

# **Girls' Education in Nigeria**

**REPORT 2014:**

**ISSUES, INFLUENCERS AND ACTIONS**



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## **Acronyms**

CRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
DFID	UK Department for International Development
EFA	Education For All
FME	Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HDI	Human development Index
LGEA	Local Government Education Authority
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NDHS	Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey
NEDS	Nigeria Education Data Survey
NPC	National Population Commission, Nigeria
SBMC	School-Based Management Committee
SUBEB	State Universal Basic Education Board
UBEC	Universal Basic Education Commission
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNESCO	UN Education Social and Cultural Organisation
WIDE	World Inequality Database on Education

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Why does girls' education matter in Nigeria?

**Girls' education is a human right. It is also our responsibility. Educating girls contributes significantly to the development of a stable, prosperous and healthy nation state whose citizens are active, productive and empowered. Yet data indicate that in Nigeria:**

- Over 5.5 million girls are out-of-school (UNESCO, 2014)
- 40% women and 28% men have never attended school (NPC, 2009)
- Nearly two-thirds of women in the North West and North East regions have no education, compared to less than 15% in the South South (ibid.)
- The Net Enrolment Rate at primary school level is 56% for girls and 61% for boys (UNESCO, 2014)
- Drop-out rates are highest at the sixth grade of primary school and higher among girls than boys (NPC, 2009).

Educated women are less likely to die in childbirth and more likely to have healthy and well-nourished children than their non-educated counterparts. We know this. A child born to a literate mother is 50% more likely to survive past the age of five. In Nigeria 66% mothers with secondary education give birth in a health facility compared to 11% with no education (British Council, 2012).

The children of educated women are more likely to go to school. Girls' education spurs exponential positive effects on social and economic development for generations to come. One extra year of schooling increases lifetime earnings by up to an estimated 10%.

Girls' education is good economics. It is the best investment in a country's national development. We know this. Educating girls enhances growth rates and reduces social disparities. Women with higher educational qualifications are more likely to be in formal wage employment than those with only primary schooling (NPC, 2009).

Yet girls and women suffer educational exclusion across Nigeria. Nigeria's out-of-school population is the largest in the world and it is growing. Of the staggering 10.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria today, the majority are girls. Girls from the poorest families in rural areas of the North West and North East regions are among the most at risk of never attending school. Now is the time to deliver on the Federal Ministry of Education's mission of education to foster the 'development of all Nigerian citizens to their full potential'.

## **1.2 Design and Scope of the Report**

This report is a compilation of two literature reviews commissioned by the British Council Nigeria in 2013 to:

- (i) identify and collate significant and influential reports, statistics and interventions on gender parity in Basic Education in Nigeria
- (ii) identify decisions, decision-makers and influencers of girls' education at school, community and local levels in Nigeria.

The reviews are based on an appraisal of published and unpublished academic and grey literature on girls' schooling in Nigeria, including official statistics. To identify decision-makers and influencers, the researchers also conducted a survey of 600 men and women across six states (details in Chapter 6). The work focuses on girls' enrolment and access to primary and junior secondary schooling in Northern Nigeria.

The preliminary literature reviews were completed by a team led by Professor Paul Izah of the Institute of Development Research at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The IDR reviews were compiled, edited and furnished with supplementary data by an independent consultant, Louise Wetheridge into the present report. This report gathers together what we know about girls' basic education in Northern Nigeria with the aim of generating productive, evidence-based discussion, collaborations and targeted action to deliver on the promise of education for all.

## **1.3 Structure of the Report**

The report is divided into seven chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 provide an overview of the report and the global situation of girls' education. These preliminary chapters summarise some key trends and issues related to girls' education, including socio-economic and regional disparities in school participation and literacy. Chapter 2 underpins why a focus on girls has emerged in education and development discourse and why this matters for national development and human rights.

Chapter 3 delves into the specific context of Nigeria and the status of the provision of basic education. It discusses legal and policy provisions for education, as well as trends in financing for basic education. This chapter provides up-to-date statistics for the sector, including enrolment rates, pupil: teacher ratios and youth literacy rates, disaggregated where possible by sex and region.

Chapter 4 takes up the problem of girls' schooling in Northern Nigeria with an in-depth analysis of data, barriers and opportunities, including strategies adopted by significant service providers and agencies in an attempt to improve girls' access to, participation and retention in basic education.

Chapter 5 describes six purposively selected case studies from diverse countries and organisations that demonstrate different approaches to enhancing girls' basic education in terms of access and quality. The intention is to generate discussion and ideas on what works to secure basic education for all girls. The examples range from a school feeding programme in Pakistan to a human-rights based approach to challenging traditional practices in West Africa.

Chapter 6 outlines the results of a pilot survey conducted in six Northern states to investigate the key decision-makers and influential persons and organisations related to girls' education. It outlines

the apparent significance of fathers, religious leaders, community clubs and social spaces, and the radio in generating and dissemination information and decisions on social and community issues.

Chapter 7 rounds up the discussion with some key reflections and recommendations to take this report on girls' education in Northern Nigeria further.

#### **1.4 A note on education data in Nigeria**

Access to reliable and complete information on education in Nigeria has for a long time proved difficult. The development of a national database for education statistics has been slow and various data generating agencies (including the Federal Ministry of Education, Universal Basic Education Commission, National Population Commission and National Bureau of Statistics) often used different sample designs, methods of data collection, analysis and reporting, different modes of disaggregation and definitions of indicators. The absence of rudimentary data at school and local level in many areas is often viewed as a crisis, inhibiting the development of effective education planning, monitoring, programming and policy-making.

This situation has improved in recent years thanks to renewed political will from the federal and state governments and non-state supporters. This report compiles data on girls' education from several recent national and international sources.

The Federal Ministry of Education published the Nigeria Digest of Education Statistics 2006-2010. This document offers a wide-ranging summary of national education data including sex-disaggregated information on enrolment and completion at basic education levels. The Nigeria Education Data Survey (NEDS) 2010 provides data for over 70,000 children aged 4-16 years nationwide enabling an analysis of the status of schooling including enrolment, drop-out and attitudes to education. NEDS was linked to the 2008 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, which includes questions on educational attainment and literacy for all women aged 15-49. NEDS II (2014) is currently being produced. In addition, the annual UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Reports provides one of the most reliable sources of current information on education globally, including Nigeria.

If Nigeria is committed to achieving education for all, it is imperative that its education statistics are reliable, accessible and consistent. The institutions responsible for the collection, storage and analysis of education data at all levels, from schools to federal government, need to be equipped with the skills and technology to generate robust, up-to-date data. To promote girls' access to quality basic schooling, these data must be accurately and appropriately disaggregated to support efforts towards gender equality in education in Nigeria.

## 2. Girls' Education Worldwide

### 2.1 Global frameworks galvanising change

**Two international commitments made in the year 2000 are major drivers for education worldwide: the Education For All (EFA) Framework for Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Of the eight MDGs, Goal 2 aims for universal primary education and Goal 3 is to eliminate gender disparities in education.**

The specific targets of MDGs 2 and 3 are to:

- Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling;
- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

Tracking these targets has involved detailed national and international analyses of education databases and programme outcomes, specifically with a view to sex disaggregated net and gross enrolment and literacy rates.

The 2000 Dakar Framework for Action complements and adds to these MDGs by specifying more detailed goals and objectives, mobilising political will and collectively committing to education for all. The goals are specific on the need to target girls, ethnic minorities and those in difficult circumstances in the attainment of free and compulsory primary education of good quality, and the progressive achievement of gender parity and gender equality in education.

#### Box 1: The Education For All Goals

<b>Goal 1</b>	Expand early childhood care and education
<b>Goal 2</b>	Provide free and compulsory primary education of good quality for all
<b>Goal 3</b>	Promote learning and life skills for young people and adults
<b>Goal 4</b>	Increase adult literacy and equitable access to basic and continuing learning for all adults
<b>Goal 5</b>	Achieve gender equality in education
<b>Goal 6</b>	Improve the quality of education

The EFA Dakar Framework for Action embraces the language of human rights and echoes earlier commitments to UN conventions that espouse education for all: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Article 26 of the UDHR states that 'everyone has the right to education'. On the basis of non-discrimination the Convention on the Rights of the Child elaborates that: 'all children have the right to a primary education, which should be free'. In addition, 'education should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest' (Articles 28 and 29). The right of everyone to education has been reaffirmed by several different UN conventions over time.



African regional consensus was gathered for the development and affirmation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999). This Charter recognises the specific socio-cultural and economic realities of African contexts. Importantly, it challenges traditional views that might conflict with children's rights; it promotes affirmative action for girls' education; and it grants girls the right to return to school after pregnancy. 47 States of the African Union have ratified this treaty, including Nigeria. Thus, at global and regional levels, frameworks and agreements exist and have been adopted to achieve education for all.

## **2.2 The challenges of Education For All**

Despite repeated commitments, the approval of international and regional conventions for education for all, and a multitude of programmes and projects to ensure access to quality primary and secondary schooling for all children, in 2014 there are a staggering 57 million children out of school worldwide, many of whom are expected never to go to school.

Girls' and boys' enrolment in primary schooling has increased markedly worldwide since the start of the millennium, from 84% in 1999 to 91% in 2011. The number of out-of-school children has almost halved. Enrolment increases have been most pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa (+19%) and South and West Asia (+16%). Many countries have achieved even greater increases. By 2011, 60% countries had achieved gender parity in primary education with a further 10% expected to reach parity by 2015 (UNESCO, 2014). These improvements are thanks to a global impetus and much national political will to achieve universal primary education, notably through the abolition of school fees, a commitment enshrined in the MDGs and EFA.

However, progress towards UPE and quality basic education for all is highly uneven across regions and nations and within countries. Despite substantial enrolment increases, 22% of Sub-Saharan Africa's school-age population are not in school (UNESCO, 2014). It has become clear that most children who remain out of school are in the hardest to reach sections of populations, the poorest and most marginalised. These children commonly include girls, nomadic and pastoral children, children with disabilities, street children, orphans and vulnerable children.

The expansion of free primary schooling and subsequent rapid increase in enrolment has created enormous demands on education systems and significant challenges in ensuring good quality schooling and learning outcomes. Resources are stretched. The number of schools, essential infrastructure, textbooks, teachers and financial resources have inadequately catered for this growth. An additional 1.6 million teachers are needed globally to achieve universal primary education by 2015 (UNESCO, 2014).

While progress in gender parity at the primary level is laudable, it is only one step towards education for all. The achievement of gender equality, a goal of EFA, demands a school environment that is safe and secure, child-friendly, free from all discrimination and that provides equal opportunities for all boys and girls to realise their potential. It involves taking a holistic view of education that acknowledges the role of schools and communities, including parents, traditional and religious leaders, teachers and school managers, in creating learning environments on the basis of equality. This means, for example, addressing the root causes of boys' and girls' premature drop-out from school and poor learning outcomes.

Even if they attend school, millions of children are not learning fundamental life skills. 130 million children in school are unable to read, write or do basic mathematics (UNESCO, 2014). Lower secondary schooling consolidates foundational skills including literacy and numeracy. Yet by 2011 only one third of countries with data had attained universal lower secondary education. Poor quality education significantly affects children's learning and perpetuates illiteracy. The number of illiterate adults worldwide has fallen by just 1% since 2000 to 774 million. In Sub-Saharan Africa the youth (15-24 year olds) literacy rate is 70%.

The Human Development Index (HDI) rankings, which are a composite measure of income, life expectancy and literacy, help to understand the broader national contexts within which educational disparities persist. Countries with a low HDI ranking often have significant disparities in education. Nigeria's HDI ranking, for example, is 153 out of 186 countries, placed between the United Republic of Tanzania (rank 152) and Senegal (rank 154). This ranking indicates that Nigeria is among the most unequal countries in the world. This is echoed in education data on access and participation at all levels of schooling (Chapter 3). Nigeria remains the country with by far the highest population of out-of-school children in the world. Recognising Nigeria's socio-economic and political status and systems facilitates an understanding of the salience of wider national contexts in efforts towards education for all.

### **2.3 Why focus on girls?**

More girls are enrolled in primary school today than ever before. Yet the majority of children still out of school are girls. Of the 31 million girls out of school in 2011, 55% are expected never to enrol.

In eleven Sub-Saharan African countries 50% or more young people aged 15-24 have fewer than four years' education. In Nigeria, double the number of women to men have less than four years' education - 30% compared to 14% (WIDE). The global community aimed to achieve gender parity - an equal ratio of boys to girls - in primary schools by 2005; nine years on and only 60% countries have attained this target.

Women account for almost two-thirds of the world's 774 million illiterate adults and there has been no change in reducing this share since 1990 (UNESCO, 2014). The gender parity index for the youth literacy rate in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2011 was 0.84 – a significant disparity in youth literacy.

The gender gaps in literacy rates reflect historic and ongoing gaps in enrolment and completion of basic education. Girls have a high risk of dropping out of primary school and overall they are less likely than boys to make the transition to secondary schooling and complete lower secondary education. Poverty, gender norms and traditional practices, including early marriage, increase the risk of premature school dropout.

Gender disparities in education are compounded by additional deep-rooted forms of inequality based on wealth, ethnicity, residence and disability. Wealth disparities are striking in many countries. Children from the poorest households are much less likely to ever enrol in school. Living in a rural area where long distances to school are compounded by poverty and traditional practices increases the risk. UNESCO suggests that in 'Sub-Saharan Africa, if recent trends continue, the richest boys will achieve universal primary completion in 2021, but the poorest girls will not catch up until 2086' (UNESCO, 2014).

Progress enrolling more girls into primary schools and keeping them there has waned in the last five years. Data shows that renewed efforts are urgently needed. We know that educating girls is good for development; girls' education encourages economic growth, contributes to stable and secure communities, reduces maternal and child mortality, reduces fertility rates, raises schooling levels for the next generation and meets human rights standards. We still have far to go to meet the needs of all girls to a basic education.

The following chapter outlines some of the moves that the Government of Nigeria has made towards the provision of education for all, including girls, and how this has affected trends in access and participation in schooling.

### 3. Basic Education in Nigeria

#### 3.1 Legislation and policy

**Universal Basic Education in Nigeria was initiated by the 1999 Constitution, which establishes six years of free primary schooling and three years of free junior secondary schooling on the basis of non-discrimination. The Nigerian Government recognises basic education as the foundation for economic and social development.**

UBE stalled for five years because of the absence of enabling legislation but in 2004 the Universal Basic Education Act reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing nine years' free and compulsory primary and junior secondary schooling for all children aged 6-15 years. In addition to nine years' formal schooling, the Act stipulates adult literacy and non-formal education, skills acquisition programmes and the education of special groups including nomads and migrants, street children, and children with disabilities. All 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) have domesticated the UBE Act.

The Child Rights Act was passed at Federal level in 2003. This Act further enshrines the rights of all children to free and compulsory primary education and to freedom from discrimination, among other rights. The law has differing levels of acceptance and integration among Nigerian states. By 2011, 24 States had domesticated the Child Rights Act.

Two national policies complement the UBE Act and the Child Rights Act: the National Policy on Education (launched in 1977; last updated in 2012) and the National Gender Policy (2006). The National Gender Policy harmonises with international consensus on women's empowerment and gender equality and contains a key focus on promoting the empowerment of women and integrating gender within key sectors including Education and Training.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) Programme integrates Qur'anic education schools into the mainstream of formal primary education. Many Muslim parents view Qur'anic schooling as essential for children's moral development. In Northern Nigeria, Islamic, Tsangaya and Qur'anic educational institutions complement public secular provision and account for up to four-fifths of all schools in some states (ESSPIN, n.d). It is estimated that over 9 million boys and girls attend Qur'anic schools either as their only school experience or in addition to secular schooling.

Islamiyya schools combine Qur'anic and secular education, including mathematics, science and English, into a state-approved curriculum. Around two-thirds of Islamiyya pupils are girls and as such these schools have been a major vehicle for girls' education in Northern states.

Over 3 million school-age children are estimated to be among the nomadic populations of Nigeria. The 1986 Nomadic Education Programme first set about to provide primary education to children of nomadic pastoral families. Latterly, the 2004 UBE scheme includes targets to meet the educational needs of these children through the National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE). NCNE aims to provide all nomadic populations in Nigeria, pastoralists, migrant fisher folk and farmers alike, with relevant and functional basic education. This mandate includes establishing, managing and maintaining primary schools in settlements and grazing reserves and dispersing grants, funds and aid. NCNE places a high premium on basic functional education, notably literacy, numeracy and life skills, particularly for women and girls.

### **3.2 Governance and implementation**

All three tiers of the state (federal, State and local government) play an important role in the provision of education. The Federal government is primarily responsible for regulation, quality control and policy formation and it is most directly engaged at the tertiary level. States take responsibility for the provision of quality secondary education, while local governments are responsible for primary schools.

All the tiers are currently operating under the Federal Ministry of Education's Strategic Plan for the Development of the Education Sector 2011-2015. This Plan has two strategic goals – access and quality – and four key implementation areas:

- (i) strengthening the institutional management of education;
- (ii) teacher education and development;
- (iii) technical and vocational education and training;
- (iv) funding, partnerships, resource mobilisation and utilisation.

The UBE Act provided for the establishment of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) to coordinate the delivery of basic education at State and local government levels through the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) and the Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs). However, while primary education is intended by the UBE Act and the Constitution to be the responsibility of LGEAs, in reality the autonomy of LGEAs and the delineation of the relative roles of State and local government authorities for primary education may be opaque and often varies. LGEAs report to SUBEB and, in practice, may defer to the SUBEB for many critical decision-making on education at all levels. While key strategies, policies and core funding come from federal level, the States have considerable autonomy for policy and financing. The Education Commissioner at State level, appointed by the State Governor, is head of the State Ministry of Education. The States play a strong role in the delivery of primary and secondary education.

A weakness of the existing governance structure for basic education is the number of overlapping functions that may be conflicting or contradictory with limited coordination of many activities. It is a challenge to provide quality basic education for the estimated 45% of the population who are under 15 years of age - a challenge that demands adequate financing and resource management.

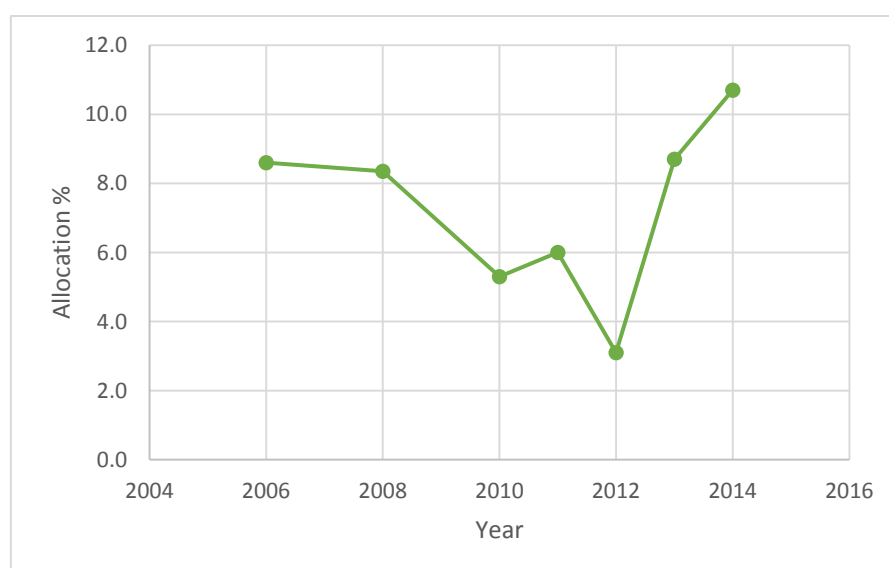
### **3.3 Financing Basic Education**

The EFA Dakar Framework for Action (2000) recommended that 20% of national budgets, or 5% GDP, should be allocated to education. Allocations by the Government of Nigeria have not met this expectation: the Federal Ministry of Education budget share declined overall from 8.6% of the national budget in 2006 to 5.3% in 2010 and 3.1% in 2012 (ActionAid, 2012). A fluctuation in 2011 to 6.0% represented only 1.5% GDP to education (Figure 1). However, in 2013 the education sector was prioritised and allotted the highest proportion of the national budget at 8.7%. The Government's 2014 budget proposal is to allocate 10.7%, which would represent a commendable and consistent increase on former years.

The allocations cover recurrent and capital expenditure on institutions, administration and subsidies with an almost equal share apportioned across the sector between primary (32%), secondary (31%) and tertiary (30%) schools. This implies that much more is spent per capita on tertiary education

than primary because nearly half of all enrolments are at primary. Construction and the rehabilitation of infrastructure absorb significant portions of budgets across all levels.

**Figure 1: Budget allocations to Education**



Despite increased allocations in the last two years, there remains a chronic lack of adequate financing to education. Only half, or less, of the recommended 20% national budget is allocated to the education sector. It is very difficult to track the actual utilisation of allocated resources from Federal to States and LGEAs, including for basic inputs such as textbooks and buildings maintenance. The complete picture of public expenditure on education is unclear but is certainly inadequate at the classroom level in many communities. Coupled with a complex financing structure and system, the education sector faces many challenges.

The Universal Basic Education Commission requires counterpart funding of the federal allocation by the State governments. This has led to many SUBEBs not accessing their assigned funding from UBEC because they have not adequately budgeted for the counterpart component, meaning that many State governments are not taking full 'advantage of Federal Government educational intervention funding because they are unable or unwilling to give counterpart funds required under the 2004 UBE Act' (ActionAid, 2012). This implies that significant finances allocated to basic education are left untouched for periods of time. It is critically important that SUBEBs budget for this counterpart funding in order that they access federal funds timely and consistently.

While public sector provision dominates basic education investment, non-state providers including the private sector and religious institutions also contribute. The Nigeria General Household Survey 2010 estimated that 51% students nationally attend state schools, 18.5% attended private schools, 16.5% were in local government schools and 5% were schooled by religious institutions (British Council, 2012).

### 3.4 Trends in access and quality

The education sector is characterised by a wide range of challenges in the provision of equitable access, quality and management. While the total number of children enrolled in primary schools nationwide has increased from 17.9 million in 1999 to 20.7 million in 2011 (UNESCO, 2014) data reveal wide disparities in enrolment, retention, completion and literacy rates by gender, region, residence, ethnicity and wealth.

The latest national education statistics from 2011 present a Primary Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of 85% and a Primary Net Enrolment Rate (NER) of 59% (Table 1). The higher GER figure indicates that a significant number of pupils outside of the primary age group (6-11 years) are enrolled in primary school. Primary enrolment figures have fluctuated only marginally in Nigeria in the recent past. After peaking in 2006, when the GER was 96% and NER 63%, they have remained static or in decline.

**Table 1: Enrolment at Primary and Junior Secondary school**

Indicator	2011 %
GER Primary Female	79
GER Primary Male	87
GER Primary Total	83
GPI GER Primary	0.91
NER Primary Female	55
NER Primary Male	60
NER Primary Total	58
GPI NER Primary	0.91
GER Junior Secondary Female	44
GER Junior Secondary Male	49
GER Junior Secondary Total	47
GPI GER Junior Secondary	0.89

*UNESCO, 2014*

The Gender Parity Index (GPI), the ratio of girls to boys at each level of education, consistently shows fewer girls than boys enrolled in school. Indeed, the majority of out-of-school children are girls. The GPI of the gross enrolment rate declines between primary and junior secondary school.

Gender disparities in access to basic education are compounded by regional disparities. 14% more girls of primary school age are enrolled in the South West compared to the North West region. In all southern regions there is gender parity or over-parity in net enrolments, while a little over two-thirds the number of girls to boys are enrolled in the North West and North East (Table 2). Note that Table 2 is an imperfect measure of enrolment by region as it shows total net enrolments (millions) and not Net Enrolment Rates, which would account for the corresponding school-age population.

**Table 2: Primary Net Enrolment by region**

Region	Total net enrolments (millions)	GPI net enrolment
North West	5.72	0.71
North East	2.78	0.75
North Central	3.09	0.89
South-South	2.08	1.01
South East	1.83	1.00
South West	2.53	1.03
Total	18.03	0.90

*UBEC, 2010*

The number of children out-of-school in Nigeria grew by 42% between 1999 and 2010 (UNESCO, 2014). Rural residence exacerbates regional disparities in enrolment. Three times more primary school age children out of school live in rural areas compared to urban areas (36% compared to 12%). Ten times more children and adolescents of primary or junior secondary school age are out of school in the North East and North West compared to regions of the South (Table 3). Girls living in rural areas in Northern states are among the least likely to ever attend school.

**Table 3: Out-of-school children and adolescents**

	Male	Female	NE	NW	NC	SS	SE	SW	Rural	Urban
Out of School children (%)	26	32	53	52	22	5	5	7	36	12
Out of school adolescents (%)	25	32	54	53	21	6	4	9	36	12

*World Inequality Database on Education, Nigeria, 2011*

The importance of staying in school until the end of basic education is marked by the receipt of the Junior Secondary School Certificate at the completion of junior secondary school. However, completion and transition rates are highly disparate. Even if they are enrolled, girls are slightly less likely than boys to complete primary school: 65% of the primary cohort completed primary school in the year ending 2010, of whom 66% were boys and 64% girls (UNESCO, 2014). While 92% children in urban areas have completed primary school, only 67% of those in rural areas have done so (WIDE, 2011). By region the disparities are also stark: for example, 30% of children in Bauchi State in the North East have completed primary school compared to 92% in Abia in the South East. All states with below average primary school completion rates are in Northern Nigeria (WIDE, 2011). The mean number of years of education received has increased by around just 1.5 years since 1999.

With increases in actual pupil enrolments since 1999, the demand for additional trained teachers, classrooms, books and basic infrastructure has been heavy. Indicators of education quality indicate that, despite some commendable improvements and ongoing progress, in many locations across Nigeria resource demands have not been met.

In 2010, there were an estimated 574,000 teaching staff at the primary level and 274,000 at secondary level (UNESCO, 2014). The pupil: teacher ratio at primary level improved slightly in the past five years for which there is data from 37:1 in 2006 to 36:1 in 2011. The proportion of trained teachers in the system has also increased over time. In 2011, 66% all teachers in primary schools



were trained (of whom 61% are male and 72% are female) compared to 50% in 2006 (of whom 39% were male and 60% were female), an increase of 16% in five years (UNESCO, 2014). These trends are very much in the right direction towards the provision of quality schooling.

However, pupil: teacher ratios vary considerably by region, level of education and between urban and rural areas. UBEC has reported regional disparities in pupil: qualified teacher ratios at primary and JSS schools for 2010 (Table 4). Note that by presenting the number of pupils per *qualified* teacher these ratios provide a more specific measure of minimum quality standards.

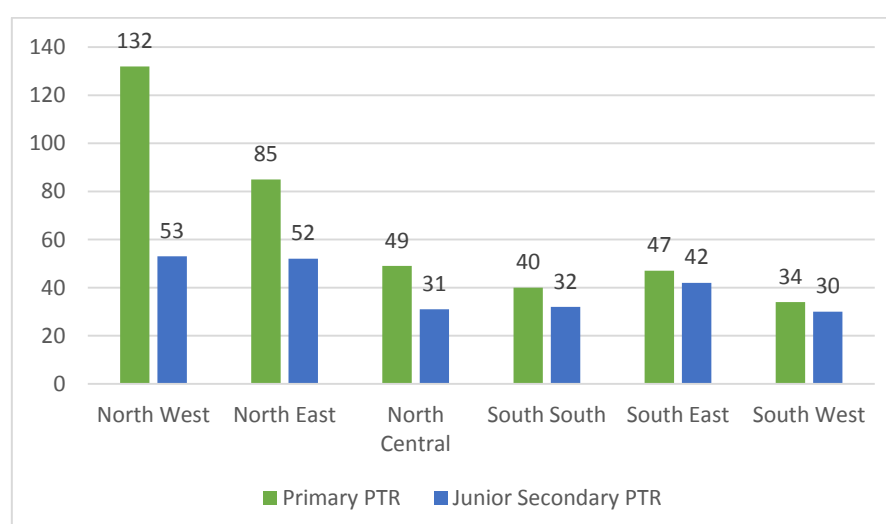
**Table 4: Pupil: Qualified Teacher ratios**

	Primary PQTR	Junior Secondary PQTR
North West	132: 1	53: 1
North East	85: 1	52: 1
North Central	49: 1	31: 1
South South	40: 1	32: 1
South East	47: 1	42: 1
South West	34: 1	30: 1

UBEC, 2010

Table 4 shows marked variation between the highest ratios in the North West, where the pupil: qualified teacher ratio at primary schools is a staggering 132: 1, compared to the South West which has the lowest ratio for primary and JSS of 34: 1 and 30: 1. These data are graphically presented in Figure 2. In some rural areas of Northern Nigeria ratios exceed 100:1. Ratios in excess of 40:1 in primary schools are considered a measure of poor quality education. It is clear that Nigeria needs many more trained and qualified teachers to improve upon this measure of quality teaching and learning. Teacher education and development has been a key goal of the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan for the Development of the Education Sector (Chapter 3).

**Figure 2: Pupil: Qualified Teacher ratios by region**



The UBEC report (2010) also notes that the ratio of pupils to 'good' classrooms is grossly inadequate across Nigeria. In it not uncommon in some locations to see pupils learning outside because of a lack

of classrooms. The average pupil: classroom ratio at primary level is 49: 1 and at JSS is 62: 1. However, for classrooms classified as in 'good' condition by UBEC, for whom the expected ratio would be 35:1 at both levels, the actual situation is much worse (Table 5). In primary schools the ratio is over one third higher in the North East and North West than the South West, and three times higher than the UBEC standard. At JSS level the reverse is true, with higher pupil: good classroom ratios in Southern compared to Northern states. This may reflect lower primary completion and JSS enrolment rates in the North compared to the South, thus fewer pupils in the available classrooms in Northern states, and/or population pressures on education resources, especially in urban areas of Southern Nigeria.

**Table 5: Pupil: good classroom ratio by region**

	Primary	Junior Secondary
North West	131: 1	114: 1
North East	136: 1	108: 1
North Central	96: 1	105: 1
South South	97: 1	166: 1
South East	98: 1	136: 1
South West	85: 1	136: 1

*UBEC, 2010*

Entrenched regional and gender disparities in access and participation in basic education are reflected up the education system in adult and youth literacy rates. Fighting illiteracy is a key element of the 2004 UBE Act. There are stark differences in literacy between men and women, the rich and the poor and urban and rural residence. Among adults aged 15-49, urban women are nearly twice as likely to be literate as rural women (77% compared to 41%). 87% of the poorest adult women are illiterate compared to just 8% of the wealthiest adult women (NPC, 2009).

Youth literacy rates describe the proportion of the population of young men and women (aged 15-24 years) who can read and write. These rates can be associated with the level of functional reading and writing learned during formal schooling. In 2008, nearly 10 million young people were illiterate across Nigeria. The youth literacy rate was 66%, of which 58% of females and 72% males were literate (GPI 0.77). Data show even greater variation in young men and women's literacy by region (Table 6).

**Table 6: Youth Literacy Rates by Region**

Region	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
North West	73.8	46.0	60.3
North East	72.2	54.9	63.8
North Central	87.4	73.6	80.8
South South	93.3	92.9	93.1
South West	95.2	94.2	94.8
South East	96.3	91.2	95.8

*National Bureau of Statistics, 2010*

Within all regions, there are more literate men than women. Literacy rates are over 10% higher in Southern compared to Northern zones. Some comparisons are plain: 50% more young men in the South East are literate than young women in the North West (96% compared to 46%). These data resound with trends shown across Tables 2 – 4, which evidence a sharp regional and gendered divide between Northern and Southern Nigeria in access and participation in quality basic education.

The provision of nomadic education under the UBE Act has also grown. Between 1990 and 2010:

- The number of nomadic schools increased from 329 to 3,060;
  - Teacher numbers increased from 873 to 13,849 of whom 43% were female;
  - Total pupil enrolment increased from 19,769 to 484,694 with girls comprising 45% of those enrolled in 2010
- (Muhammed & Yamta, 2010).

These data point towards significant growth in the education sector in the last two decades as a result of increased demand for provision following the Universal Basic Education Act in 2004 and increased recognition of the role and function of education for Nigeria's social and economic development. As the sector has grown, so disparities in provision have developed. There are wide discrepancies in access to and participation in primary and junior secondary schooling by sex, region and residence, as well as other socio-economic factors. One third of children do not enrol at school at the right age and many never enrol. Girls in Northern states are among the most disadvantaged in the education system.

The next chapter will explore where, how and why girls experience discrimination and disadvantage in the basic education system in Nigeria and what strategies have been adopted by the Government, aid agencies and civil society to address the needs and rights of all girls to quality schooling.

## 4. Girls' Education in Northern Nigeria

### 4.1 Situational analysis

**One third of all girls are out-of-school in Nigeria, amounting to over 5.5 million school-age girls not in school. Net Enrolment Rates for girls at primary level are 5% lower than for boys; gross enrolments at junior secondary school level follow this trend. Both figures hover around 50%. This falls far short of the targets of Education For All and the MDGs.**

Data reveal very little progress in universal access to primary schooling in the last decade. In fact, Nigeria is one of a handful of countries far from that target with slow progress to date. Gender disparities in access to basic education are compounded by interrelated regional, wealth and residence inequalities in access and completion.

Girls are less likely to attend primary school than boys, on average. In the academic year 2009-2010, among a representative sample of households, 58% girls attended primary school compared to 64% boys aged 4-16 years. The Net Attendance Rate (NAR) is the percentage of children who attend school compared to the total population of school-age children. A NAR of 100 percent would indicate that all children of the official school age are attending school at that time. Table 7 shows that even among the wealthiest girls in Southern Nigeria, attendance was below 100% in the academic year 2009-2010. Only one third of girls in the North West attended primary school at all. Attendance among the poorest girls is less than one third of attendance among the wealthiest.

**Table 7: Girls' Net Attendance Rates**

Residence	NAR (%)
Rural	52.2
Urban	73.0
Region	
North West	35.5
North East	38.0
North Central	65.2
South South	79.9
South East	80.0
South West	78.0
Wealth	
Poorest	26.7
Middle	68.1
Wealthiest	81.0

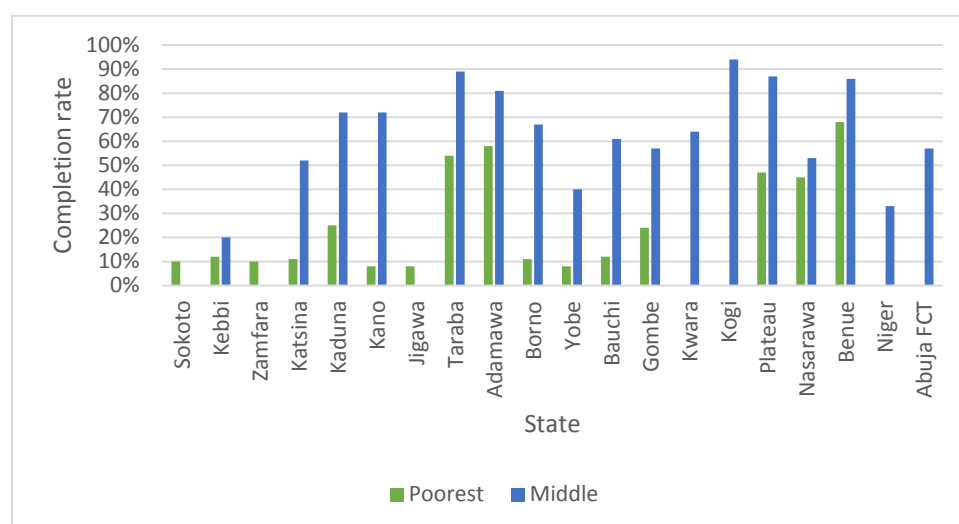
*National Population Commission, 2011*

Dropping out of school early is a significant issue among girls. 12% girls compared to 10% boys will drop out of primary school in the last class, class 6, before completion. Of the girls who drop out, the majority live in rural areas and in the North East or North West regions (NPC, 2009). 70% young women (age 15-24) in the North West have not completed primary school (UNESCO, 2014).

Gender, region and residence disparities in primary education data are deeply interwoven with levels of household poverty. In general, as household wealth increases, girls' level of education

improves. On average 31% girls from the poorest households across Northern Nigeria complete primary school; this figure doubles to 62.5% for girls in middle-income households across the same area. Only 8% of the poorest girls in Kano state in the North West complete primary school compared to 72% girls in middle-income households; in Bauchi state in the North East these figures are 12% compared to 61% respectively (WIDE, 2011). Increases in household finances clearly contributes to raising educational levels for girls (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Girls' primary completion rate in Northern states by household wealth**



Many girls fail to make the transition to junior secondary school for a range of educational, economic and socio-cultural reasons. An over-age start to school, the onset of puberty or increased costs of secondary education may all put an early end to girls' education. Girls' low levels of transition and retention in junior secondary schools is becoming an increasing concern because it implies that girls will continue to fail to acquire fundamental life skills, including literacy and numeracy.

**Table 8: Girls' literacy**

Variable		% literate
Education	No education	7.1
	Primary	54.3
	Secondary +	95.3
Residence	Rural	34.5
	Urban	69.4
Region	North West	24.0
	North East	15.4
	North Central	40.0
	South South	70.4

	South East	69.6
	South West	79.9
<b>Wealth</b>	Poorest	13.0
	Middle	46.4
	Wealthiest	83.5

*NEDS, 2010*

Literacy trends among girls aged 5-16 show that female literacy – the proportion of girls who can read all or part of a sentence - increases with level of education and alters drastically by region and wealth. Table 8 shows that literacy increases by up to 40% between primary and secondary or higher levels of education. This reiterates the importance of secondary schooling for girls. Girls' literacy rates are more than five times lower in the North East compared to the South West, with all Southern regions having significantly higher rates than Northern regions. These trends are similar by all variables for girls' basic numeracy skills. Literacy and numeracy are key skills for increasing lifetime earnings and improving family health.

#### **4.2 Barriers to girls' schooling**

Why do girls in Northern Nigeria enrol and stay in school less than their southern counterparts? There are many obstacles, within and beyond schools, to girls' participation in a full cycle of basic education. Distance to school and perceptions of school security may hinder parents from encouraging their daughter to attend school. Many families cannot afford the costs of schooling, for uniforms or books. Other families prefer to send their children to Qur'anic schools or to keep them at home to help with domestic work or generate additional income.

Obstacles to girls' education can be constructed as 'supply' and 'demand' barriers. Supply barriers refer to problems and inequalities within the education system and institutions, which push children away from school. Demand side barriers pertain to challenges experienced by parents and communities in sending their children to school, which work to pull children away from education. In the context of Northern Nigeria, three dominant categories of supply and demand side barriers prevent or shorten girls' schooling: (i) educational barriers; (ii) socio-economic barriers; (iii) traditional / socio-cultural barriers (Box 2).

**Box 2: Barriers to girls' education in Northern Nigeria**

<b>Educational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessibility</li><li>• Infrastructure</li><li>• Safety and security</li><li>• Teaching and learning</li></ul>
<b>Socio-economic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School fees and costs</li><li>• Poverty</li><li>• Child work</li><li>• Employment</li></ul>
<b>Traditional / Socio-cultural</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gender norms and stereotypes</li><li>• Early marriage</li><li>• Early pregnancy</li><li>• Religion</li></ul>

**i. Educational barriers**

The accessibility of schools can be a significant hindrance to girls' enrolment and retention in school. In rural areas girls' may have to walk considerable distances to reach the nearest school. In recent research (Chapter 6), 14% girls' surveyed walked over six kilometres to school every day, taking them over an hour each way. The majority of girls (61%) walked between 1 to 3 kilometres. Results of a baseline survey conducted in 2008 in Northern states (TEGINT, 2011) revealed that 21% girls viewed distance to school as a major obstacle that would prevent them from achieving their desired level of education.

For girls in the most marginalised communities and nomadic girls, journeys to school may be even greater and create a considerable barrier to enrolment. For all parents confronted with such significant distances, the opportunity cost of sending children to school increases. Associated factors, including the perceived safety of the journey to school and restrictions on women's mobility, may compound this as a factor in girls' non-participation.

For girls who do attend school, many experience dark, poorly ventilated classrooms with dirty floors, broken chairs and inadequate desks. Inappropriate and unacceptable toilet facilities put girls at a particular disadvantage. Many schools do not have separate latrines for boys and girls and lack water and sanitation facilities. Evidence from interventions such as the Girls' Education Project suggest that girls attendance rates can rise by as much as 30% when water and sanitation issues are addressed (British Council, 2012).

Bullying, harassment, corporal punishment and discrimination in and around schools have serious negative impacts on girls' education. Unequal gendered relations of power are a root cause of safety and security problems. Girls complain of sexual and psychological harassment and physical punishments, including caning, from male teachers and boys in school. Inadequate school infrastructure, such as a lack of school fences and remote, unsuitable toilets, can contribute to increasing the risk of violence for girls. Research by ActionAid emphasises that: "Corporal punishment is entrenched in school systems and was discussed most by girls in Nigeria. It is often connected to poverty, for example in response to non-payment of fees and lack of uniform or books, and parents and girls complained about this occurring but appeared powerless to stop it" (ActionAid, 2011).

In addition, informal and unwritten rules may govern relations between boys and girls in and around schools. Boys may reinforce girls' subordination through bullying and establishing 'no go' areas for girls (British Council, 2012). There seem to be a persistence of 'troubling silences' (ActionAid, 2011) on the levels and types of gender-based violence experienced by girls in and around schools. It seems plausible that many girls and schools under-report cases of violence, lacking the confidence and capacity to handle incidents. Views on what constitutes unacceptable violence also varies by context, making it more difficult for women and girls to speak out. The low level of reporting in some locations may also be associated with Islamic codes of behaviour and reflect gender dynamics in the wider community. However, the results of the Transforming Education for Girls project (Chapter 4) indicate that targeted interventions at school and community level to tackle gender-based violence can have significant positive outcomes (ActionAid, 2012).

Trained teachers, suitable and good quality teaching and learning processes, and a relevant curriculum are critical to ensuring girls' full participation in schooling and improving literacy. Teachers sleeping on duty, inappropriate punishments on children and a shortage of textbooks are examples commonly cited by girls of poor teaching and learning.

Despite an increase of 287,000 in the total number of teachers in primary and secondary schools between 1999 and 2009, less than half of the primary and secondary teaching staff are female (48% and 46% respectively). This perpetuates barriers to girls' enrolment and retention. Countries with a wide gender disparity in enrolment often lack women teachers. The proportion of women teachers in Nigeria has stayed the same at primary level since 1999, though it has increased at secondary level by 10% (UNESCO, 2014).

However, the proportion of female teachers in primary and junior secondary schools varies considerably by State and location. In some areas, especially rural and marginalised communities, there are very few female teachers in schools. Women teachers can reassure girls and act as positive role models and mentors for girls in school, facilitating girls' clubs (Box 6) and encouraging girls in their education and personal endeavours. Where there are few female teachers and/or a lack of female representation on SBMCs, critical decisions on the girls' schooling may be compromised. Research suggests that in schools where there are larger numbers of women teachers, there is more gender parity in attendance, progression and attainment (ActionAid, 2012).

Teachers must be supported by appropriate curriculum systems that recognise gender issues and the learning needs of girls. Marginalised groups, including girls and nomadic children, may be disenfranchised by curriculum that fails to promote inclusion or reinforce negative stereotypes. If women are not represented in the curriculum or are only presented in subservient or discriminatory roles, this can perpetuate discriminatory attitudes and behaviour in classrooms, schools and the wider community (UNESCO, 2014).

## ii. Socio-economic barriers

Despite the UBE policy for free basic education, evidence suggests that there are significant costs deterring parents and pushing children out of school. Many research studies have established the detrimental effects of charges on girls' attendance and progression. Net Attendance Rates for girls increase drastically as household wealth increases (Table 7) indicating a strong correlation between



school attendance and income. Recent research (Chapter 6) corroborates this association with 46% girls who had withdrawn from school indicating that they dropped out for economic reasons.

There are a wide range of formal and informal charges and levies at primary and junior secondary schools across Northern Nigeria. The amount and purpose of levies varies by school. These include cash or in-kind charges for registration, examinations, supporting the PTA, supplementing teacher salaries, infrastructure rehabilitation, and sports or club equipment.

These costs of schooling vary across Nigeria but can absorb as much as three quarters of household expenditure (NPC, 2011). An inability to pay may be punished by preventing pupils from sitting exams, sending pupils home, or girls missing classes to go and earn more money to stay in school (ActionAid, 2011).

While the costs of schooling may push children out of school, poverty and employment expectations simultaneously curb parents' demand for education, pulling children into various forms of work. With over 60% of Nigerians (almost 100 million people) living in poverty, on less than US\$1 per day, girls are often sent to work in markets or hawk wares on the street.

UNICEF (2004) estimated that 15 million children work full time in Nigeria, the majority of whom are girls out of school in Northern States. Most of these children work in very low paid jobs. Mothers may place girls in roles as domestic helpers, nannies to younger children or petty traders to bring additional income into the family home. Educated adult women in urban areas may employ young girls from rural areas as nannies or domestic workers while their own daughters stay in school. Among migrant communities, girls may be kept out of school to tend grazing herds.

A paucity of good employment prospects perpetuate parents' fears that education is a waste of time. 54% young people in Nigeria are currently unemployed. Among women aged 15-49, 37% did not work at all in the 12 months preceding the 2008 national Demographic and Health Survey. The lowest levels of female employment were in the North West (NPC, 2009). Women often benefit less economically from education due to systematic discrimination in the labour market, which means that they are likely to earn less than their male peers with the same level of education for the same type of work. This compounds parents' justifications for not sending their daughters to school.

There is evidence that, in contexts of absolute poverty, incentives may be a successful way to retain children in school. Particularly attractive incentives include free-of charge learning materials and uniforms, subsidised transport to school and employment or vocational training opportunities following the completion of basic schooling (Chapter 5).

### iii. Traditional barriers

Many diverse socio-cultural factors influence the value that parents attach to their daughters' education. Gender norms and stereotypes exclude women and girls from decision-making, community participation and control over their own lives in many areas.

Son preference in access to education is still widespread. As a girl in the North Central said: "Some parents prefer their boys to go to school because only sons inherit and carry on the family name" (Mahdi, 2011 in British Council, 2012). Others may express hostility towards girls' schooling connecting it with loosening morals and Westernisation. Some parents disapprove of what they view as a secular curriculum taught by state schools. It has been argued that fundamental conflicts and

contradictions that alienate girls from completing their schooling operate in some locations, stemming from particular concepts and ideological perspectives of knowledge and what constitutes appropriate knowledge.

The cost, quality, safety and perceived benefits of school may all influence parental and student decisions regarding the age at which marriage takes place (British Council, 2012). While high cost, poor quality schooling can push girls out of school, gender norms that define girls primarily by their function as wives and mothers, combined with post-puberty fears of early pregnancy, may simultaneously pull girls into an early marriage.

Parents' fear of pregnancy outside of marriage intensifies when girls reach puberty, sometimes inducing early marriage. Marriage may be viewed as a protective mechanism, shielding girls' honour from the potential shame of an early, unwanted pregnancy. Marriage may also be seen as a way to accumulate cash or goods through bride wealth payments, given by the groom or his family to the bride's family during the marital union. These can be of significant economic value to a girl's family. The significance of marriage relationships for social networks and developing social capital is also important.

Marriage under the age of 18 years is prohibited by the federal Child Rights Act (2003). Not all States have domesticated the Act and many girls, especially in Northern States, marry before the age of 18. The median age at first marriage varies substantially by region, residence, wealth and education. In 2008, 28% young women aged 15-19 years surveyed for the DHS were currently married, compared to 1% of young men. Among these young women, 12% were married by 15 years of age and 26% were already in a polygamous union with one or more co-wife (NPC, 2009).

Age at first marriage is considerably lower among the poorest girls with no formal education, living in the North East and North West regions. The median age at first marriage for the poorest women aged 20-24 years in 2008 with no education living in the North East or North West was 15.5 – 15.9 years. Men tend to marry much later and consequently girls tend to marry older men. Among the poorest men aged 25-29 years with no education in the North East the median age at first marriage was 23.1 – 23.9 years, at least eight years later than young women (NPC, 2009).

These trends are reflected in girls' fears for their education. Among girls surveyed in six Northern States in 2008, 43% cited early marriage as a major obstacle that would prevent them from continuing their schooling and 32% cited pregnancy (ActionAid, 2011). In Gombe and Adamawa States, 60% of girls' withdrawals from primary school were linked to early marriages, which parents considered a religious obligation (Abdulkarim, 2009).

Education has complex and diverse effects on marriage. For boys, completion of basic schooling or higher is often deemed essential to a good marriage and future prosperity. In one research study, a girl noted that "girls drop out of school to get married but boys do not because no one will marry them if they are not educated and successful" (Mahdi & Asubiaro-Dada in British Council, 2012). As girls leave their natal home after marriage to live with her husband's family, many parents view the education of their daughters as wasted.

Some families distrust formal schooling, fearing that it inculcates immoral behaviour and will lead girls away from marriage and childbearing altogether. Relatively few girls who drop out of school for marriage are permitted to return to school. Girls who stay in school longer, marry later. The median age at first marriage increases substantially by educational attainment. Among women aged 25-29 in

2008, the median age at first marriage rose from 15.5 years for those with no education, to 18.4 years for those with primary schooling, and 22.5 years for those with secondary education (NPC, 2009). Increasing the number of years of girls' education can be beneficial to families forming marital unions. Acquiring literacy skills may increase girls' 'value' and broaden families' opportunity to marry their daughter to a wealthier, better educated husband and, potentially, for the girl to enter a more egalitarian household.

The social processes, norms and fears related to gender, poverty, education, marriage and childbearing thus come to bear heavily on girls around the time of puberty. However, relatively little is understood about the ways in which girls, their parents, extended family, community and school negotiate and manage these decisions and transitions in diverse contexts across Northern Nigeria.

#### **4.3 Strategies to improve girls' education in Northern Nigeria**

Many programmes have been developed and delivered in the last decade to address the obstacles and urgent need for action on girls' education in Northern Nigeria. Northern States have much ground to cover to enrol all girls in primary school and keep girls in school until they complete junior secondary school. Federal, States and local government authorities have been engaged with all of the programmes described below in order to generate ownership, leadership and sustainability around girls' education. Civil society organisations and the media have also been informal partners in some programmes to deliver public information campaigns to tackle gender stereotypes and harmful traditional practices.

A selection of major programmes is presented here to highlight various strategies, interventions and successes in girls' basic education. It is clear from many successful activities that good local policies and collaborative and sustained interventions can have a positive impact on girls' lives. There is much to be learned and to take forwards from these programmes to transform girls' basic education in Northern Nigeria.

##### **i. Strategy for the Acceleration of Girls' Education in Nigeria**

UNICEF supported the Federal Ministry of Education to develop the Strategy for the Acceleration of Girls' Education in Nigeria (SAGEN) in 2003. SAGEN was designed to respond to the number of out-of-school girls in Nigeria and was a plan of action to enable all girls to access quality basic education by 2005. SAGEN was also designed to complement and enhance work already being done towards EFA in Nigeria. The initiative evolved into 'SAGEN Plus' in 2004 with support from international development partners and with refinements that link girls' education to women's health.

SAGEN inspired the Girls' Education Programme, launched in 2004.

##### **ii. Girls' Education Programme**

The Girls' Education Programme (GEP) is delivered by UNICEF in partnership with the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Government of Nigeria. It is a collaborative programme which has become the largest DFID/UNICEF partnership in the world with £26 million funding from DFID to boost girls' participation in education Northern Nigeria.

The Programme's main goal is to achieve progress towards MDG 3 in Nigeria: to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education. To achieve this, the Programme takes an inter-sectoral approach, combining interventions in education, health, water and sanitation, and income generation. It operates in 720 schools across six states in the North East and North West regions where many girls do not go to school and many more drop out early. The states are Bauchi, Borno, Niger, Sokoto, Jigawa, and Katsina.

GEP has been delivered in three phases: Phase I from 2005-2008; Phase 2 from 2008 - 2012 and Phase III scheduled for 2012 – 2019. The Programme's interventions have taken a holistic view of education, working simultaneously within schools and school functions, such as establishing school-based management committees and reviewing teaching materials, and in the wider community including awareness-raising and promoting synergies between girls' education and poverty alleviation (Box 2). Non-formal learning centres have been supported alongside the GEP schools to provide income generation skills to out-of-school girls and women.

**Box 2: Girls Education Programme Interventions**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising national awareness in girl-child education and increase political and financial commitments through advocacy and sensitization of policy makers at all levels, parents, school authorities, other leaders and girls' themselves.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing schools' technical capacity and pedagogical skills to create a girl-friendly school environment that enhances the participation of girls' and improves learning outcomes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing child-friendly school principles as minimum benchmarks for effective schools linked to community empowerment and development.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating school management committees with community involvement and participation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborating with Government and other stakeholders in reviewing existing curricula and teaching materials for gender sensitivity.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting the employment of more female teachers to serve as role models and mentoring out-of-school girls.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring and evaluating of girls' education programmes and mobilizing and strengthening inspectorate.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting synergy between girls' education and poverty alleviation programmes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service delivery on a partnership basis with all stakeholders providing more girl-only schools and improved facilities) for the promotion of quality education.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing School-based Teacher Development Programme to build teachers' capacities and skills to improve pupils' learning outcomes.</li> </ul>

*Source: UNICEF, 2007*

At national level, GEP promotes best practice and seeks to mainstream improvements into the national education system, policy and strategy development, and planning, monitoring and evaluation. Technical assistance has been specifically delivered to (i) improve States planning and data management systems; (ii) establish School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs) with

SUBEBS; (iii) improve the quality of teaching and learning in collaboration with State Colleges of Education (Akunga, 2010).

The first evaluation of GEP I in 2006 noted that in GEP schools girls' enrolment and attendance had increased. GEP schools had also benefitted from new boreholes and separate toilets for boys and girls.

GEP has evolved over time to deliver and promote the most effective interventions, learning from what works such as female teacher training and advocacy with traditional leaders. The fact that communication on girls' education is led by religious and traditional leaders is believed to have enhanced the influence and reach of GEP. In addition, the Female Teacher Training Scholarship programme introduced in 2008 through GEP II, UNICEF and state and local governments extended efforts to increase girls' completion rates through closing gaps between the demand and supply of women teachers in rural areas. The programme provided full teacher training funding for women in rural areas, attracting over 3,000 women since 2009.

iii. Enhancing Girls' Basic Education in Northern Nigeria and Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria

In 2003 ActionAid Nigeria initiated a project called Enhancing Girls Basic Education in Northern Nigeria (EGBENN). The project aimed to promote basic education rights and enhance good governance at all levels of education. EGBENN was supported by Oxfam Novib and operated in nine LGAs across three North West states: Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi. The LGAs were specifically targeted due to major gender disparities in access to primary and junior secondary schools.

EGBENN aimed to contribute to the attainment of MDGs 2 and 3: achieving universal primary education and the eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary schools. It was designed to build on the Commonwealth Education Fund initiative which sought to strengthen civil society and communities to demand education, especially for girls, monitor government spending on education and promote innovative ways of opening up access to education for girls.

EGBENN also promoted School-based Management Committees and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and supported civil society organisations and community leaders to track education budgets, link schools and the wider community, and engage with local and state governments to advocate for girls' education. In its first three years EGBENN increased girls' enrolment in its schools from 25% to 43%.

Its second phase strengthened the capacities of SBMCs, CSOs and government institutions. An important additional component of Phase II was additional, targeted interventions on HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence to address identified risks and vulnerabilities among girls within and beyond schools.

In 2008 ActionAid took learning from EGBENN to develop the Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria (TEGIN) project. TEGIN ran from 2008-2012 in partnership with the Nigerian NGO Community Action for Popular Participation (CAPP). The project was delivered in 72 primary and junior secondary schools across eight states in Northern Nigeria: FCT, Niger, Bauchi, Gombe, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kaduna, and Katsina.

Like EGBENN, the TEGIN project delivered interventions to improve girls' education that looked within and beyond schools. TEGIN's overall aim was to enable girls to enrol and stay in school by addressing key challenges and obstacles that hinder their participation and increase their vulnerability to gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS (ActionAid, 2012). It intended to achieve this goal through five key objectives and related interventions which, like other programmes, including establishing and supporting school-based management committees and improving teacher training (Box 3).

**Box 3: TEGIN Objectives**

<b>1:</b>	To build the capacity of girls (and boys) to challenge gender discrimination
<b>2:</b>	To promote participatory modules on gender and HIV/AIDS in national pre-service and in-service teacher training
<b>3:</b>	To facilitate capacity building and support to school management committees and the wider community addressing girls' rights in education and HIV/AIDS
<b>4:</b>	To facilitate the development of legal and policy frameworks and good practice that will enhance and protect girls' rights in school
<b>5:</b>	To build the capacity of national organisations to become leading bodies in education, gender and HIV/AIDS

*Source: ActionAid, 2012*

TEGIN worked closely with girls themselves, their families, religious and traditional leaders and policy makers to address the full range of educational influences from micro to macro levels. Girls' clubs in schools provided safe spaces for girls to learn and gain support from their peers and female teachers about issues affecting them and their schooling; in-service female teacher training provides teachers with enhanced classroom teaching methods and gender sensitivity; SBMCs are supported to create school development plans to identify school priorities and acquire government funding.

iv. Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria

The Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN) is a partnership between the Nigerian Government and DFID UK delivered by a Cambridge Education-led consortium in principal partnership with the British Council. The Programme runs from 2008 to 2014 (extended till 2016). Its main aim is to strengthen governance and systems to improve the quality of basic education in six states across Nigeria: Lagos, Kwara, Enugu, Kano, Kaduna and Jigawa.

ESSPIN is an education sector and governance intervention programme. The Programme works at federal, state, local government, school and community levels through multiple international and national partners. ESSPIN is the most well-resourced programme currently working to address challenges in the education system in Nigeria, and its remit and operations are broader than those, such as GEP and TEGIN, which focus on improving girls' education in Northern Nigeria (Box 4).

**Box 4: ESSPIN Interventions**

<b>Federal</b>	Institutional development support to Policy, Planning, Management and Research departments of FME and UBEC.
<b>State</b>	Planning and budgeting, resource allocation and monitoring
<b>School</b>	Supporting teacher training and development; resourcing primary and junior secondary schools with water and sanitation, infrastructure and materials to support good quality learning environments
<b>Community</b>	Establishing and supporting SBMCs to make schools accountable; encourage community participation and demand for quality education; working with CSOs and the media to develop public information campaigns.

*Source:ESSPIN [no date]*

## 5. International approaches to girls' education

**Since the adoption of the MDGs and EFA in 2000 forms of intervention and approaches to tackling girls' education have proliferated. Some draw on human rights frameworks, others on economic models; some seek to harness the potential of civil society organisations, others work with government institutions; some mainstream gender into education sector-wide approaches; others focus on challenging discrimination against women and girls.**

While many approaches adhere to one or perhaps two types of intervention, many, especially more recently, tackle girls' education using a combined and integrated approach. Combined approaches often yield the strongest and most sustainable success by complementing activities in the education sector with inputs to tackle challenges in livelihoods, health, employment, and more.

### 5.1 Approach 1: Improving educational institutions for girls

The quality of education significantly affects girls' enrolment, participation, retention and completion of basic schooling. Girls and their parents often identify poor infrastructure, including inadequate toilet and classroom facilities, and insufficient teachers and teaching, including absent teachers and poor attitudes, behaviour and pedagogy, as key factors that push them out of school (Chapter 4.2). The language of instruction and school curriculum can also have serious effects on girls' attendance and retention.

Many education sector programmes have intended to tackle these problems, through school construction and rehabilitation, in-service and pre-service teacher training on child-friendly pedagogy and alternative discipline, school managers' capacity development and curriculum review processes. Many techniques are described in the annual EFA Global Monitoring Reports, particularly the 2013/14 report on Teaching and Learning for All. This section provides two interesting and different examples of successful approaches applied in Bangladesh and across Sub-Saharan Africa.

#### Box 5: Multiple Ways of Teaching and Learning in Bangladesh

Improving the quality of education in primary schools is top of the development agenda in Bangladesh. There are approximately 1.5 million primary school age girls out of school. The poor quality of education results in low achievement levels. Drop-out rates are around 37% for girls and 38% for boys. Just over a quarter of girls in school complete primary education with the minimum level of expected competencies. Limited options for girls within society exacerbate the problems and effects of inadequate schooling.

The Government of Bangladesh's Girls' Education Strategy aims to promote and enhance the value and role of girls in all aspects of social and economic life, to improve the quality of basic education and to ensure equitable access to learning opportunities for girls currently not enrolled in primary schools.

In collaboration with the Government, one UNICEF project aims to improve girls' attendance and learning outcomes by improving the quality of teaching. The Intensive District Approach to Education for All (IDEAL) Project started in 1996 and included 9 million children across 36 districts. This project is a part of the Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP) of the Ministry of



### Primary and Mass Education.

The aim of IDEAL was to ensure high quality education through improved teaching and learning methods, better supervision and participatory planning and community involvement. In-service teachers' training on child-centred active learning methods and the promotion of community participation in schools were cornerstones of the project.

Multiple Ways of Teaching and Learning (MWTL) was one intervention within the project. This methodology expanded the range of teaching methods in use and helped teachers develop different kinds of learning exercises and activities to ensure that all children in the classroom learn.

An evaluation of the MWTL intervention in 2000 noted some key strengths and challenges:

- No wastage of class time
- Greater variety of teaching-learning activities
- Positive behaviour change among teachers
- More interested, enthusiastic and able pupils.

However, few traditional classroom seating arrangements are designed for interactive classrooms and good monitoring and supervision require adequate resources.

*Source: UNICEF, 2000*

### Box 6: Girls' Clubs: Empowering Girls to Speak Out

One of the flagship models of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) is the innovative '*Tuseme*' ('Let Us Speak Out') programme. The programme trains girls to identify and understand problems that affect them, articulate these problems and take action to solve them. Through drama, song and creative arts, girls learn negotiation skills, how to speak out, self-confidence, decision-making and leadership skills.

*Tuseme* was initiated in Tanzania in 1996 and enhanced by FAWE with gender-in-education and life skills. The model has been introduced across Africa, including in Burkina Faso, Chad, The Gambia, Mali and Senegal. Over 80,000 students have benefited since 1996. Successes include:

- Improvement in girls' self-esteem and in their leadership, social and life skills
- Teachers' positive attitudinal change towards girls
- Significant reduction in sexual harassment

Drawing on the *Tuseme* model, many organisations and projects have adopted girls' clubs to empower girls' in and out of school. Many girls' clubs are supported by female teachers or mentors who are trained to engage with girls on topics such as HIV/AIDS, gender violence, sexual and reproductive health and traditional practices, as well as teach them about their right to education. The clubs offer safe spaces for girls to meet and talk about issues affecting them, learning from each other. With the backing of their peers and mentors some girls are able to raise the issue of their education with their parents and challenge marriage arrangements, delaying marriages and staying in school for longer.

*Source: FAWE, 2009*

## 5.2 Approach 2: Alleviating economic barriers to girls' enrolment and retention

Removing or reducing the costs of education for parents and families living in poverty has been shown to have significant effects of girls' enrolment, retention and completion of basic schooling. Costs can be both 'direct' through school fees and levies and 'indirect' through children's need for school materials including books, pencils and uniforms, and food. Although primary education is supposed to be free in many countries, indirect costs may be prohibitive for poor parents. In addition, secondary schooling is often not free of charge. At this level, registration, examination and ongoing direct costs alone may render secondary schooling unaffordable.

A range of social protection interventions to mitigate the costs of education have been tried and tested across disadvantaged, poor communities. Interventions include: conditional grant schemes such as school feeding; stipends; conditional cash transfers; and targeted subsidies such as scholarships or incentives in-kind. Studies have shown that, implemented properly, some of these interventions can prove highly effective for increasing attendance and progression rates among disadvantaged groups, including girls. Some schemes (for example conditional cash transfers in Latin America) also may help to combat other socio-economic demand-side barriers to girls' education, including domestic work and child labour.

### Box 7: Food for Education in Pakistan

Food for Education schemes are conditional grant programmes designed to address low and unequal levels of enrolment. Poor households with primary school age children are eligible for monthly rice or wheat allowances, conditional on the children maintaining an adequate attendance record at school.

The Government of Pakistan's National Plan of Action on Education for All 2001-2015 aims to ensure access to education for disadvantaged rural females. Pakistan faces persistent gender disparities in girls and boys enrolment at primary school in rural areas, despite a national policy of Universal Primary Education. In some areas, girls enrolment is less than half that of boys (Rahman & Chaudry, 2009).

One of the major obstacles to girls' education is the cost of schooling. Girls from poor households are less likely to enrol at primary school in rural and underdeveloped areas due to the lack of accessible schools and the costs of schooling.

In response, a Food For Education programme started in 1998. It encouraged poor parents to send their children to school and they would be well-nourished. The World Food Programme's 2005-2009 country program took up the importance of school feeding, giving meals to more than 400,000 girls in primary schools in over 30 districts across Pakistan. Each girl received a monthly take home ration of a 4 litre tin of vegetable oil, snacks and meal by attending a minimum 20 days school per month (Lambeis, 2008).

School feeding has been a popular approach to addressing school attendance and child nutrition simultaneously. Evaluation studies of school feeding programmes in Bangladesh and Pakistan have found statistically significant effects on enrolment, especially of girls. In Pakistan the programme improved all students' learning. These programmes therefore seem to have high cost-

benefit ratios. However, the effects on girls' drop-out rates and on school quality are variable across contexts.

*Sources: Lambeis, 2008; Rahman & Choudry, 2009.*

#### **Box 8: Incentives to increase girls' enrolment in Northern Nigeria**

The Bixby Center and partners use in-kind incentives to increase girls' enrolment and retention in Zaria, Kaduna State. The aim is to delay the age at first marriage and childbearing among girls and to enhance women's livelihoods and health outcomes. In these communities less than 7% of girls have ever attended secondary school. Educational and socio-economic barriers identified by the programme include poverty; lack of opportunities for women; poorly functioning educational system; and a lack of toilets in primary schools.

In collaboration with communities, the scheme provides books and uniforms free of charge for one year to all girls registered and attending primary school. The uniforms are tailored by community members. Registration fees, annual school fees and books are provided for girls entering Junior Secondary School. Funds are also reserved to guarantee parents that any primary school girl that maintains 90% attendance rate will receive books and uniforms until she completes primary school.

The cost and effort to get girls into school and keep them there is shared by parents, teachers, the community and the scheme. Parents provide lunch to children. Mothers have agreed not to allow their daughters to hawk during school hours. Teachers monitor attendance and Parent Teacher Associations promise to meet with parents whose daughters miss classes.

The programme intended to provide more substantial incentives to encourage girls' attendance. However, the strength of the community response indicated that with support from PTAs and community leaders, girls' can enrol and attend school regularly. It is believed that by mobilising community support, scaling-up the approach will be effective and sustainable in the long-term.

*Source: The Bixby Centre for Population, Health and Sustainability, 2014*

### 5.3 Approach 3: Challenging socio-cultural constraints to girls' schooling

Challenging discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes that curtail girls' education is of critical importance in raising girls' educational attainment. Some interventions that challenge gendered inequalities in education take an explicitly multi-sectoral approach, coordinating efforts to break down socio-cultural barriers to girls' education, such as early marriage and female genital cutting, across education, health, social justice and other sectors. Showing that girls have value in addition to marriage and childbearing and that they can play an important and active role in the community, through for example, girls' football clubs or community theatre, can have significant positive impact on girls' lives and their futures.

#### Box 9: Community empowerment to eliminate traditional practices in West Africa

Tostan's Community Empowerment Program enables communities to change their own lives using a human-rights based approach that aims to be respectful and inclusive.

Communities with which Tostan works create Community Management Committees who are trained in project management and social mobilisation skills. These committees are tasked to lead community development projects. All community members, including parents, traditional and religious leaders and young people, participate in human rights-based discussions, which empower them with knowledge and skills to question traditional practices and community norms.

The Program provides spaces for dialogue, led by local facilitators, on human rights and responsibilities, health and problem solving. Some communities are trained in documentary film-making, harnessing the power of storytelling to tell stories and encourage dialogue on issues that are important to the community. A father in one village in Senegal explained the issue and how his views had changed:

*"In our tradition girls were not allowed to go to school. We kept our daughters until they were 13 and then gave them into marriage.  
With the change from the Tostan program, I began to understand the importance of education for [my daughter] and I began to support her in her schooling" (Tostan, 2013a).*

Through a process of 'organised diffusion' community members reach out to others within and outside their own communities to share ideas and information. This process reinforces and extends the impact of the Program. Collective public pledges to end traditional practices have been the result. These public declarations have involved local government officials, Imams and youth groups and been celebratory events (Tostan, 2013b).

Since the start of the Program over 6,000 communities in West and East Africa, including in Senegal and The Gambia, have declared an end to female genital cutting and child marriage. Tostan's success is based on three elements of positive social change: (i) empowering education; (ii) outreach to interconnected groups; (iii) a collective public pledge to mark the end of a practice (Molly Melching, Executive Director of Tostan, 2012).

Sources: Tostan (2013); Melching (2012)

### Box 10: Community-based child protection in Ghana

The Stop Violence Against Girls in Schools project in Ghana challenges gender-based violence and discrimination and aims to increase girls' enrolment and retention in schools. One approach has been to establish and support Community Advocacy Teams (CATs) in communities to raise awareness about violence and discrimination, monitor and respond to incidents and support victims and their families.

CATs are made up of five volunteers (three women and two men). They are trained in legislation, referral mechanisms and psychosocial support by police, justice and social welfare services. After training, they establish Child Protection Networks in their community, which include members from SBMCs, PTAs and local government. These Networks help to spread information more widely and create stronger links in case of reports.

The teams develop strong relationships with local authorities, traditional and religious leaders and community groups to promote girls' education and create support to keep girls in school and challenge their withdrawal in cases of marriage, pregnancy or work. Girls can report incidents to CATs confidentially, who then escalate the issue appropriately and sensitively.

A local official noted that:

*"the Community Advocacy Teams are providing a sense of security and social support for victims of violence in the communities, which hitherto was absent. We have dealt with a number of forced marriage cases together with the communities with much cooperation and at a very low cost to everybody."*

As a result of this intervention, the percentage of adults aware of official reporting mechanisms on gender violence and discrimination rose from 36% in 2009 to 86% in 2013.

Source: ActionAid, 2013

## 6. Influencers of Girls' Basic Education in Northern Nigeria

**In order to map the key influencers within communities in Northern Nigerian who determine and lead change, a preliminary survey was conducted in six states with 600 men, women and young people. The purpose was to identify the decisions, decision-makers and influential persons and networks engaged with girls' basic education, particularly the decision to enrol girls in primary school, in Northern Nigeria.**

Semi-structured questionnaires comprising 40 multiple choice questions was conducted in Adamawa State in the North-East; Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi and Jigawa states in the North-West; and Niger State in the North-Central region. The states were purposively selected to provide an adequate representation of ethnic and social groups. In each state, a minimum of two Local Government Areas (LGA) were selected within two Senatorial Districts. In each LGA, the Headquarters and one rural community participated from which households were selected using systematic sampling. Fifty questionnaires were administered in each LGA. A total of 587 questionnaires were retrieved (98% response rate).

Survey respondents included: mothers, fathers, head teachers, teachers, community and religious leaders, local government officials, in and out of school children, and members of youth, women's and other organisations. The data presented amalgamate answers from all survey respondents.

### 6.1 Decision-makers directing girls' schooling

The National Policy on Education is most frequently (66%) cited policy pronouncement that determines girls' enrolment at school. Directly associated with the significance to respondents of this policy, the Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Education and through the States Ministry of Education were cited as critical decision-makers at the federal and state levels (noted by 76% and 60% respondents respectively). The high profile given to these government sanctioned decrees and bodies indicates their unsurprising power and significance to public service provision and take-up, including of girls' education.

At the local level, the survey found two major actors in the decision to enrol and retain girls in primary school: family heads (predominantly fathers) and religious leaders (67% mentioned both). These are authoritative male figures in the household and in the community. Their prioritisation by all respondents indicates the relative exclusion of women and girls in decision-making.

It is difficult to disentangle the decision-makers from those who influence the decision-makers through the results of this survey (mainly due to design and analysis gaps). However, while fathers and religious leaders are clearly making decisions for on behalf of girls regarding their education, these figures are also cited as critical influencers of decision-makers, suggesting a mutually reinforcing scenario. Parents ranked highest on the list of key influencers with 90% respondents mentioning them, while 69% respondents flagged the secondary role of religious leaders (Table 9).

**Table 9: Local Influencers of girls' education**

Influencer	%
Parents/Guardians	90
Religious Leaders	69
Traditional Leaders	54
Community-Based Organisations	51

Interestingly, Community-Based Organisations were believed by respondents to carry more weight on decisions to enrol girls in school than School-Based Management Committees or local education authorities. Given the relatively recent establishment of many SBMCs compared to some CBOs, particularly in rural areas, this result may not be surprising but it nevertheless demands further investigation to understand the relative advocacy roles of these groups.

Most traditional institutions in Nigeria have systems of decision-making based on collective consensus, often among male members of the community. Resources like water and land are thus used and shared for the collective interest of communities. In some communities, this formal or informal collective consensus is likely to also shape girls' participation in education or their withdrawal from school for marriage or work, for example. In the same way that harnessing collective community consensus may succeed to end harmful traditional practices, it can also work to keep girls in school (Chapter 5.3). More specific examples and research on collective decision-making related to education seems necessary in the context of Northern Nigeria.

At the household level men, especially fathers, thus tend to be dominant in decision-making while women take responsibility for ensuring the execution of those decisions. Men control households, deciding which children attend school and the level each child can attain. In nuclear or extended households, older males take precedent over younger males. Women's ability to make their own decisions about factors affecting their lives is a key element of empowerment. This empowerment is significantly lacking for many married women in Nigeria. Over half of all married women surveyed in the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey (National Population Commission and ICF Macro, 2009) report that their husbands mainly make the decisions for their own health care (56%) and major household purchases (62%). 44% women report that their husbands made the decision about her visiting friends and family. Over half of all husbands corroborated these allocations of decision-making. Over two-thirds of married young women aged 15-19 will not participate in any household decisions. Married women living in rural areas in the North East and North West regions are less likely than other women to report participating in any household decision-making.

One group of women who tend to have a stronger voice in decision-making are older mothers-in-law. Once a girl is married and joins her husband's family, evidence suggests that mothers-in-law can become key figures determining girls' lives, including their schooling. Mothers-in-law can veto existing agreements, to which their sons tend to be compelled to agree. Obedience to parents and elders in all aspects of social life is strongly adhered to in many communities in Northern Nigeria. The importance of the extended family was highlighted as respondents proactively named grandparents and elder aunts and uncles as influential to household decision-making.

At community level, religious leaders and institutions, traditional leaders and CBOs hold significant sway. In predominantly Muslim communities, Islamic institutions and leaders influence social interactions and decision-making processes. Islamic leaders determine instructional methods and the curriculum of Qur'anic schools or madrasas. Some girls that drop out of formal primary schooling may continue their Islamic education in a madrasa.

Traditional leaders including the Sarki (Emir), District Head and Ward Head influence fathers' decisions through giving advice on education and social issues to families. Community members also gain information and advice visiting the homes of village heads.

## **6.2 Influential social networks and advocates**

In the majority of communities surveyed, popular and influential social networks operate in isolation of formal education structures such as the SBMCs or local education authorities. The radio and local 'town criers' were the most cited influential social mechanisms.

The media, particularly the radio, can play a strong role in influencing individual and community decisions and, for example, advocating for girls' schooling. The radio was the most popular source of information for all surveyed communities. 98% of respondents carried their radios to farms or grazing areas and a high proportion carried them to other places or work or listened at home. Respondents listened to both local and international news services and programmes. They were discerning in what they preferred to listen to: as well as news items, there was a strong preference for sports news, drama and comedies. Other media including televisions and newspapers were less well used due to unreliable electricity (for television use) and supply restrictions (newspapers in rural areas). Newspapers were more common sources of information and influence among urban residents.

Many other social centres are sources of information and influence over social issues, including town halls, churches and mosques, markets, grazing/watering points, farms and organised clubs. Football clubs and youth clubs were ranked highly by respondents as key social forums which can influence decisions made at the community or household level. Leaders of youth forums may even set to resolve local social, economic, health or education debates in collaboration with other influential community members.

Places of worship offer spiritual education and mentoring in religious affairs and family counselling. Religious organizations and places of worship tend to be strongly influential at the local level and above. Women's engagement in discussions on community issues varies but the survey found women engaged in church-based education discussions in parts of Kebbi and Kaduna states, while in other locations women were excluded. Of the religious organisations mentioned by respondents, Zumuntan Mata (the Christian Women's Association) and FOMWAN (the Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria) were most frequently cited, ranking 8<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> respectively among influential social networks. Other CBOs, such as Mothers' and Women's associations and workers' unions, have a lesser but nevertheless important degree of influence over decision-making at community and household levels.

Sixty five percent (65%) of rural communities in the survey had independent Town Criers. These men disseminate urgent messages from local government headquarters, the District Head, Village or



Ward heads or religious leaders. This result indicates the potential role of this person to inform, disseminate and influence social issues, a possibility which may merit further investigation.

## 7. Reflections

The Nigerian Government and civil society recognises basic education as the foundation for economic and social development. The UBE Act (2004) promises nine years of free and compulsory basic education for all children and succeeded initially in expanding enrolments. However, more action is urgently needed to enable and empower every girl across Nigeria to participate in a full cycle of basic education.

Serious disparities in education across Northern Nigeria are compounded by deep-rooted forms of inequality based on gender, wealth, ethnicity, region, residence and tradition. The poorest girls living in rural areas in the North East and North West regions are the most likely to never attend school. Traditional practices and gender norms that discriminate against women, including the marriage of young girls, will compound the likelihood of their never receiving an education.

Yet strategies and actions taken in Nigeria and in countries around the world indicate that there are many options for positive action and advocacy on girls' education. Many of the most successful and sustainable interventions (outlined in Chapter 5) engage actors across sectors and multiple levels of authority. They recognise and respect the decision-makers and persons on influence at community and local levels and work with them to mobilise positive change.

The research that has informed this report enables us to reflect upon the evidence-base, to discuss the data and appraise the range of initiatives taken with a view to the context of Northern Nigeria, and to collaborate on future actions. To assist this process, a few themes that emerge from this report are important to reiterate in this closing chapter:

### **i. Basic education is not free and the costs of schooling present a major barrier to girls' enrolment and completion in Northern States**

Charges and levies for education should be abolished for all children of primary school age. This would help significantly to increase girls' participation and present a powerful message about the value of girls' education.

In addition to advocacy for the removal of all costs at the level of basic education, context-specific incentives can succeed in boosting girls' participation. Important actors in the system, whether they are parents, students, teachers or administrators, respond positively to well-designed incentives. Collaboration with community members in such interventions, for example engaging local skilled workers to make uniforms or school lunches, have been proven to succeed and, particularly, to make a difference in parents decisions to enrol girls in school. Talking to parents and community decision-makers about why girls are out of school and what would encourage them to send their daughters to school would facilitate the development of appropriate and sustainable local action.

### **ii. Monitoring and quality assurance of schools at community, local and national levels is imperative to ensure that schools are safe and comfortable places for girls to learn**

Community members and media organisations, together with local civil society organisations, have an important but sometimes under-used role to play in monitoring the quality of local education provision and, in particular, girls' participation in education. Interventions such as the Community Advocacy Teams working for child protection and enrolment in Ghana (Chapter 5) and the work of

the Girls' Education Programme in Northern Nigeria to develop child-friendly schools (Chapter 4.3) for example showcase the potential rewards of effective local monitoring and reporting.

In addition, education data collated, stored and analysed at local levels must be improved to better recognise, monitor and take action on disparities in education access and completion. Better data would improve our understanding of marginalised groups in the education system and therefore improve action to remedy the situation. Training and awareness-raising on the importance of data would bring attention to this need.

**iii. Trained female teachers can empower girls to stay in school but may be lacking in the most marginalised communities where the need for them is greatest**

Where there are more women teachers in schools, there tends to be better gender parity in enrolment and completion. Getting the best teachers, especially women teachers, into the most marginalised communities requires effective training, deployment and motivation schemes that are based on a solid awareness of the challenges and obstacles teachers face working in disadvantaged communities. Combining advocacy and action to address these challenges is crucial to girls' education in Northern States where female role models in schools in rural areas are most needed.

In 2013 the British Council initiated a research project to assess the availability and effectiveness of in-service teacher training in five states, including three in Northern Nigeria (Jigawa, Kano, Lagos, Rivers and Sokoto). The research aims to identify critical barriers to the effective delivery of innovative new pedagogy, technology and consideration of gender, sexual and reproductive health issues in teacher training programmes in order to ignite debate and promote positive policy steps and donor interventions.

**iv. Religious leaders and parents are authoritative decision-makers and their positive influence and engagement in education can transform girls' lives**

In a survey conducted in six Northern states, parents and religious leaders were the two most cited influencers of decisions to enrol girls in primary school and keep them there. Fathers, in particular, are an authoritative voice in most households (Chapter 6). According to the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey, over half of all married women report that their husbands mainly make the decisions for their own health care and major household purchases. Married women living in rural areas in the North East and North West regions are less likely than other women to report participating in any household decision-making. This strongly indicates that local initiatives to promote girls' education must engage constructively and respectfully with male heads of households, while simultaneously advocating for and addressing the issue of women's empowerment.

Places of worship and religious leaders also tend to be strongly influential at the local level. Engaging their views and sharing knowledge and information on girls' education can be a powerful lever for sustained change.

Many people listen to the radio, at work or at home. Training, information-sharing and engagement with media organisations, especially radio journalists, may be effective in delivering and disseminating positive messages about girls' education that reach rural communities.

**v. Girls can be powerful advocates for their own rights and their voices should be heard**

Evidence from projects that have established and promoted girls' clubs (Chapter 5.1) suggest that when girls are empowered with information, confidence and opportunities to challenge discrimination and voice their opinions, they do so effectively and with conviction.

Girls often have high aspirations for their education and their future livelihoods (ActionAid, 2011). With support from their peers and women teachers girls are able to delay marriage and stay in school for longer, which is beneficial for girls, their family, community and the country. Literate, well-educated girls have healthier lives, healthier children and contribute more to national economic and social development.

Girls themselves present early marriage as a major obstacle to achieving their aspirations, but relatively little is known about Northern Nigerian girls' experiences and negotiations of marriage, education and childbearing. This presents a challenge to formulating appropriate and effective action to address socio-cultural barriers to girls' education. Well-designed research, which listens to the voices of girls as well as key decision-makers, would help to bridge this knowledge gap.

Girls are critical agents of change in their own lives and need to be engaged alongside existing decision-makers and influencers to enhance and achieve education for all.

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# **Girls' Education in Nigeria**

**REPORT 2014:**  
**ISSUES, INFLUENCERS AND ACTIONS**

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