that many parents and guardians subscribed to the programme, and also make efforts to ensure their wards have the support needed to participate.

As such, this study investigates the impact of the COVID-19 on girls' education in the NE using Adamawa state as a case study, while interrogating how social norms and perceptions affect girls' continued learning during the pandemic era. It also assesses the effectiveness of the Federal Government's LHP in relation to girls' education in the region. Through its findings, the research hopes to influence policy making in the region through recommending measures to ensure continuous learning for girls' amidst school closures; ensure the LHP is effective and inclusive; boost recovery readiness through putting gender-responsive measures/standards in place for girls safe return to school when schools reopen; effective mechanisms to promote girl-child education; and approaches that should be considered for effective digital learning for girls.

1.2 Research Questions:

1. How has COVID-19 affected girls' education in the NE?

2. How effective and inclusive is the Federal Government's learning at home programme in relation to girls' education?

3. How e-ready are governments in the region to deploy digital learning approaches for pupils and students in the state at this time and in post-COVID?

4. How does social norms and perceptions affect girls' continuous learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

5. Post-COVID, what should the government do in addressing the identified gender-oriented gaps and challenges from the study and putting gender-responsive recovery measures in place for schools re-opening?

1.3 Justification of the Study:

Why is the Study so Important?

The research findings provide policymakers and key stakeholders with relevant data, information and policy recommendations on the impact of COVID-19 on girls' education in the NE to enable them to adequately respond to the recovery gender-responsive demands, and the identified gender-oriented educational gaps and challenges, post-COVID. It recommends reforms for post-COVID policymaking in relation to promoting girls' education, ensuring their safe return to school through effective gender-responsive standards and measures, and effective and inclusive digital learning platforms.

As technology has become a core driving tool for inclusion in this century, this study provides data on the extent of preparedness of the North-East to deploy technology in education and thereby enabling girls' integration into an inclusive global economy. The research study also enhances public knowledge about the impact of the COVID-19 situation on this already vulnerable region of the country, how this has affected girls' education, and how effective the federal government's LHP has been in Adamawa State and the NE.

This study provides evidence-based data with which to mount multidimensional advocacy campaigns in a bid to encourage girls' safe return to school amidst installed gender-responsive standards; raising demands on policymakers to consider automatic grade promotion for girls; addressing harmful discriminatory laws/policies and cultural practices that constrain girls' education; campaigning for a free and compulsory 12-year education for the girl-child; as well as putting structures in place for gender-responsive budgeting and community-driven public oversight of government spending in the education sector.

1.4 Methodology:

Research Approach:

Mixed method research design was used for data collection while utilizing empirical and secondary data. This research also used thematic, descriptive and explanatory analysis (mixed method) for data analysis. Qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis and the task was to reduce a wide variety of items of information to a more limited set of attributes in terms of a variable. The quantitative data collected were analysed using descriptive and explanatory analysis. For better observation and comparison, statistical tools such as graphs, charts and tables are used.

Empirical data was collected from basic education stakeholders in the region, through questionnaires targeting 120 respondents and interview guides targeting 30 respondents.

Secondary data was collected by analysing the literature in academic journals, policy documents, books, newspapers and national & international reports. Statistical data was collected from reports and websites such as the National Bureau of Statistics, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Federal Ministry of Education, UNICEF etc.

Sampling of Respondents:

The respondents included State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) Executive Chairs and relevant Directors; Commissioners of Education and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Permanent Secretaries; School Based Management Committee (SBMC) State Chairs and development partners across the six (6) NE states. See table 1 below.

In Adamawa state specifically, SBMC/Parents Teachers Association (PTA) chairs, educational secretaries, community and women leaders, head teachers, parents and girls were targeted in 10 Local Government Areas (LGAs) - see table 2, across the state. Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents, and key emphasis was placed on the gender and ethnic-origin of respondents.

Table 1 - Respondents distribution matrix:

S/N	Respondents	Questionnaire	Interview Guide	Location
1	SUBEB Executive Chairs/a relevant Director	-	6	North-East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe)
2	Commissioners of Education/ Permanent Secretary	-	6	North-East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe)
3	Commissioners of ICT/Communications/ Permanent Secretar	-	6	North-East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe)
4	SBMC/PTA State Chairs/Secretaries	-	6	North-East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe)
5	Development Partners	-	6	North-East (Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe)
6	SBMC/PTA Chairs	10		Adamawa State
7	Education Secretaries	10		Adamawa State

8	Community leaders	10		Adamawa State
9	Women leaders	10		Adamawa State
10	Parents/Caregivers	20		Adamawa State
11	Girls	40		Adamawa State
12	Teachers	20		Adamawa State
	Total	120	30	Adamawa State

Table 2 - Research LGAs in Adamawa State:

Adamawa Central Senatorial Zone	Adamawa North Senatorial Zone	Adamawa South Senatorial Zone	State Capital: Yola North
Girei, Fufore LGA, Yola South LGA	Michika LGA, Mubi South LGA, Maiha LGA	Mayo-Belwa LGA, Ganye LGA, Numan LGA	LGA (Jimeta)

Data was collected in 3 weeks and considerations such as data validity and research instruments reliability were strictly adhered to. In addition, the confidentiality, consent and non-forceful compliance of respondents were upheld, as well as "Do No Harm" which guided the engagement with all the participants and stakeholders. Through this, measures were taken to ensure that the data gathering approach did not put any participants or stakeholders at increased risk of harm.

The responses from respondents were on the following questions:

1. How COVID-19 situation affected girls' education?;
2. How effective and inclusive the Federal Government's LHP were?;
3. The e-readiness of governments in the region to deploy digital learning approaches for pupils and students in the state at this time and in post-COVID?;
4. Social norms and perceptions that affect girls' education during the pandemic?
5. And what should the government do in addressing the identified gender-oriented gaps and challenges from the study towards schools re-opening?

COVID-19 Safety Measures Adherence:

Understanding the challenges of carrying-out such data collection exercise amidst COVID-19, enumerators, as part of their training, were advised to strictly adhere to the global COVID-19 safety measures such as: embarking on the data collection exercise with hand sanitizers and cleaning their hands often with the sanitizers during the data collection exercise; wearing masks throughout their activities on the field; maintaining 1.5 meter distance between them and the respondents, avoiding collecting data from respondents with COVID-19 symptoms, avoiding touching of eyes, nose or mouth while adequate logistical preparations were made to ensure they used private vehicles to and fro the communities where data were collected from.

Research Limitations:

- Insecurity in some of the communities in Adamawa state.
- Out of the 150 targeted respondents, only 146 were successfully interviewed/administered question-aires/interview guides to. It was difficult for the enumerators to interview 3 commissioners of education in three (3) of the states, as well as a development partner, in one (1) of the states.

  The sample size was smaller due to the logistics challenges and time constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It required social distancing measures and strict adherence to curfews fixed by the state.

Gender of Respondents:

From the table below, out of the 146 respondents for the study, 66 were female while 80 were men. Therefore, the percentage of female respondents in the study is 45.21%.

The gender disparity in sample size can be attributed to lesser representation/availability of women as teachers, and in leadership positions at community level and in state education MDAs. 100% of women and girls were purposefully selected for their sub-sample groups to ensure the voices of women are adequately represented for the authenticity of the research objectives and findings.

Table 3 - Distribution of Respondents by Gender:

Respondents	Female	Male	Total
Girls	40	0	40
Parents	7	13	20
Teachers	5	15	20
Educational Secretaries	1	9	10
Women Leader	10	0	10
Community Leaders	0	10	10
SBMC/PTA	0	10	10
MoE	0	3	3
SUBEB	1	5	6
ICT	1	5	6
State SBMC	1	5	6
Dev. Partners	0	5	5
	66	80	146

Ethical Considerations

As recommended in the World Health Organisation (WHO)'s "Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies", this research measured the risk of going on the field before the onset.

Field researchers were indigenes of the state and were knowledgeable on the secure areas to visit.

They were also trained on appropriate ethical measures needed to address peculiar controversial issues pertaining to girls such as child marriage and GBV which could put the girls at greater risk during the interviews if not handled appropriately.

Hence, the interviews with the girls were conducted separately in a safe space to ensure safeguarding while adhering to COVID-19 guidelines.

The research team was also carefully selected with capacities in the areas of girls, education, GBV and statistics.

Confidentiality for all respondents was guaranteed and informed consent was acquired from all respondents before the start of interviews, including girls under the age of 18 years from which consent was gotten from their legal guardians.

Chapter 2

Girls' Education in North East-Nigeria and Adamawa State. What Does the Data say?

2.1 Access to School: Infrastructure, Enrolment and Disparity

Poor educational indices is one of the developmental challenges of the NE. As of 2020, the region had 60% of the country's over 13 million out-of-school children, while also having the lowest literacy rate across the country at 34%. In a 2017 data from the NBS, Adamawa had the second highest adult literacy rate in the region at 55.8% and just below Taraba had 72%. Similarly, in a 2017 data by the Federal Ministry of Education regarding the literacy of Nigerians between 15 and 24 by gender, Adamawa had a female adult literacy rate of 50.6% below Borno 56.4% and Taraba 53.1%. Although for Adamawa, this is a fall from the 2012 rate of 55.8%. Cumulatively, the region had the second to lowest female adult literacy rate nationally at 41.0% after North West which had 38%. For male adult literacy rate, the region had the lowest of 53%, followed by North West 57.5%.

> " Girls are the most affected in the region considering that many of them are out of school and find it difficult to complete primary and secondary education "

Girls are the most affected in the region considering that many of them are out of school and find it difficult completing primary and secondary education. This is because of many factors including traditional and cultural barriers; early child-marriage; BH insurgency; poverty; distance to school; and lack of proper WASH facilities in schools which puts them at a particular disadvantage.

Gender disparity in education has been more visible in the northern part of the country for decades now although the gap is closing. Only in a few of the states is gender disparity still wide with the proportion of girls

> **In the North East, gender disparity is more pronounced in Bauchi, Yobe and Gombe State, also being states with the highest female illiteracy.**

to boys in school ranging from 1 girl to 1.5 boys especially for junior secondary education. In the NE, this is more pronounced in Bauchi, Yobe, and Gombe states, also being states with the highest female illiteracy, adolescent girl marriage, and highest number of girls not in secondary school. In Bauchi for instance, with its high rate of poverty, basic education indicators have been dishearteningly low. This is in terms of enrolment of girls in school, attendance and transition. In 2009/10 for instance, girls' enrolment in public primary schools in the state was at 41.3%. Even nationwide efforts to spur enrolment through initiatives such as the UNICEF/UK Department for International Development (DFID) Girls Education Project which recorded results later got overshadowed by the Boko Haram insurgency. The insurgency disrupted normal school activities.

In Gombe state, while girls' enrolment in public primary schools has improved marginally from 41.7% in 2005/6 to 42.5% in 2009/2010, 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, between 2005/6 and 2009/2010, girls' enrolment in public junior secondary schools increased from 31.7% to 38%. Factors that contributed to this include the state government's strategy of recruiting 1,000 additional graduate teachers who were posted to rural areas with 40% of them being women.

In Adamawa state, in 2020, of 519 public secondary schools in the state, only 17 are girls-only secondary schools. However, in the same year, education gender disparity for learners has been low with the proportion of girls to boys in school being almost the same (see table 4).

Table 4 - Total Number of Students in Public Basic Schools in Adamawa State 2020:

	Primary School	Junior secondary School
Total number of students in basic schools	618,274	132,124
Total number of female students in basic schools	299,637	64,455
Percentage of female students in basic schools	48.5%	48.8%

Data from Adamawa State Universal Basic Education Board

Regarding access to school, generally in northern Nigeria, the distance to the nearest school is a major hindrance for girls' considering issues surrounding safety and general restrictions on women's mobility. Most importantly, access to education in the region was worsened by the Boko Haram insurgency which has led to schools' closure for several years, and the unavailability of teachers, classrooms and instructional materials. 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.

In addition, Nigerian armed forces have used schools as military bases which resulted in more Boko Haram attacks on schools. School buildings have also been used to host IDPs. Furthermore, in host communities, schools have become overstretched and struggling to deal with the influx of IDP children. In the 2014 Joint Humanitarian Needs Assessment, it was reported that parents prioritise basic needs such as food and shelter over education.

> " Basic education in Nigeria is plagued by decaying physical infrastructure and teacher shortfall across many public schools. "

In relation to infrastructure, basic education in Nigeria is plagued by decaying physical infrastructure and teacher shortfall across many public schools. This has been a major impediment to access and enrolment especially for girls who need access to WASH services in schools. In a 2012 study by UNICEF, only an estimated 41% of primary schools in Nigeria had access to improved sanitation facilities, just 51% have access to improved water sources, and only 28.6% of schools have soap for washing their hands and where available, school WASH facilities, particularly toilets, do not often meet recommended standards. Also, while a considerable number of Nigeria's schools report providing separate toilets for boys and girls, the functionality and quality are not always fully monitored. In another 2018 study by the same UN agency, the percentage of schools with sanitation facilities in the country increased to 55% while only 4% of the schools had a sewer connection.

For Adamawa State, table 5 shows that the percentage of public primary schools with toilets in the State is at 50%, which is more than the regional average of 44%. In the same vein, regarding public junior secondary schools, Adamawa has 76% compared to the regional average of 73%. Similarly, for portable water (see table 6), Adamawa has 32% more than the regional average of 26% for public primary schools and 47% more than the regional average of 45% for public junior secondary schools.

Table 5 - State of Toilet Infrastructure in Public Basic Schools Adamawa State:

	North East	Adamawa State
Number of Schools in Primary Education (ECCDE Inclusive)	10,266	1,910
Number of Schools with Toilets in Primary Education (ECCDE Inclusive)	4,486	957
Percentage Of Schools With Toilet In Primary Education (ECCDE Inclusive)	44%	50%
Number of Schools in JS Education	2,159	499
Number of Schools with Toilets in JS Education	1,567	380
Percentage Of Schools With Toilet In JS Education	73%	76%

UBEC Education Profile Indicators, 2018

Table 6 - Potable Water Data of Primary Schools in Adamawa State:

	North East	Adamawa State
Total No of Primary Schools (ECCDE inclusive)	10,266	1,910
No of Schools with Potable Water In Primary Education	2692	604
Percentage Of Schools With Potable Water In Primary Education	26%	32%
Total No of JS Schools	2159	499
No of Schools with Potable Water In JS Education	967	237
Percentage Of Schools With Potable Water In JS Education	45%	47%

UBEC Education Profile Indicators, 2018

2.2 Remaining in School and Completion:

Completion, Promotion, Drop Out and Transition

> **72% of Nigerian school children who finished primary education do not make it to secondary school.**

According to data from the UBEC, 72% of Nigerian school children who finished primary education do not make it to secondary school. About 3.7 million children do not complete elementary education. And of the sample 24.2 million who acquire their first school leaving certificate, only 6.8 million further their education. Only 86.81 per cent of primary school entrants complete their education. This percentage is lower for early childhood care development and education (ECCDE) - completion rate of 35.47%, and junior secondary education - completion rate of 42.27.

Regionally, from table 7 (find below), regarding completion rate in primary school, the NE has the second to lowest percentage after North Central with 63.84%. Similarly, for completion rate in junior secondary school, the region had the lowest percentage of 31.97% followed by North West with 33.98%. In addition, for promotion rate in primary schools, the region had the second to lowest percentage of 56.53% and third to lowest percentage of 48.49% for promotion rate in junior secondary schools.

Table 8 shows that Adamawa has the highest percentages for completion rates in primary and junior secondary education, more than the regional average. The same for transition rate, and drop-out rates for both primary and junior secondary schools.

Table 7: Basic Education Data Across Regions in Nigeria for Public and Private Schools (in %):

	North Central	North East	North West	South East	South South	South West
Completion Rate in Primary School	63.84	85.64	95.34	95.81	86.54	86.99
Completion Rate in Junior Secondary Schools	43	31.97	33.98	53.84	48.83	51.22
Promotion Rate in Primary Schools	64.75	56.53	49.9	75.51	75.15	58.67
Promotion Rate in Junior Secondary Schools	43.91	48.49	43.21	59.05	60.93	55.77

UBEC Education Profile Indicators, 2018

Table 8: Completion, Transition and Drop-Out Rates in Primary and JS Education
Across Public and Private Schools in Adamawa State (In %):

	North East	Adamawa State
Completion rate in Primary Education	85.64	88.36
Completion rate in JS Education	31.97	36.52
Transition rate in JSS Education	79.41	138.90
Drop-Out Rate (DR) In Primary Education	1.64	1.93
Drop-Out Rate (DR) In JS Education	2.50	2.97

UBEC Education Profile Indicators, 2018

Although there are no disaggregated data by gender as regards the data presented in this subsection, it still shows a picture of what the situation of completion, transition, promotion and drop-out rates are in Adamawa state for girls' considering that the state's gender parity index for learners are 0.86 for primary and 0.89 for junior secondary - both for public and private schools.

2.3 Contextual Barriers to Girls' Education in the NorthEast Region

Insecurity (Boko Haram Insurgency):

> "The BH insurgency in the region has encouraged attacks on children, widespread rape of girls and women, and destruction of school facilities."

The BH insurgency in the region has encouraged attacks on children, widespread rape of girls and women, and destruction of school facilities. As such, classrooms, teachers, pupils and students have been prime targets. This has occasioned enormous challenges to education in the region and hindered hundreds of thousands of girls from attending schools, contributing to a high percentage of children that are out of school in the country. Through several schemes such as female school children kidnapping, the group has succeeded in dissuading parents from sending their girls to school. There are also fears on the part of children to attend classes and among teachers to teach. Furthermore, more than 600 teachers have been reportedly murdered in the region, 19,000 displaced, and more than 1,200 schools have been damaged and destroyed.

In April 2014, an estimate of 276 female students were kidnapped from a secondary school in Chibok, a village in Borno State. Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the kidnappings and media reports revealed that the insurgency group hoped to use the captured girls as negotiating pawns in exchange for some of its members in jail. A similar incident occurred in February 2018, when Boko Haram kidnapped 110 schoolgirls from the Government Girls' Science and Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State. The girls were subsequently released in March 2018 with the exception of a Christian girl, Leah Sharibu who refused to abandon her faith and convert to Islam. These 2 events constitute a big hindrance to school enrollment and attendance in the region especially for girls.

In furtherance, the displacement occasioned by the insurgency has significantly increased the challenge of access to education, following the fact that the efforts of government, donors, and civil society organizations to provide emergency education opportunities for children in IDP camps have fallen short of delivering quality learning. This is considering the unconducive environment to learning and the psychosocial effects of violence on the children which affect their preparedness to learn.

Poverty:

Although basic education is free in Nigeria, as well as in the NE, pupils and students are often required to pay a variety of fees, such as sanitation and sports fees, which reduces the likelihood of economically disadvantaged children, such as IDPs, to gain access to schooling. In addition to this, with a poverty rate of 71% in the region, it means that most parents would consider deploying their children, mostly the girl-child to farming, street hawking or even marry them off in a bid to have a lesser number of children to care for. Child labour is predominant in the NE as children are used to bring additional income into the family.

> "Child labour is predominant in the NE as children are used to bring additional income into the family."

Inadequate of Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Facilities

The unsuitability of sanitary facilities such as water and toilet contribute to keeping girls from school in several communities in NE, Nigeria. Girls' dealing with the challenges of attaining puberty need a safe place to maintain proper hygiene. As such, rather than have their monthly periods without such safe places, many of them would prefer to stay away from school, because staying in school could mean bearing the embarrassment and taunts that come with the possibility of having their clothes stained. The data in tables 5 and 6 above show that many public primary schools in the region do not have toilets and water.

> "The unsuitability of sanitary facilities such as water and toilet contribute to keeping girls from school in several communities in NE, Nigeria."

Child and Early Forced Marriage (CEFM)

In Northern Nigeria most especially, child marriage is seen as a strategy for economic survival in the sense that it generally means one less person to cater for, and as thus as an immediate strategy of escaping the cycle of poverty. However, it entrenches and reinforces the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Its been estimated that early child marriage below the age of 18 can lead to a decrease of up to 6% points in the probability of literacy and secondary school completion for girls. A household survey data that provides parents' perception on reasons why girls drop out of school, child-marriage accounted for 15 - 20% of the reasons. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as of 2009, 68% of girls below the age of 18 get married off in North East Nigeria. In addition, half of all women in North East and North West Nigeria get married off before the age of 16 and are expected to start bearing children from the first years of their marriage.

> "Half of all women in North East and North West Nigeria get married off before the age of 16"

Harmful Norms and Practices

Historically, cultural and social values have contributed to gender disparity in education. Even across the country, there is this cultural view that it is better for the woman to stay home and tend to her family than attend school. The tradition attaches higher value to a man than a woman, and for the latter, whose place is believed to be the kitchen. This sad situation is aggravated by patriarchal practices which gave boys traditional rights to succession and girls none. As such, same patriarchal practices encourage preference to be given to the education of the boy-child rather than the girl's. In NE, Nigeria, this is exacerbated by the dominant and patriarchal narratives of religion.

> "Across the country, there is this cultural view that it is better for the woman to stay home and tend to her family than attend school."

Chapter 3

Impact of COVID-19 on Girls' Education in North East Nigeria; Our Findings

3.1 Effect of COVID-19 on Girls' Learning and Education

Given existing harmful cultural practices and gender norms, girls may be less preferred to return to school as opposed to their male counterparts due to the male-child preference system still in operation in some communities. In addition, girls are more at risk of being married off or undergoing female genital mutilation (FGM). A government representative further highlights the challenge of child marriage during an interview:

This uncertainty may be linked to the negative impact COVID-19 has had on the economy which has trickled down to a reduction in household income. Given existing harmful cultural practices and gender norms, girls may be less preferred to return to school as opposed to their male counterparts due to the male child preference system still in operation in some communities. In addition, girls are more at risk of being married off or undergoing female genital mutilation (FGM). A government representative further highlights the challenge of child marriage during an interview:

> *"The cultural practice here is early marriage and the girl-child should learn domestic chores so she is restricted from going to school."* - Government Representative.

To corroborate these assumptions, respondents highlighted issues of sexual harassment linked to gender-based violence, inadequate teachers and WASH facilities, as well as post-traumatic stress disorder from the insurgency to have gravely affected girls' education within the state.

> *"Here in this part of the state COVID-19 and the Boko haram insurgency have already traumatized our girls, it has created fear in them because you can't last for a week without hearing gunshots. So automatically, when they hear these sounds, it affects their education."* - Education Secretary.

23

Beyond the impact of COVID-19 on girls' education within the household, it was also important to explore if teachers were in contact with their students for continuous learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic and only 60% of the teachers were in contact with their students. Illiterate parents' inability to teach girls beyond the digital learning provisions made through the contents shared on television and radio substantiate the need for adequate follow-up between teachers and girls as teachers may be more equipped to tutor in the context of challenge with literacy to avoid excluding girls and boys with caregivers who are unable to read and write from learning.

> **Lack of electricity impedes on the girls' ability to access the lessons via television and radio**

Lack of electricity impedes on the girls' ability to access the lessons via television and radio and further excludes girls from low income households as elite households can afford batteries, fuel and power generators to access the LHP. This challenge was also highlighted in Bauchi State.

"There will be challenges like the issue of electricity (for using the LHP), we have not had electricity since when Boko Haram invaded our community." - Zuliha, Adamawa State..

Generally, the COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened existing barriers to girls' education such as harmful gender cultural practices and norms, poverty, gender-based violence, teenage pregnancy, insecurity and limited infrastructure and teachers. As such, with the recent efforts by the government to begin day-to-day activities such as the resumption of schools, it is important to consider the existing barriers such as the child marriage, poverty, and gender roles that have been augmented by the long break due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.2 Effectiveness and Inclusiveness of the Learning at Home Programme on Girls' Education

The existing LHP created by the Federal Government to ensure continuous learning raises questions about its reach, accessibility, usability and effectiveness. Also vital to its success is accessibility to all marginalized groups, including girls with disabilities and girls living with disabilities. As mentioned in the methodology section, interviews were conducted with government stakeholders, SBMCs and development partners at state capital level in all the six North-East states while a more in depth interview was conducted with a wide range of stakeholders at community and LGA level.
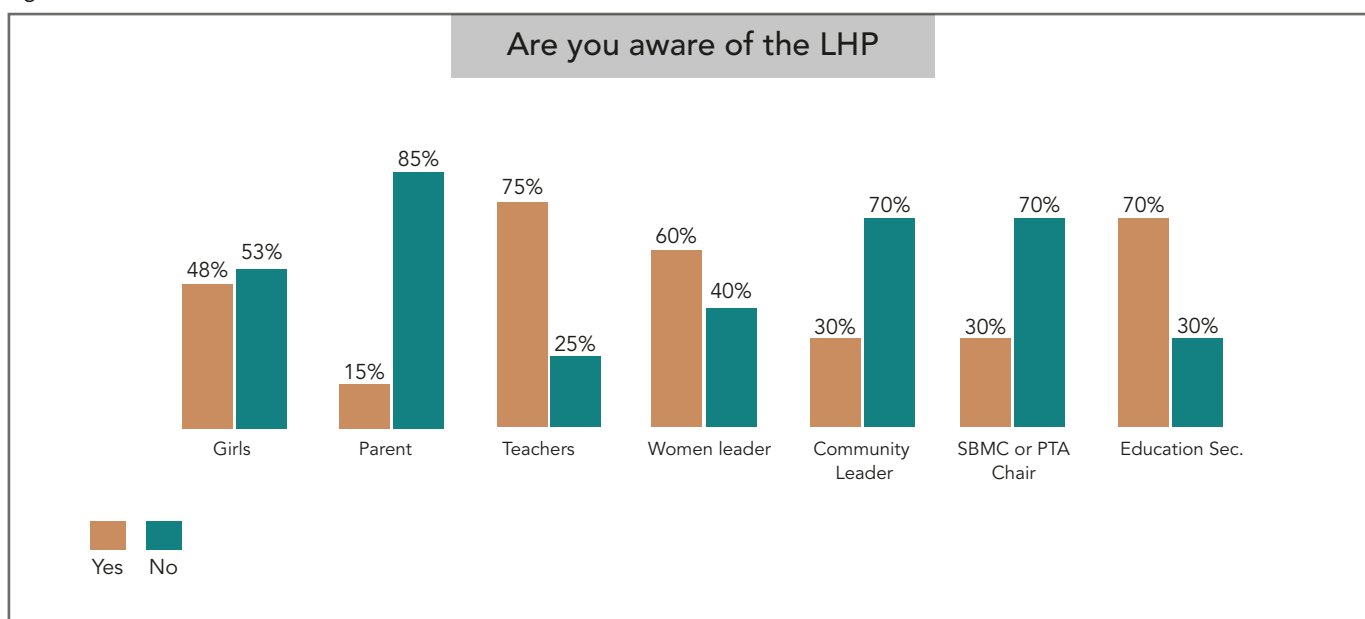
Although similar challenges such as insurgency are experienced in the six NE states, there is a possibility that variances in the implementation of the LHP can exist. All the states launched the LHP between April and May 2020, except for Gombe State where it began two weeks before the field visit for this research in July. Limited information is available on the late onset for the LHP in Gombe State. This may be linked to logistical arrangements and platform creation for deployment.

Awareness of the Learning at Home Programme

With regards to the reach of the LHP in Adamawa state, only 48% Of the girls interviewed were aware of the programme. More alarming is the level of awareness amongst parents which was a meagre 15%.

> " Only 48% Of the girls interviewed in Adamawa State were aware of the LHP programme. "

Figure 1: Awareness of LHP

The stakeholders who have a high level of awareness about the LHP are education secretaries and teachers. However, excluding women leaders, only 30% or less of stakeholders on the demand side, including parents, community leaders and SBMC chairs are aware of the LHP. One of the girls interviewed stated that:

> " Only 30% or less of stakeholders on the demand side, including parents, community leaders and SBMC chairs are aware of the LHP. "

Girls like me should know about it. Most of us are not even aware.
A Girl, Adamawa State.

This raises a worrying' concern of the usage of the LHP if some of the direct beneficiaries were not aware of the programme. In addition, it also shows gaps in the consultation process during the planning of the programme if major stakeholders are not aware.

Planning and implementation gaps are also evident in the fact that a substantial proportion of education secretaries at the local government (municipality) level (30%) and teachers (25%) are not aware of the LHP.

## Participation of Girls in the Learning at Home Programme

" **Only 28% of the girls interviewed participate in the LHP** "

From respondents across Local Government Areas in Adamawa State, only 28% of the girls interviewed participate in the LHP. Moreso, parents' perception of their girls' participation in the LHP is much lower at 15%. This implies a low utilization of the LHP programme.

Figure 2: Participation in LHP

Do you participate in the learning at home programme (LHP) in your state?

28%

72%

■ *No* ■ *Yes*
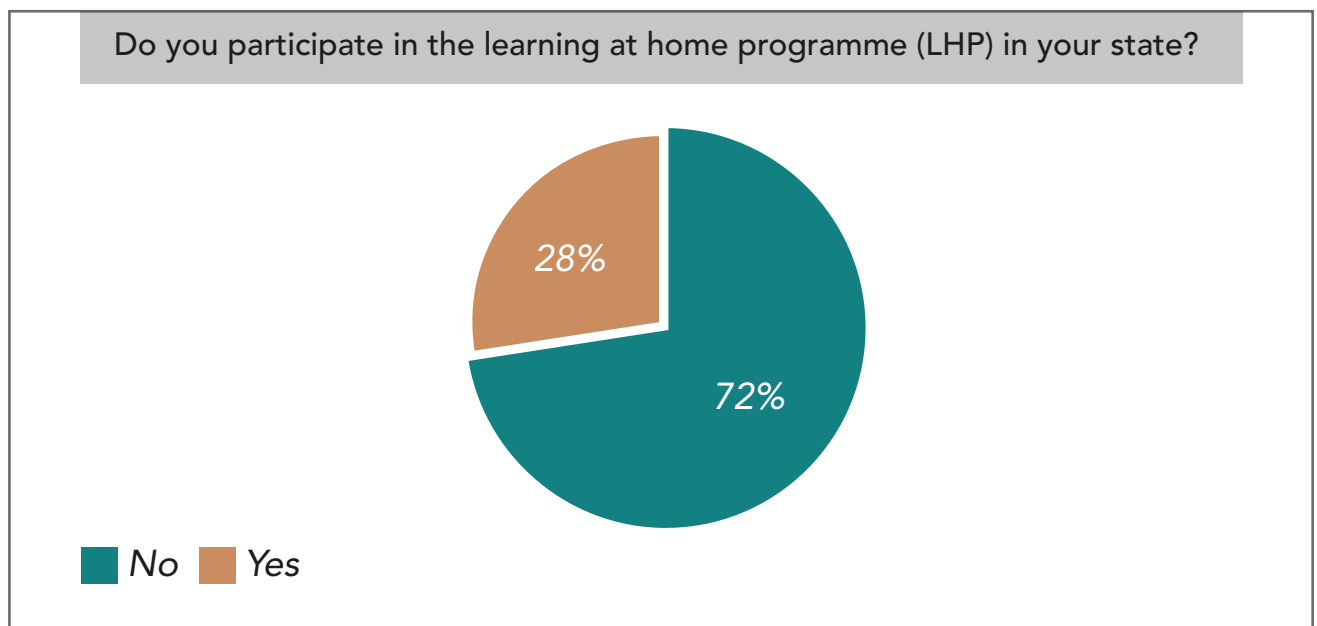
This implies that despite the availability of the programme, additional factors such as accessibility, gender norms and time constraints as mentioned in section 4.1 may be inhibiting girls from participating in the LHP thereby impeding on their learning during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Also, the lack of flexibility in timing is a challenge for the participation of girls- A teacher stated:

> *"Yes, we find it difficult especially now that it is the raining season, and sometimes you will find out that when the girls finish their house work, they may be too tired and exhausted. And sometimes the stipulated time given which is 5 o'clock, is the time some of the children are coming back from the farm, by then they will be exhausted" Assistant Director Quality Assurance, Adamawa State.*

In addition, another challenge mentioned was limited participation by students as there was no platform for asking questions. Perhaps, this is where constant communication with their school teachers would have played a vital role in the form of a follow-up after class.

However, some girls state that they have enjoyed the programme and emphasize on the flexibility of the programme. This may be linked to the support they receive from their family to study. As one of the girls point out:

> *"It's so effective due to my keen interest I have & the support from my father"*
> *- Ramat, Adamawa State.*

The variances show imbalance in opportunity for girls across the states and calls for adequate sensitization and awareness for family members and community leaders and requires effective engagement of these stakeholders from the onset of project design.

Regional data show that, in Adamawa State, actors believe that the programme will attain its expected results to a reasonable level. In Bauchi State, actors believe the program is very flexible but ineffective, as no measures have been put in place to ensure effective participation although the expected result of girls' participation has not been met. In contrast, most of the parents are aware that learning is ongoing. Parents provide radio for the girl child to use in learning and teachers are able to provide follow-up clarifications for students in Borno State. In Gombe State, respondents believe that the desired result of providing girls with education especially in this season of COVID-19 pandemic cannot be met due to the unusual method of teaching which is still new to the girls. Also, additional challenges highlighted are the lack of schools for girls and boys with special needs and the exclusion of girls in IDP camps who are not able to listen to the program due to child labor, hawking and abuse. In Yobe State, the expected coverage is as low as 5-10% according to some respondents as the programme is only available in 5 out of 17 LGAs.

> " There is a lack of schools for girls and boys with special needs and the exclusion of girls in IDP camps. "

The differences in experiences and estimated outcomes across states may be linked to political will and existing structures in place presently being utilized. It is also possible that the state capitals excluding Adamawa State may have more favourable responses as responses are mostly from state actors concentrated in urban areas.

Participatory Process for Creating the LHP

From the perspective of government stakeholders interviewed across the six states, there is a general agreement on a considerable amount of engagement of stakeholders. In Adamawa State, the SBMCs and teachers were all carried along in the planning of the LHP. in Bauchi state, PTA leads were carried along at every stage. Also, faith-based centres were engaged to create sensitization. However the monitoring of the LHP was foisted on the PTA leads at LGA level which does not seem feasible given the magnitude of the task. The responsibility of monitoring should have been shared with other non-state actors such as SBMCs, community leaders and Mothers' Associations.

Likewise, in Gombe, Taraba and Yobe States, SBMCs were engaged to create awareness in communities about the LHP. It is unclear if Mothers' Associations, as well as community leaders and religious and traditional leaders are part of the SBMCs. In Borno State, there is a fixed system through which the SBMC chairs monitor the LHP on Thursdays and Fridays to understand the challenges and proffer solutions.

In contrast, responses from women leaders, SBMCs and PTA Chairs shows limited participation in the creation of the LHP in Adamawa State.

Table 9: Participation of Teachers in the design of the tech tools

Are you carried along as well as the teachers in the design of the tech tools used for continuous learning in your state?		
	Yes	No
Women Leaders	20%	80%
SBMCs or PTA Chairs	30%	70%

Only 20% of women leaders and 30% of SBMCs or PTA Chairs were involved in the planning process of the LHP. These results are likely linked to the limited participation of girls and stakeholder awareness in the LHP. It is possible that effective communication channels were not imbibed from SBMCs/PTA at state level to LGA and community level.

Technological Capacity and Resources to implement Digital Learning Approaches

> "There was no training from the Ministry of Education and Technology on the application of the digital learning tools during the lockdown."

In the deployment of the LHP, it is important to decipher the extent to which the government has taken cognizance of the technological capacity of direct users, including teachers and students. Half of the education secretaries interviewed indicated that there was no training from the Ministry of Education and Technology on the application of the digital learning tools during the lockdown.

The implication of this denotes that the government has not effectively attempted to apply enhanced digital learning tools or empower teachers and students, particularly girls, with the necessary skills required in a situation where digital learning is necessary such as virtual learning contexts as induced by COVID-19.

Additionally, introducing digital learning would ideally require access to the internet. This poses a challenge as only 25% of the girls and 30% of parents interviewed had access to the internet.

The average internet penetration in Nigeria still falls at 61.2% and this figure may be lower for persons living in rural areas or from low income homes, particularly girls.

Based on the limited access to the internet as seen above, It is commendable of the government to have selected radio as the major medium for deploying the LHP. In Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Borno and Taraba states, the media used were Radio and Television, however, Yobe used Facebook, radio and Google classroom. A follow-up is needed on the feasibility and usability of the advanced tools used by Yobe state to measure its effectiveness.

Responses from a cross section of respondents shows TV and Radio as the frequently used tools to access the LHP. Accessibility to radio frequency across communities within each state is a challenge, especially in rural areas as highlighted by Bauchi, Taraba and Yobe State representatives.

> "It is commendable of the government to have selected radio as the major medium for deploying the LHP."

Figure 3: Training of Teachers on LHP Technological Tools

Has there been any form of training from the Ministry of Education and Technology on the application of these tools?
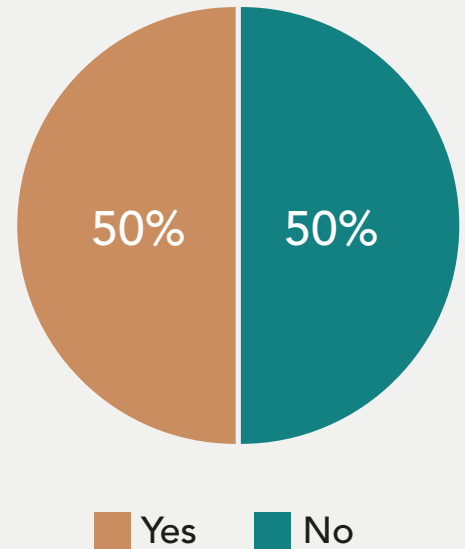

50% — Yes   50% — No

Figure 4: Access to the Internet

Do you have access to internet?

Girls: 25% (Yes), 75% (No)
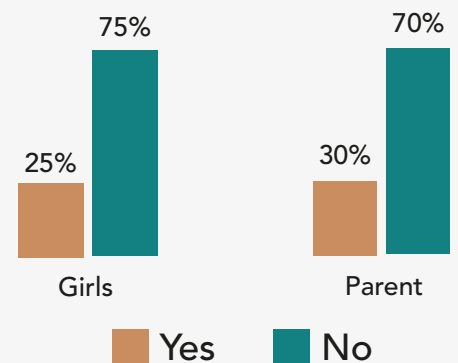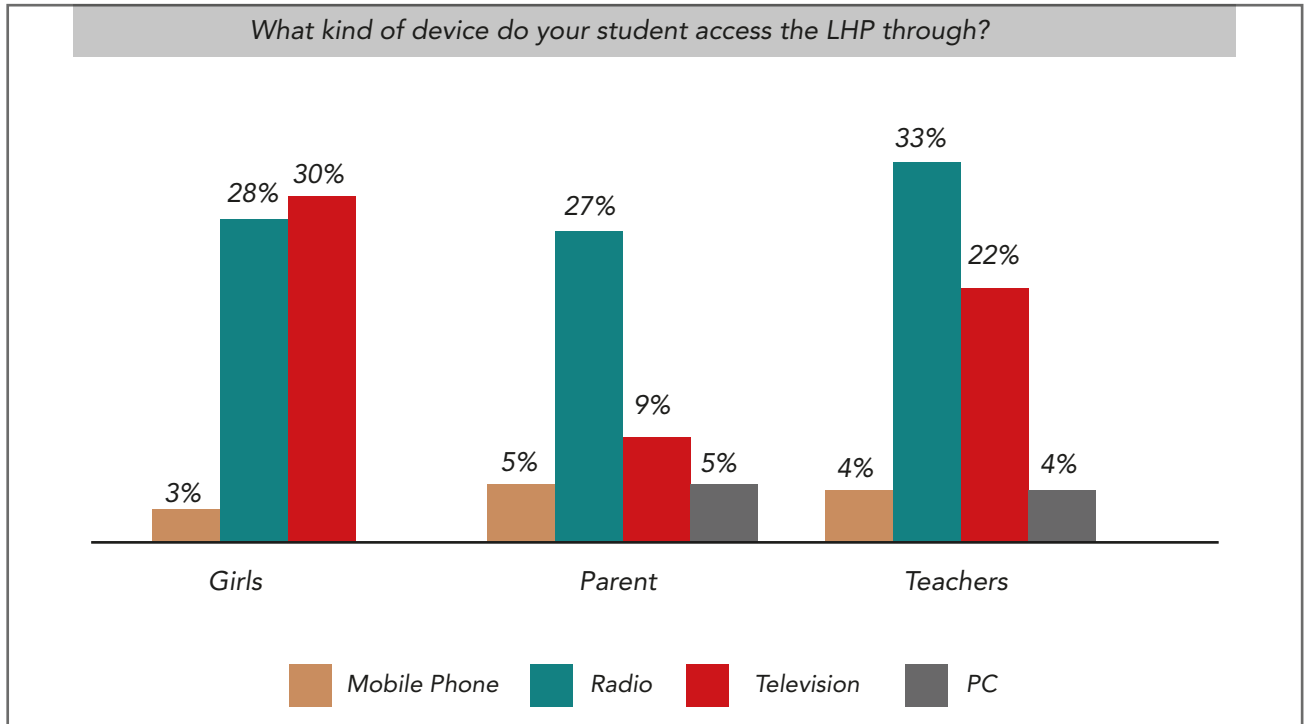Parent: 30% (Yes), 70% (No)

Yes — No

Figure 5: Device Used to Access the LHP

Interestingly, girls self-report the use of TV as opposed to radio for accessing the LHP more than their parents and teachers' perception of their usage of TV. This may be linked to a more frequent usage of radio by men than women in Northern Nigeria.

An important point to note missing from the findings is the existing gender digital divide as women and girls are less likely to use the internet than men and boys. This is further likely to hamper girls' access to learning in states such as Yobe State where advanced technological tools are being used. Vital information on the frequently used tools by all genders which can be obtained by a thorough gender analysis is crucial to the success of projects like the LHP. Addressing the gender digital divide is also crucial to empowering girls in the long run.

3.3 Additional Measures for Continuous Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic

It is possible that apart from the LHP, there are additional measures in place. An estimated 60% of SBMCs/ PTA leads as well as Education Secretaries attest to additional continuous learning programmes in place. However only 30% and 40% of community and women leaders respectively attest to the availability of additional continuous learning programmes.

Table 10: Other Measures in Place for Continuous Learning

Additional Measures In place to ensure continuous learning for the girl child during this pandemic		
	Yes	No
Women Leaders	40%	60%
Community Leaders	30%	70%
SBMC or PTA Chairs	60%	40%
Education Secretaries	60%	40%

There is no information on the complimentary approach used by the implementers of these continuous learning programmes with the LHP. This may have been instrumental in maximizing learning outcomes for girls and boys.

3.4 Harmful Gender-based Social Norms and Perceptions

Gender-based norms and practices mostly relegate girls to time-consuming roles which are mainly house chores and domestic care work that hampers their ability to study.

Traditionally, women are tasked with providing water, taking care of children and the aged, cooking and hygiene. The disproportionate burden of domestic work is highlighted by one of the respondents:

"The LHP is not flexible because during most of the time slots for the LHP, I am engaged with household activities" Aisha, Adamawa State.

Another girl, Amina states that:

"Yes, household chores and taking care of my younger ones limit me from accessing the learning at home programme" Amina, Adamawa State.

In addition, harmful cultural practices such as child marriage and frequent gender-based violence persist. There also seems to be a rise in hawking by girls to augment family income.

"The factors that affect girl's education during this pandemic are intimidation, rape and so on especially when the girls are sent hawking, farming, or running errands" Education Secretary, Adamawa State.

The perception that girls' education is not useful is likely to foster the need to limit the learning time of girls to and prioritize boys' education in order for girls to boost family income. With the looming economic hardship as highlighted by parents, there is a tendency for not only street hawking to occur but also early, forced child marriage which is usually be carried out to alleviate economic hardship. Hawking limits the time spent on girls' education and can also increase the risk of gender-based violence and abduction, given the frequent occurrence of kidnapping adolescent girls by Boko Haram.

These challenges need to inform a gender-responsive strategy adopted when the re-opening of schools begins. Schools' resumption will require a concerted combination of awareness and sensitization campaigns complemented by social protection and psychosocial interventions as well as infrastructural and resource provision that will ensure that girls and boys at risk of not returning to school are targeted.

"

The perception that girls' education is not useful is likely to foster the need to limit the learning time of girls

"

3.5 Recommended Actions to Improve Gender-Responsive School Reopening During and Beyond COVID-19 by Stakeholders

Measures to Re-open Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic
Reopening schools requires the provision of basic infrastructure and equipment to ensure the safety of students and teachers. This will require the provision of hand-wash points, other WASH facilities and personal protective equipment. As a respondent states:

"Whenever schools are about to reopen, I hope and pray that all necessary measures for the protection from this COVID-19 are taken, for example provision of hand wash bucket, hand sanitizer and the mask to ensure the safety of the girls"- Education Secretary, Adamawa State.

Engaging and Investing in Teachers
Respondents strongly advocate for increasing the welfare of teachers including ensuring consistent payment of salaries, building their capacity in digital learning and ensuring adequate and adequate engagement of teachers in the LHP implementation.

Multi-stakeholder Awareness and Sensitization
Government will need to garner and mobilize the support of stakeholders such as religious and traditional, community leaders as well as the media to increase sensitization and awareness on the importance of girls' education and campaigning against the barriers to education such as harmful gender norms and practices.

Demand-Side Boost for the LHP
Stakeholders consulted suggest reopening of schools with safety measures and smaller class sizes as well as provision of devices for the LHP in the meantime. In addition, increase awareness of the programme involving key actors such as religious and traditional leaders from the design phase and provide access to constant electricity. There is also a need for improved supervision and monitoring of the programme and provision of scholarships for the poor. There is also a recommendation to reschedule the time of the LHP and make it more interactive. It was also recommended for the government to strengthen its efforts to combat insurgency in the Northeast.

Chapter 4

Research Recommendations

What's next for Girls' Education in the North East and Adamawa State?

The recommendations covers the existing challenges with girls' education in the North East, taking into cognizance the way forward for the Learning at Home Programme and the reopening of schools, strategies to tackle existing barriers to girls' education, as well as mechanisms to boost digital learning during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.1 Mechanisms to Improve Access to Education for Girls During the COVID-19 School Closure

Local awareness raising at community level

Awareness creation using community leaders, religious and traditional leaders, SBMCs and other stakeholders is likely to increase the participation of girls in the LHP, with important campaign messaging on harmful gender norms and practices such as the disproportionate burden on chores on women and girls.

Flexibility and Participation through Teachers

Flexible timing for the LHP was a major challenge for girls as a result of the timing for house chores and other responsibilities at home. For instance, the Ministries of Education and Communication should make more repeat episodes should be made available so girls can have access to the LHP during convenient time ranges. Teachers should also be provided with resources such as airtime to follow up with the students to foster an effective learning experience with the LHP.

> "
> Flexible timing for the LHP was a major challenge for girls as a result of the timing for house chores and other responsibilities at home.
> "

32

Increased and Defined Roles for Non-State Actors

Non-state actors such as SBMCs, community and women leaders, religious and traditional leaders as well as Mothers' Associations should be involved in future planning, implementation and monitoring of the LHP at the community level. This engagement of non-state actors should not be assigned to one group alone as it could exclude other groups who can help improve intervention outcomes.

Improved Communication Channels of Non-State Actor Groups

Findings from the state level show that SBMCs, religious leaders and women groups were involved in the planning and monitoring of the LHP in some states. However, this is not the case at LGA and community levels in Adamawa state where key stakeholders such as women, SBMCs, community leaders and girls themselves were not aware of the LHP. The capacity to easily send information from state level to community level should be improved by associations and organizations through effective channels so information can get to communities.

Knowledge sharing and collaboration across states

Some states seem to have a clear cut workable approach to the LHP. In Borno State, there seems to be collaboration between the government, international partners and CSOs/CBOs. In Yobe State, advanced digital tools such as Facebook have been used in teaching students. Hence, it is important to create platforms for knowledge sharing to identify best practices and strategies that do not work.

Addressing the Gender Digital Divide

Men and boys are more likely to have access to technology and have the capacity to use it. This stems from age-long gender roles, fewer women and girls in STEM and access to resources. It is therefore important to put this into consideration when planning e-learning programmes for girls and boys. A thorough gender analysis of the tools most accessible to girls and boys should be carried out by the state government in partnership with SBMCs and other local groups before a final decision on the main medium to be used for deployment is made.

> " Men and boys are more likely to have access to technology and have the capacity to use it. "

Electricity and other Sustainable Energy Tools

The LHP programme requires electricity and batteries that may not always be available sustainable energy-powered tools such as solar energy can be used in place of expensive or affordable.

Complementary Interventions- Social Protection and Psychosocial Support

Given the economic hardship that ensued due to the COVID-19 pandemic, improved palliatives such as cash transfers should be provided for households who are unable to afford basic necessities and meet the learning needs of their children/wards. In addition, psychosocial support will need to be provided for girls who have been traumatized by the insurgency in the North East in combination with the socio-economic and fatal implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inclusion: Girls with Disabilities, Girls from Low income homes, IDP Camps and Rural Areas

Feedback from the research shows that girls from excluded groups have not been considered adequately in the LHP. Radio frequency is not universally available for rural communities. The accessibility of the programme for girls with disabilities is also not certain. In addition, internally displaced persons camps have also been excluded. It is therefore important to include these groups in consultations to ascertain what works best in teaching. For instance, where radio frequency is not accessible, mobile technology may be, or social distanced classes done in shifts may be possible. Also, creating accessible disability-friendly tools and instructions can also be implemented to ensure adequate inclusion of all groups of girls.

> " Girls from excluded groups: girls with disabilities, girls from low-income homes, IDP camps have not been considered adequately in the LHP. "

Exacerbated Risk of GBV, CEFM

Since respondents report the high risk of gender-based violence as well as child and early forced marriage, it is important to put structures in place to address these challenges, such as Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) and sensitization in communities to create awareness.

4.2 Addressing Existing Barriers to Girls' Education

Harmful Social Norms

Existing issues relating to social norms require sensitization and awareness to induce behavioural change across communities in the NE and Adamawa state. This requires a multi-stakeholder, multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral approach. This would help to reduce the incidence of early and forced child marriage which affects girls' secondary education enrolment, retention and completion, most importantly; and other harmful norms that create barriers to girls' education.

Infrastructure provision and fiscal accountability

Having examined the state of infrastructure in section 2.1, especially that of WASH across schools, there is a need for a joint education budgeting approach so that key demand-side actors can routinely ensure that basic and secondary education budgets are gender-responsive and reflective of schools' priorities in order to create a conducive learning environment for girls. It's also important that state governments sign onto the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and mount transparency and accountability measures in the education sector; while citizens and basic education governance structures at the community level are empowered to follow the money by providing adequate oversight on government educational spending.

> "There is a need for a joint education budgeting approach so that key demand-side actors can routinely ensure that basic and secondary education budgets are gender-responsive"

Tackling the Impact of Conflict and the Insurgency

It is important to strengthen efforts towards ending the insurgency in the North-East and take cognizance of additional challenges and risks on girls such as ensuring their safety through coordination by the security agencies and community policing as well as continuously providing psychosocial support.

Political will

Political will remains one of the most important factors for improved girls, education in the NE. It is key that state governments donate the requisite amount of political will in order to ensure a more favourable atmosphere for girls to attain education in the state. This includes mounting advocacy that leverages key local stakeholders to address cultural and traditional barriers to girls' education; implementing a compulsory and free 12-year education for the girl-child through policies that encourage girl-child education enrolment, access and retention; and ensuring every community has a female secondary school.

> "It's key that state governments donate the requisite amount of will to ensure a more favourable atmosphere for girls to attain education in the state."

4.3 Gender-Responsive Strategy to Ensure a Smooth Return to School for Girls

Concerted and augmented sensitization and awareness for School Reopening

This is to ensure that all children, especially girls are in school and learning. This requires working with community leaders, religious and traditional leaders, SBMCs, Mothers' Associations and well as media houses to campaign for children to return to school. Additional sensitization is needed due to the increased incidence of child and early forced marriage, drop-outs, economic decline and child labour that may have risen from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Provision of COVID-19 Compliant Infrastructure and Facilities

Hand wash points, PPE, adequate WASH facilities and social-distant setup in classrooms should be provided for children in line with the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) guidelines.

> **Hand wash points, PPE, adequate WASH facilities and social-distant setup in classrooms should be provided for children**

Complementary Multi-Sectoral Interventions

Additional interventions such as cash transfer programmes to alleviate the negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic are necessary. This should be complemented by sexual and reproductive healthcare services and continuous education for girls as respondents report a likely rise in teenage pregnancies.

Adequate Inclusive Planning for Vulnerable Groups

Ensuring that adequate provisions are in place for the most excluded groups, including girls with disabilities, and girls in internally displaced camps is important. Finding sustainable practices from virtual learning that can be adopted for girls in emergency situations may also foster sustainable solutions for safe learning for girls living in conflict-affected areas.

Automatic Grades promotion for girls

Considering that girls might lose a year of schooling, automatic grade promotion would offer an incentive for them to continue and stay in schools.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This research explores the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on girls' education in the North East by examining the effectiveness of the LHP and probing how social norms, the insurgency and other barriers affect girls' education with Adamawa State as a case study.

Research findings show that although the LHP is able to ensure continuous learning during school closures, hard to reach girls such as those from low income homes, those living with disabilities and those in rural areas and IDP camps are excluded. In addition, the burden of domestic and care work further inhibits girls from participating in the LHP. Teachers and other stakeholders such as SBMCS as well as religious and traditional leaders were not adequately engaged in the LHP to enhance participation and feedback for girls and boys. This implies that peculiar issues relating to harmful gender norms were not inculcated in the planning and deployment of the LHP. Another key finding is that existing barriers to girls' education have been heightened and there is a risk of more girls dropping out of school due to an increase in the incidences of child marriage, teenage pregnancies, child labour and gender-based violence. The insurgency in the North-East has further increased the complications with equitable access to quality education.

Combating these challenges requires a three-pronged approach of ensuring the LHP reaches all children, especially the most hard-to-reach girls, addressing existing challenges and mitigatinge the intensified risks engendered by the COVID-19 pandemic and insurgency. This involves adopting a multi-stakeholder approach with state and non-state actors involved in planning and monitoring from the state to the community level. The deployment strategy should also involve a strong concentration on awareness raising and sensitization in communities. In addition, providing adequate complementary interventions to ensure the effective use of the LHP and the return of girls to school after resumption is core.

This will entail coordination, cooperation and coherence with MDAs focused on security, social protection, healthcare and others, depending on the contextual needs of communities and states. Also, adopting some of the virtual learning tools created during the pandemic to ensure continuous learning for children, particularly girls in unsafe situations will further contribute to improving education in emergencies.

Ultimately, ensuring all children, particularly girls in emergencies are in school and learning requires understanding the resources and opportunities available to mitigate the peculiar challenges they face. The present context in the North East depicts multiple sets of emergencies in the categories of conflict, harmful deep-seated social norms as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. Improving access to quality virtual and face-to-face education when schools resume will require using a gender-responsive approach with constant reviews based on the feedback on effectiveness through beneficiaries, the government and other stakeholders. The education of every girl and boy is relevant to sustainable development, therefore, it is important for all key actors to effectively play their role in ensuring that every girl and boy, including those living in emergencies are in school and learning.

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