

## Out-Of-School Girls as an Impediment to the Achievement of the UBE Goals in Plateau State

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**Abstract.** This paper investigated out-of-school girls as an impediment to the achievement of the UBE goals in Plateau State. The sample consisted of one hundred (100) respondents were used in the study. Three research questions were formulated and answered in the study to facilitate the findings of the research. Descriptive survey research design was adopted in the study and the research instrument used for this study was a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The data collected in the study was analyzed using mean score and simple percentages. From the analysis of data collected, it was discovered that there are many of out-of-school girl-children in Jos North LGA and therefore, the extent of achievement of the UBE goals is still low despite effort by stakeholders to curb the rate of out-of-school girl-children. Therefore, it is concluded in this study that there is need to put more effort towards curbing the rate of out of out-of-school girl-children in Jos North LGA of Plateau State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that early girl-child marriage should be discouraged in Nigeria and the UBE programme should be made compulsory for very Nigerian child of school age.

### Introduction

The girl-child refers to the female children between the ages of 0-18 years. The girl child is seen as a prospective mother and a home-maker, thus educating her becomes very important

because the vital role women play in the family, the society and the nation at large. However, the girl-child has been neglected when it comes to education in some parts of Nigeria. For instance, in Northern Nigeria, many parents are of the belief that educating the girl-child is a waste of resources since she will eventually end up getting married into another family. Other factors that militate against girl-child education include poor economic conditions of parents, broken homes, teenage pregnancy, early marriage and religious beliefs. It is common to find young girls of school age in small towns, streets of major cities in Plateau State including Jos roaming around and hawking pure water, groundnuts and other petty commodities rather than being in school. This phenomenon puts the girl-child at disadvantaged position because she is denied access to basic education which will equip her with knowledge, skills and value to function effectively in the society (Kabiru, 2012).

The Education for All Campaign and the Millennium Development Goals focused attention on ensuring that no child is excluded from receiving a primary education. However, despite global efforts to promote universal primary education, there were still 115 million children of primary school age out-of-school in 2013/2014. Globally, 61.6 million girls of primary school age were not in school, accounting for 53% of the total number (UNICEF, 2015). The greatest absolute numbers

of out-of-school children were found in sub-Saharan Africa (45 million) and South Asia (42 million). Education brings wide-ranging benefits to both individuals and societies. It is considered so important to individual development that the right to primary education is legally guaranteed in most countries of the world. Ajaja (2012) stated that international human rights conventions also recognize the right to education. This right has been established by a succession of UN Conventions, from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which acquired the status of international law in 1990. According to Article 28 of the Convention, governments have the responsibility of making primary education compulsory and available free to all. Education is also recognized as crucial to human development. Indeed the Education for All (EFA) movement and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) have led to greater attention paid to educational participation and completion. Universal primary education is Goal 2 of both EFA (Jomtien, 1990; reaffirmed in Dakar, 2000) and the MDGs, adopted by UN Member States in 2000 (UNESCO, 2000; UN, 2003).

For many years, education for girls has been identified as one of the best investments a society can make because of the many social and economic benefits that are accrued to it. These documented benefits include later marriage, healthier, more educated children, and more rapid economic growth. Known to be the best investment in development, girls' education has become a major issue in most developing countries. Especially in sub-Saharan Africa a large number of young girls still do not attend school. The global figure for out-of-school children is estimated at 121 million, 65 million being girls. Over 80 per cent of these girls live in Sub Saharan Africa. (Egbochuku, 2002)

In Nigeria, girls' access to basic education, especially in northern states, has remained low. As few as 20 per cent of women in the North West and North East of the country are literate and have attended school (UNICEF, 2015). In the Northern part of the country, the number of children out of school is particularly high and

the proportion of girls to boys in school ranges from one girl to two boys and even one to three in two states. Although the gender gap has narrowed from 12 to 10 points, there exist wide variations across the States and zones, with the North Central and North West presenting worst scenarios (Egbochuku 2002).

Commenting further, Egbochuku (2002) stated that the Net Attendance Ratio is at 60.10%, translating to about 40% level of non-attendance among primary school age children. In the Northern part of Nigeria, where girls' enrollment rates are already low, it is likely that those who do not participate in education are girls. Girls' education does not only bring the immediate benefit of empowering girls, but is seen as the best investment in a country's development. Educated girls develop essential life skills, including: self-confidence, the ability to participate effectively in society, and protect themselves from HIV/AIDS, sexual exploitation. Girl's education also helps cutting children and maternal mortality rates, contributing to national wealth and controlling disease and health status. Children of educated women are more likely to go to school and, consequently, this has exponential positive effects on education and poverty reduction for generations to come. (Egbochuku, 2002).

The hindrance of girl's education in Nigeria anchors on various factors-cultural, societal and economic factors. These can be viewed from early marriage and child bearing, house hold duties, parent's perceptions that schooling is more beneficial for their sons than for their daughters, worries about girl's safety outside the village environment and limited job opportunities for women in sectors that require higher education. These barriers loom large in many states and communities (Abiri, 2009).

Cultural factor also acts as barrier is the education of the girl-child. Many of the cultural and traditional practices advocated for the girl-child by their societies and families stem from the belief that females are inferior and must be controlled as well as prepared for their main role- to be wives and mothers. Cultural inhibitions are closely tied with religious

affiliations and traditional practices. For instance, in many of the predominantly Moslem states where gender gap is marketing high in Sokoto and Zamfara, girls are traditionally prevented from accessing formal school environments as a consequence of erroneous interpretation of religious injunctions. The betrothal of the girls for marriage at early age also hinders school attendance and retention. This is closely tied with teenage pregnancy. To support this assertion, Ezio (2003) stated that about 30% of the teenagers drop out of school has already begun bearing child before the age of 18. However, this practice is becoming unfashionable in homes with educated parents.

According to Mcmillen (2003), societal influence also impedes girls 'education. In rural areas, many Nigerian parents prefer to enroll the boy-child in school instead of the girl-child especially in large families where fund are limited. This is because they (parents) believe that education is more important for the boy-child and less for the girl-child. Gender roles in homes and society at large are stereotyped with the girl-child made to do greater proportion of household chores. This lack the reserve energy and spare time makes real participation in development of her community and self-development through education and training impossible even if the opportunity is available. Some parents argue that investing in the girl-child is equivalent to investing for the benefit of the family she will marry into while investment on the boy-child will be to the benefit of his family.

Economic factor is another area of impediment to the education of girls. The economic barriers are largely associated with parental poverty. With about 70% of the populace being poor most especially in the rural communities and urban ghetto settlement, the inclination is to deploy the girl-child to income generating activities rather than to school. Thus, during school hours, it is common to see more girls than boys hawking in the streets or in markets selling wares. In the process of hawking, they are exposed to all sorts of abuse including sexual abuse and the dangers of contracting HIV/AIDs and other sexual transmitted disease (Boyd, 2007).

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Many -girl-children of school age are out of school. Rather many of these them are found hawking, begging, doing menial job and prostitution. The phenomenon of out-of-school children in Nigeria is a serious problem to the entire nation and Plateau State in particular which needs urgent attention. The high rate of out-of-school girl-child in Plateau State has cumulatively undermined the achievement of the Universal Basic Education goal. As a result of ignorance, poor socio-economic background, cultural and religious misconceptions, many children are not enrolled in school. Even among the few children that are enrolled in school, many still drop out before graduation. Socio-economic factor such as low income results in children dropping out-of-school because their educational needs cannot be provided. Also, cultural and religious practices such as early marriage results in the girl child dropping out-of-school to become a wife and a mother at an early age. There is also the issue of ignorance on the part of some parents who may see western education as waste of time and resources. Such parents may withdraw their children from school to help them at home with domestic and farm work.

The problem of this study lies in providing answers to the following questions: why are girl-children of school age not attending school? What impact does out-of-school girl-children have on the achievement of Universal Basic Education goals in Plateau State? The above questions constitute the problems which this study intends to address.

## 3. Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the rate of out- of- school children and achievement of Universal Basic Education goals in Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

- Determine the causes of out-of-school girl-children in Plateau State.

- Find out the extent of achievement of the UBE enrollment goals in Plateau State.
- Find out the efforts put in place by government in Plateau State to reduce the incidence of out-of-school girl-children in the state.

**4. Research questions**

The following research questions will guide the study:

- What are the causes of out- of- school girl-children in Plateau State?
- To what extent have the UBE enrolment goals for the girl-child been achieved in Jos North LGA?
- What are the efforts put in place by the government to reduce the incidence of out-of-school girl-children in Plateau State?

**5. Methodology**

Descriptive survey research design was employed in carrying out this study. The

descriptive survey assesses out-of-school girls as an impediment to the achievement of the UBE goals in Plateau State. The population for the study consisted of all the out-of-school girls, teachers and head-teachers of the UBE schools in Jos North Local Government Area. The sample consisted of one hundred (100) respondents consisting of 10 head-teachers and 30 teachers and 70 out-of-school girl-children. The research instrument used for this study was a questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument was divided into two parts. Part one consisted of personal data of the respondent. Part two sought information on the causes of out-of-school girls and achievement of the UBE goals in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents who formed the sample used for the study. The data collection exercise took two weeks to complete. The data obtained from this study were analyzed using simple percentage and mean score and standard deviation

**6. Results**

**Research Question One:** What are the causes of out-of-school girl-children in Jos North LGA?

**Table 1:** Showing the Responses on the Causes of Out- Of-School Girl-Children in Jos LGA

S/N	Statement	Responses					Mean score	Decision
		SA (5)	A (4)	UD (3)	D (2)	SD (1)		
1	Ignorance of the importance of education by parents	44	16	10	23	7	3.28	Agreed
2	Poor mobilization by government and non-governmental agencies	36	39	4	18	3	3.54	Agreed
3.	High dropout rate of children from the UBE	33	30	7	18	12	3.30	Agreed
4	Poor parental enlightenment by government and non-governmental organisations	41	29	3	17	10	3.50	Agreed
5	Cultural factor	49	21	2	20	8	3.51	Agreed
6	Poor socio-economic status of parents	29	28	2	21	20	3.03	Agreed

The results of the analysis in table 1 shows that ignorance of the importance of education by parents, poor mobilization by government and non-governmental agencies, high dropout rate of children from the UBE, poor parental enlightenment by government and non-governmental organisations, cultural factors and poor socio-economic status of parents are all causes of out-of-school girl-children in Jos North LGA.

**Research Question Two:** To what extent have the UBE enrolment goals for the girl-child been achieved in Jos North LGA?

**Table 2:** Showing the Results of the Extent of Achievement of UBE Goals for the girl-child in Jos North LGA

S/N	UBE Goals	Extent of achievement					
		High	%	Moderate	%	Low	%
1	Enrolment of the girl-child in the UBE programme	22	22%	58	58%	20	20%
2	Retention of the girl-child in the UBE programme	27	27%	43	43%	30	30%
3	Completion rate of the girl-child in the UBE programme	21	21%	50	50%	29	29%
4	Quality education for the girl-child in the UBE programme	20	20%	57	57%	23	23%

The results of the analysis in table 2 show the extent to which UBE goals have been achieved in Jos North LGA. From the responses on enrolment goal, 22 respondents representing 22% agreed that the extent of the achievement of enrolment goal is while, 58 respondents representing 58% said it is moderate while 20 respondents representing 20% said the extent of achievement of enrolment goal in the UBE is low. From the responses on the achievement of retention goal in the UBE, 21 respondents representing 21% agreed the extent of retention in the UBE programme was high. 43 respondents representing 43% agreed that the extent of retention in the UBE programme was moderate while 30 respondents representing 30% said it was low. From the responses on the extent of achievement of completion goal in the UBE programme, 21 respondents representing 21% said the extent of achievement of completion goal in the UBE was high, 50 respondents representing 50% said it was moderate while 29 respondents representing 29% said it was low. From the responses on the extent of achievement of quality education goal in the UBE programme, 20 respondents representing 20% said it was high, 57 respondents representing 57% said it was moderate while 23 respondents representing 23% said it was low.

**Research Question Three:** To what extent have the efforts of stakeholders reduced incidence of out-of-school girl-children in Jos North LGA?

**Table 3:** Showing Responses on the Efforts of Stakeholders Towards Reduction of Out-of-school Children in Jos North LGA

S/N	Efforts of Stakeholders	Extent of achievement					
		High	%	Moderate	%	Low	%
1	Making the UBE programme compulsory for all school age girl-children by law	30	30%	23	23%	47	47%
2	Providing easy access to the UBE schools in rural and urban areas	10	10%	39	39%	51	51%
3	Enlightenment campaign on the admission and re-admission of dropouts into the UBE programme	25	25%	22	22%	53	53%
4	Discouraging early girl-child marriage	20	20%	24	24%	56	56%

The results of the analysis in table 3 reveals the responses of respondents towards the extent to which the effort of stakeholders towards reducing of the incidence of out-of-school girl-children in Bassa LGA of Plateau State. From the analysis, 30 respondents representing 30% agreed that the extent to which stakeholders

have made the UBE programme compulsory for all school girl-children by law is high, 23 respondents representing 23% said it is at moderate level while 47 respondents representing 47% said it is at low level. From the statement on the extent to which stakeholders have provided easy access to the

UBE schools in rural and urban schools, 10 respondents representing 10% said to a high extent, 39 respondents representing 39% said to a moderate extent while 51 respondents representing 51% said to a very low extent. From the statement on the extent to which stakeholders have carried out enlightenment campaign on the admission and re-admission of dropouts into the UBE programme, 25 respondents representing 25% said to high extent, 22 respondents representing 22% said to a moderate extent while 53 respondents representing 53% said to a very low extent. From the responses on the extent to which stakeholder have discouraged early girl-child marriage in Plateau State, 20 respondents representing 20% said to a very high extent, 24 respondents representing 24% said to a moderate extent, while 56 respondents representing 56% said to a low extent.

## 7. Discussion

Findings from the analysis of research question on the causes of out-of-school girl-children in Jos North Local Government Area revealed that the causes of out-of-school girl-children include ignorance of the importance of education by parents, poor mobilization by government and non-governmental agencies, high dropout rate of girl-children from the UBE and cultural factors

Research question two which sought to know the extent to which the UBE enrolment goals been achieved in Jos North LGA is analyzed. The findings from the analysis revealed that enrolment, retention, completion and quality of the UBE programme in Jos North Local Government Area are all rated at a moderate level

Findings from the analysis of research question three revealed that revealed that effort put in place by stakeholders to reduce the incidence of out- of -school girl-children include making the UBE programme compulsory for all school age girl-children by law, providing easy access to the UBE schools in rural and urban areas, enlightenment campaign on the admission and re-admission of dropouts into the UBE

programme and discouraging early girl-child marriage.

## 8. Conclusion

From the aforementioned findings, it is obvious that there are still high numbers of out-of-school girl-children in Jos North LGA and therefore, the extent of achievement of the UBE goals is still low despite effort by stakeholders to curb the rate of out-of-school girl-children. Therefore, it is concluded in this study that there is need to put more effort towards curbing the rate of out of out-of-school girl-children in Jos North LGA of Plateau State.

## 9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were proffered:

- More UBE schools should be established in Jos North LGA to accommodate the high number of out-of-school girl-children in the LGA
- The UBE programme should be made compulsory for very Nigerian child of school age
- Child marriage should be discouraged in Nigeria and be made punishable by law.
- Enlightenment campaigns should be carried out by government and other stakeholders on the need for enrolment and re-admission for dropouts from the UBE programme
- Adequate instructional materials for teaching and learning should be provided in the UBE schools
- Parents in Jos North LGA should be enlightened and mobilized to enroll their girl-children in the UBE programme

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