



POLICY BRIEF

Girl Child Education in Borno State

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Courtesy: AllAfrica.com

Introduction

This policy brief is produced as part of the “Gulmakai Network: Working for Girls Education in Northern Nigeria project (GCEP)”, which is funded by the Malala Fund. This advocacy project is being implemented in Adamawa, Borno, and Kano states by ACE Charity. The main objectives of this project are as follows:

- To create the environment for the re-enrolment and retention of out-

of-school girls in secondary schools in the target states.

- To improve parents and community gatekeepers’ commitment to support girl child education in selected communities in the target states.
- Ratification of the Child Rights Act in the target states.

These objectives are designed to support other ongoing efforts to improve girl child

education outcomes in the three target states. This brief is the second in a series of policy briefs that will be produced for this project and will be used to create awareness of the challenges inhibiting against the capacity of girls to fulfil their potential, including proffering solutions - effective policies and actions- to addressing the challenges facing girl child education Borno state is the focus of this brief which uses desk reviews, findings from discussions with relevant stakeholders, and results from scoping visits to develop its content.

Overview of Girl Child Education in Borno State

Attendance to school is largely dependent on encouragement from parents, readiness of the child, provision of school materials, distance to school and most important, the security of the child. The activities of armed groups and security forces in Borno state has discouraged many students from going to school for fear of being abducted or killed by the insurgents. The 2014 kidnap of over 200 girls from a secondary school in Chibok by Boko Haram insurgents highlights the risks that the girl child faces in the state. In fact, UNICEF reports that over one million children have been forced out of school as a result of indiscriminate attacks on schools, children and teachers; and Borno state accounts for 60% of this number.¹

Compared to Yobe and Adamawa, Borno state has had the most devastating experience since the onset of the Boko Haram insurgency, with a significant negative effect on basic and secondary school education. Prior to the insurgency, Borno state was among the states with the lowest school attendance and retention rates compared to the national average.

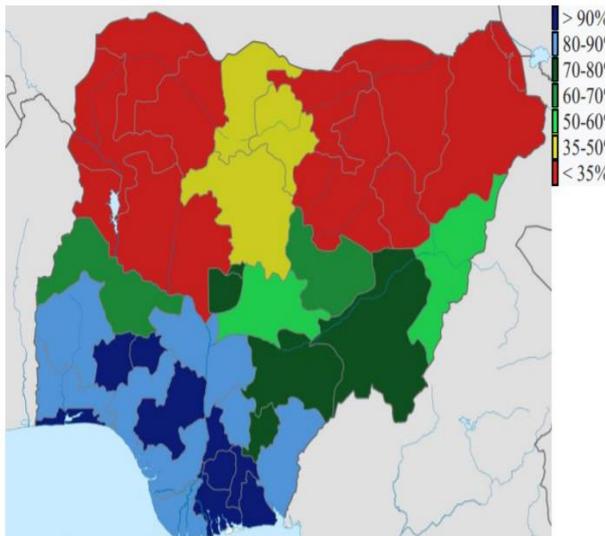
¹ UNICEF 2015, http://www.unicef.org/media/media_86621.html.

The conflict has worsened the situation as girls account for 70% of the total number of out of school children in the state according to a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICs) conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF.²

Gender disparity in education is predominant in Borno state especially as high female illiteracy (see Figure 1) and adolescent girl marriage remain serious issues. At the same time, Borno state has a high number of girls not in secondary school. Poverty is one of the leading factors contributing to these dismal statistics especially as basic education indicators have shown that enrolment of girls in school, attendance and transition remain generally low. In 2012, girls' enrolment in public primary schools and public secondary schools in the state was 39.4% and 41.3% respectively. In addition to poverty, the conflict in the state -stemming from the Boko Haram insurgency- has worsened girl child education outcomes in the state especially in terms of access to education, the availability of teachers, and the availability of classrooms. In fact, as at 2016, schools were open in only 7 of the 27 LGAs in Borno state. Adding to this is the use of schools as IDP camps or military bases by security forces.

Figure 1: Female Literacy Rates in Nigeria

² National Bureau of Statistics & UNICEF (2017), Multiple Cluster Survey.



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2013)

Factors Affecting Girl Child Education in Borno State

The Boko Haram conflict -which started in Borno state- provides a useful context for understanding the challenges affecting girl child education in Borno state. The state of insecurity has forced parents to keep their daughters away from school. Recently, ACE Charity conducted a survey -using the mixed methods approach- in Borno state where some out-of-school girls and parents were interviewed to understand the conditions faced by girls especially in relation to education. Among the key findings from the responses provided by some of the parents surveyed is that the fear of having their children kidnapped or killed is one of the reasons why they have withdrawn their daughters from school. Furthermore, some of these parents indicated that they are less likely to enroll their daughters into school anytime soon. What is clear is that the security situation in the North East is one of the predominant reasons for poor girl child education outcomes in the state.

³ International Organization for Migration (IOM), 207 Displacement Tracking Matrix.

Access and availability is another factor inhibiting against girl child education in the state. The physical condition of a school has a direct positive or negative impact on students' learning morale, and on the general learning environment. Inadequate educational facilities pose a threat to the right to education. Access to primary and secondary education has been seriously affected by targeted attacks on schools by Boko Haram. In fact, UNICEF notes that over 400 schools were destroyed, over 600 teachers killed, and about 150 children killed by Boko Haram between 2012 and 2014. The Executive Chairman of the Borno State Universal Basic Education Board (BSUBEB) indicated that, "over 500 schools in Borno state have been destroyed since the inception of the insurgency".

The displacement of households and communities also adds to the burden of improving accessibility to education. The conflict has displaced about 2 million people in the state and these IDPs are spread across formal and informal IDP camps.³ As many IDPs are sheltered in schools and humanitarian assistance is limited to life-saving interventions, displaced children are generally unable to pursue their education. The occupation of schools by the IDPs and security forces has damaged and destroyed some infrastructure and denied children access to education. Attempts by the Borno state government to relocate IDPs from schools has proved abortive as many communities remain inaccessible and prone to guerilla-style attacks by insurgent groups.

Coupled with low female literacy rates, Borno state is one of the states in Northern Nigeria with the highest case of early or adolescent girl marriage.⁴ This comes as

⁴ Nwonu, C. & Oyakhiromen, I., Nigeria and Child Marriage: Legal Issues, Complications, Implications,

little of a surprise especially considering that the state has yet to domesticate the Child Rights Act. The domestication of the Child Rights Act in the state is being pursued by ACE Charity in partnership with other organizations through engagement with the State House of Assembly and Judiciary.

High poverty levels among households is one of the leading contributors to the problem of early child marriage in the state. ACE Charity -through the Malala-funded Girl Child Education Project (GCEP)- is also addressing this problem through advocacy efforts aimed at creating the right environment for the re-enrolment and retention of girls in secondary schools. The re-enrolment and retention of girls in secondary schools should indirectly address this problem as when girls complete their secondary education, they are more empowered to take decisions to improve their sexual and reproductive health and overall wellbeing.

Addressing the Problem of Girl Child Education Outcomes in Borno State

The activities of Boko Haram coupled with counter-insurgency operations provides the context for approaching the problem of poor girl child education outcomes in the state. For one, the conflict demands a different approach to delivering education services to out-of-school children, many of whom have lost either or both parents to the violence.

Several donor-funded education-in-emergencies (EiE) interventions are ongoing in the state such as the USAID-funded Northern Education Initiative (NEI) and the DFID-funded North East Nigeria Transition to Development (NENTAD) programme. These projects are being implemented on the ground by local and

international implementing partners. To increase access to education for out-of-school children, Non-Formal Learning Centres (NFLC) are being created and carefully managed to accommodate the needs of pupils.

The curriculum being used in these NFLC were created through collaboration between implementing partners and relevant government authorities such as the Borno State Ministry of Education, the National Mass Education Commission (NMEC), and the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council (NERDC). The curriculum focuses on three key areas namely: literacy; numeracy; and socio-emotional learning. The socio-emotional learning component of the curriculum is designed to enhance the coping mechanisms of children traumatized by the violence.

With respect to the NFLC, a pre-agreed vulnerability criteria is used to select children to be enrolled to ensure that mainly those in need are the ones targeted by these interventions. Some of these EiE interventions are designed to ensure that more girls than boys are enrolled into the NFLC as a means of improving girl child education outcomes in the state. The NFLC act as a stop-gap measure to manage the burden of access to education in the state. In terms of sustainability, the plan is to reintegrate NFLC beneficiaries into formal schools.

The Borno state government is also investing in efforts aimed at improving access to education for out-of-school children. For one, the government has recently created 10 Mega Schools -with plans to increase the number to 20 before the end of 2019- to accommodate the high number of out-of-school children in the

state (see Figure 2). In fact, a committee was inaugurated in November 2018 to develop an education management plan for effective management of these mega schools. ACE Charity is currently engaging with education authorities in the state to re-enroll some of the out-of-school girls - identified by the Borno State Gender Empowerment Committees (GEC) established for the GCEP- into some of these newly commissioned Mega Schools.

Figure 2: One of the ten Mega Schools Constructed by the Borno State Government in Jere LGA



Source: Borno State Ministry of Education

Conclusion

Borno state, being the epicenter of the Boko Haram insurgency, is one of the states where the Malala-funded Girl Child Education Project (GCEP) is being implemented. This policy advocacy project seeks to improve girl-child education in the state by supporting efforts aimed at improving the environment for the re-enrolment and retention of girls in Secondary schools. One of the approaches being used by this project to improve girl

child education outcomes in the state is the domestication of the Child Rights Act in the state. This is essential to ensure that parents and the government are aware and committed to ensuring that girls complete their secondary education so that they can live healthy and productive lives. ACE Charity continues to engage with relevant stakeholders -State Ministry of Education, State Judiciary, and State House of Assembly- with a view to domesticating the Child Rights Act in the state.

Another approach being taken by GCEP to address the problem of poor girl child education outcomes, especially with respect to early marriage, is working with the Borno state government to initiate and implement policies and actions aimed at improving re-enrolment and retention rates in secondary schools for girls. When girls complete their secondary education, they are less likely to be married off early and more prone to making decisions that improve their reproductive health and overall wellbeing. At the national level, ACE Charity is working closely with other civil society organizations to amend the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act to move beyond primary education to accommodate secondary education promoting nine years of free, safe and quality education.

High poverty levels also contribute to the poor education outcomes in the state especially for girls, the cost of secondary education discourages many households from sending their female children to school. Consequently, ACE Charity is working closely with education authorities in the state to eliminate ancillary costs - such as development levies, school uniform fees, PTA fees and other levies- that make the cost unaffordable for majority of households. The deliberations are being taken into consideration by the committee set up by the Borno state government to develop a sustainable education

management plan for the Mega Schools constructed by the Borno State government.

This document is the second in a series of policy briefs produced by ACE Charity for the Malala-funded Girl Child Education Project.

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