

GIRLS AT A GLANCE

7.6 million girls are OOS in Nigeria: 3.9 million at the primary and 3.7 million at the junior secondary level¹.

More than 50% of girls are not attending school² at the basic education level.

In each cohort, 1 million girls drop out between the first and last year of primary school, and 0.6 million between P6 and JSS1.

48% of OOS girls are in the Northwest and Northeast¹.

Gender parity in net attendance ratio is below 1.0 in 10 states (primarily in the North) but is decreasing in 15 states³.

9% of the poorest girls attend secondary school compared to 81% from the richest quintile⁴.

Adolescent fertility rates remain high (104 births per 1,000 women ages 15-19) and are increasing among 10- to 14-year-olds⁴.

IMPACT ON GIRLS

Violations of girls' right to education and increased risk of child marriage, early childbearing, gender-based violence and discrimination, and poor health outcomes for both girls and their children.

Poor learning and skills development outcomes.

Lack of skills for meaningful employment, and high unemployment rates, especially for girls with the lowest educational attainment.

Intergenerational poverty and inequality, high fertility rates, and a stalled demographic dividend to drive economic growth and prosperity for all.

POLICY LANDSCAPE FOR GIRLS



Education

Facts about Girls' Education

- Adolescents (10-19 years old) constitute 23% of Nigeria's population⁴.
- Supporting girls through increased secondary education and skills development is necessary to delay early marriage, child-birth, improve health and empowerment and drive economic growth.
- Poor retention in school is a major challenge: 11% of learners—and even more girls—drop out of school at each grade level.

Universal Basic Education Act (2004) and associated State UBE Laws provide free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children. The UBE Act dedicates 2% of Nigeria's Consolidated Revenue Fund annually to UBEC, but this is not always used efficiently or effectively⁷. The 3 years of senior secondary education are not free.

Only 26 states have adopted the Child Rights Act; provisions against child marriage are yet to be incorporated into state laws, and loopholes permitting child marriage persist⁴.

National Policy on Gender in Education (2021) aims to ensure equitable access for girls and promotes quality and inclusive education for all⁵.

BARRIERS AND BOTTLENECKS



1. Poverty is among the most significant barriers as school fees are prohibitive and contributes to families' decisions to keep girls' home from school.
2. Social and gender norms place a low value on education, especially for girls and promote boy-child preference. At least 1 in 4 girls are forced into early marriage and even more in the Northwest (39%)³.
3. Insecurity, including attacks on schools and abduction of school children, as well as gender-based violence at school place girls at even greater risk of harm.
4. Poor learning outcomes contribute to drop out, and girls who marry or have children lack support and pathways to return to school.
5. Lack of WASH facilities, including sex-segregated toilets and menstrual hygiene management, as well as long distances to schools, exclude girls.
6. Insufficient recruitment and supply of trained female teachers especially at junior secondary level.

UNICEF RESPONSE

1. Support to FME to develop a **National Enrolment Drive Framework** and reached over 820,000 through enrolment campaigns in 2017.
2. Mapping of OOCs and provision of **cash transfers** to enable access to and retention in school.
3. Supported the enrolment of an **additional 1.3 million girls** through the Girls Education Project Phase 3 (GEP 3) (2012-2021).
4. Implementation of **minimum standards on safe school** in 12 states.
5. Engagement with **traditional and religious leaders** in 19 northern states and FCT to commit to girl's education.
6. Development of a **policy on gender in education**, costed states gender plans & **re-entry guidelines** for girls.
7. **Improvement of infrastructure** through micro-grants to CBMCs.
8. Establishment of **high-level women's groups** in 12 states to advocate girls' education.
9. **Training** of facilitators, provision of **teaching and learning materials**, and establishment of informal **community learning hubs** to improve learning and skills development.
10. Establishment of **peer education clubs** for girls and for boys and engagement of **mothers' association** to support retention, transition, and achievement.

EDUCATION PRIORITIES FOR 2022 AND BEYOND



1. Advocate **model to bring never-enrolled girls into school** with federal and state governments (cash, community mobilization & quality of education).
2. Build a credible and replicable **model on retention and transition** including gendered analysis of drop out.
3. Expand **comprehensive mapping of OOSC**, and monitor re-entry, especially for the most vulnerable girls.
4. Provide grants to SBMCs/CBMCs to **rehabilitate school infrastructure** and advocate adequate provision in state budgets.
5. Advocate adequate **WASH infrastructure**, including separate toilets and MHM sanitation and education to improve retention.
6. Address **gender-based violence** and develop school safety implementation plans.
7. **Recruit more female teachers** especially in JSS and in rural areas.
8. Improve the **quality of teaching and learning** on ECE, FLN and on skills development (life skills and employability skills) to enable retention and transition.
9. Build credible **multiple and alternative learning pathways** and offer support for girls' re-entry.
10. Engage in multi-sectoral programming to reduce **child protection risks**, including child marriage and early childbearing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Saadhna Panday-Soobrayan
Chief Education
UNICEF Abuja, Nigeria
spanday@unicef.org

Footnotes & References

- 1 UBEC Personnel Audit and Digest of Basic Education Statistics in Nigeria, 2018 ([Link](#))
- 2 Cambridge Education. (2021). *Investment Case for Out-of-School Children in Nigeria*. Cambridge: UNICEF.
- 3 National Bureau of Statistics & UNICEF. (2017). *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016-17, Survey Findings Report*. Abuja: NBS & UNICEF. ([Link](#))
- 4 World Bank. (2022). *Nigeria Development Update: June 2022 – The Continuing Urgency of Business Unusual*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- 5 Federal Ministry of Education of Nigeria. (2021). *National Policy on Gender in Education and its Implementation Guide*. ([Link](#)).