

## Problems of Gender Differentials in Literacy and Enrolment Among the Yorubas of South- West Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT** This study was designed in response to the general concern for the low educational status of Nigerian women. Data for the study were obtained from a survey conducted in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Osun and Oyo states of South Western Nigeria. These include Ola-Oluwa in Osun State and Ogo-Oluwa in Oyo state, the two LGAs where the existing disparity is worsening to the disadvantage of women and girl child and Obokun local government area in Osun state with high female literacy and enrolment serving as control local government area. The study revealed the depth of the problem of gender disparity. It revealed (i) that the main causes of gender disparity are fear of early marriage and pregnancy, the poor attitudes of government, escalating costs and cultural factors (ii) that mostly in Muslim communities, parents and girls share the culture of early marriage and work towards it quite early, and (iii) that parents were more interested in boys' education than girls'. To tackle these problems, measures such as public enlightenment, free education at all levels, improved infrastructure and teaching standards, literacy campaigns as well as increased financial commitment by the parents were recommended.

### INTRODUCTION

The crisis in development in the education sector in Africa has been topical for more than a decade. There is greater concern now than ever before because the crisis has worsened since the series of economic stabilization measures introduced in the 1980s and the political instability, which has plague the continent. In Nigeria, these macro structural instabilities have led to cuts in public expenditure, threatened the policy environment and led to deteriorating infrastructure, low school enrolment, high drop out rates, poor quality education, poor teacher motivation and performance. Consequently, Social and Policy Analysis (SAPA) study of 1993 reported that in spite of a national policy on free education, the expectation of a gradual and continuous rise in enrolment in primary school relative to the primary school age population

has not been met. Thus, the 80.1 percent enrolment recorded for 1984/85 dropped to 66.5 percent in 1987; 68.7 percent in 1989 and 60.1 percent in 1992 (SAPA, 1993).

Nigeria is one of the countries identified by UNESCO as accounting for 75.2 percent of the world's illiterates (UNESCO, 1990). In 1979, two out of three illiterate persons were females. Nigeria had experienced the post-war increase in enrolment and literacy for the overall population and for females. The male/female ratio in gross primary school enrolment between 1986 and 1991 was 82 to 63 compared with 54 to 31 in 1960. In 1988, the proportion of grade one enrolments reaching end of primary school was 52 and the secondary enrolment ratio was 22 males to 19 females. Recent estimates (World Population Data Sheet, 1992) indicate a gender gap of 22 percent, the male education index at 47 percent and the female education index at 40 percent. Also female literacy is estimated to be 40 percent compared with 62 percent for males.

The magnitude of the crisis of education in Nigeria and of the gender gap in particular is more explicitly shown in regional and sub-regional variations. Two decades after the National Policy on Education and government attempts to establish Universal Primary Education, there are substantial variations in literacy between the Southern and Northern states. About 58 percent of females have never been to school. Higher proportions, 87.8 percent and 83.7 percent respectively have never been to school in the North-West and North-East compared with 43.1 percent and 29.7 percent in the South-East and South-West (Federal Office of Statistics, 1990).

The problems of the Nigerian education sector are most apparent in the decline in total enrolment between 1982 and 1987 from 14.6 million to 11.5 million in 1987 (UNICEF, 1990). The proportion of females enrolled over the period was less than 50 percent and stabilized at

43-44 percent rising to 44.9 percent in 1989. In the majority of the Northern states, female primary enrolment was about 30 percent, suggesting a higher gender gap than in the Southern states. Further disaggregation of the educational statistics in line with government's decentralization programmes show higher gender gaps in areas designated as educationally advantaged as well as in the disadvantaged areas. Overall female primary enrolment in the South-Western states of Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti states was between 48 percent and 49 percent between 1982 and 1989. Disaggregating the data in subsequent surveys showed for instance that female primary enrolment was below 40 percent in some local government areas, while secondary enrolment was as low as 30 percent.

In realization of the need to bridge the gender gap throughout the country, the Federal Ministry of Education launched the Women Education Programme in 1986, while several donor agencies are strengthening government initiatives at the national, state and local government levels. It has become obvious to all stakeholders in education that new strategies would be required to achieve the success of new initiatives. Policy makers and implementers have come to realize that earlier educational policies failed to reduce the gender disparity and overcome socio-cultural constraints partly because of the inappropriateness of educational development strategies based on modernization and basic needs strategies. Such approaches are not only elitist and top-down they are comprehended and implemented by foreign and national elites with poor political and public commitment. This paper therefore considers an examination of gender differentials in education an appropriate thing to do at the moment. It attempts to suggest measures, which can be taken to overcome the limitations of various approaches to remove gender inequality and improve female literacy and enrolment. The paper thus compliments other studies on constraints to female education in Nigeria.

#### DATA AND METHOD

The study was carried out in the two most educationally disadvantaged local government areas in two of the five states in South-Western Nigeria – Oyo and Osun states. One local government area with the highest gender gap was selected from each state using official

statistics. The selected local government areas are Ogo-Oluwa in Oyo state and Ola-Oluwa in Osun state. Obokun local government area in Osun state was selected as the control local government area on account of the higher female literacy and enrolment rates relative to males. The Local Government had 51 percent and 48.3 percent primary and secondary enrolment respectively in 1994 (Osun State Ministry of Education, 1994). The two experimental local government areas (Ola-Oluwa and Ogo-Oluwa) selected for this study have wide gender disparities which are results of the level of socio-economic development of the local government areas relative to the third (Obokun), the control local government area, as well as their cultural traditions (Table 1). The two experimental local governments areas were created in order to bring development closer to the people.

The study was initiated with the collection of secondary data on literacy and enrolment in the selected states and local government areas. These data were used for the selection of target local government areas. This was followed by the collection of primary data on female literacy, enrolment, attitudes to and perceptions of female education in the selected local government areas with prepared interview schedules.

A multi-stage sample design was adopted for the study. Each local government area was divided into clusters based on the spread of educational infrastructure represented in local government area maps and documentation. Five clusters with low female literacy and enrolment rates were selected in the two experimental local government areas, while two clusters were selected in the control local government area. There are fifteen communities in each cluster. The survey was carried out in these communities. The household data collected were used to select a community with the highest gender differential in enrolment in each local government area. The target communities in the two experimental local government areas for the qualitative studies were the two with the highest gender gap in literacy and enrolment, Ogbaagba in Ola-Oluwa and Iwo-Ate in Ogo-Oluwa local government area. Where the Primary Health Care (PHC) household listing had been completed, eighty households were selected randomly in each cluster representing about ten percent of the total population. All dwellings were listed where there were no PHC numbers and all the households were listed to make up the master sample. Eighty households were selected from

each of master list. Interviews were carried out in a total of 969 households (200 in Obokun, 400 in Ogo-Oluwa and 369 in Ola-Oluwa). In each of the households, the household head (either male or female), a woman with a school-age child, and a school-age child were interviewed. Analyses in this paper were based on responses from these three categories of respondents.

Focus group discussions were conducted with parents and school children in each of the two target communities for the qualitative studies. Observations with respect to gender relations were also carried out at both the household level and in schools. Those carried out in schools were for the assessment of the quality of education and gender differentials in learning process.

Descriptive statistics were used to present the vast qualitative and quantitative data collected. The interview schedules were coded and analyzed with the SPSS with emphasis on frequency distributions, cross-tabulations of the parameters, and their influence on literacy and enrolment.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Causes of Gender Disparity in Literacy and Enrolment

The causes of gender disparity in literacy and enrolment are too widely known from the existing literature (Kwamboka, 1995; Isiugo-Abanihe, 1991; Awe, 1990; and Allele-Williams, 1988). In Africa region, economic, socio-cultural and religious factors have been highlighted. Poor infrastructure, the poor quality of education, and geographical factors are also considered significant. What is not usually established in most studies is the particular set of factors important to specific groups, which need to be manipulated through policy and the extent to which there are changes in these sets of factors.

In this study, these causes of gender disparity resounded and only differed slightly between

the different groups of respondents. There were also differences between the local government areas depending on their socio-cultural context and levels of development.

Household heads tended to emphasize structural and cultural constraints to female education (Table 2). Factors such as early marriage and pregnancy, poor commitment of government and parents to the education of the girl child, stereo-typing girls as non-achievers by teachers, financial constraints, fear of unemployment for girls, religion, poor performance of girls in schools, the high cost of educational materials and irregular payment of teachers' salary were indicated by household heads. In the three local government areas, the most frequently occurring reasons given by household heads were early marriage, poor attitudes of government and parents to female education, and the negative attitudes of girls to schooling. Cost-related factors were the fourth most frequently mentioned reasons, while cultural reasons were mentioned by very small proportion (Table 2).

The fear of early marriage/pregnancy was less felt by household heads in Obokun presumably because of the higher educational status of its populace. However, the negative attitude of girls to schooling was considered a major problem in the community. The fear of pregnancy was more in Ogo-Oluwa than in Ola-Oluwa where the most frequently cited factor was the poor attitude of government and parents to female education; although it was not clear which government was referred to. The poor attitude of parents probably stemmed from the bias of the Islamic population against female education.

As far as the children were concerned, the causes of gender disparity in education were related to women's traditional roles and their personal attitudes, which may also stem from their religious orientation. In Ola-Oluwa, the majority of the children believed that "lack of knowledge" was responsible, a factor which was not emphasized in Obokun and Ogo-Oluwa by a significant proportion of the sampled population. The fear of pregnancy and early marriage was second in importance in this local government area, although it was the most important in both Obokun and Ogo-Oluwa. In Ola-Oluwa and Ogo-Oluwa, finance was important and raised the relevance of poverty. That the girls have a negative attitude to schooling was fourth in importance in Ola-Oluwa and was also mentioned in Ogo-Oluwa (see Table 2).

**Table 1: Gender disparity in enrolment by local government Area, 1999**

| <i>Local government area</i> | <i>Male enrolled</i> | <i>Female enrolled</i> | <i>Disparity</i> |
|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| Obokun                       | 38.3 (124)           | 61.7 (200)             | 23.4 (M)         |
| Ogo-Oluwa                    | 51.9 (179)           | 48.1 (166)             | 3.8 (F)          |
| Ola-Oluwa                    | 53.3 (201)           | 43.7 (156)             | 9.6 (F)          |

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by perception of causes of gender disparity in literacy and school enrolment, 1999**

| <i>Causes of gender disparity</i>                 | <i>Local Government Area (LGA)</i> |                  |                  |              |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
|                                                   | <i>Obokun</i>                      | <i>Ogo-Oluwa</i> | <i>Ola-Oluwa</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| <i>A. Household Heads</i>                         |                                    |                  |                  |              |
| Early marriage/premarital pregnancy               | 12.4 (18)                          | 26.8 (141)       | 18.1 (89)        | 21.3 (248)   |
| Government attitude                               | 17.9 (26)                          | 10.4 (55)        | 19.6 (96)        | 15.2 (177)   |
| Teachers' behaviour                               | 12.4 (18)                          | 3.4 (18)         | 3.5 (17)         | 4.6 (53)     |
| Financial constraints                             | 11.7 (17)                          | 18.8 (99)        | 13.2 (65)        | 15.6 (181)   |
| Large family size                                 | -                                  | 0.2 (01)         | 0.6 (03)         | 0.3 (04)     |
| Religion                                          | -                                  | -                | 1.4 (07)         | 0.6 (07)     |
| Fear of unemployment                              | -                                  | 0.4 (02)         | 1.0 (05)         | 0.6 (07)     |
| Bad economy                                       | 3.4 (05)                           | 4.2 (22)         | 3.3 (16)         | 3.7 (43)     |
| Irregularity in the payment of teachers' salaries | 0.7 (01)                           | 0.4 (02)         | 0.8 (04)         | 0.6 (07)     |
| Negative to girls schooling and low productivity  | 24.9 (36)                          | 15.6 (82)        | 17.7 (87)        | 17.6 (205)   |
| Preference for boy's education                    | 2.6 (04)                           | 3.0 (16)         | 4.7 (23)         | 3.7 (43)     |
| Cost of educational materials                     | 4.8 (07)                           | 1.5 (08)         | 1.2 (06)         | 1.8 (21)     |
| Others                                            | 9.0 (13)                           | 15.4 (81)        | 14.9 (73)        | 14.4 (167)   |
| <i>B. Mothers</i>                                 |                                    |                  |                  |              |
| Financial constraints                             | 2.5 (06)                           | 6.5 (22)         | 13.8 (40)        | 7.8 (68)     |
| Early marriage/pregnancy                          | 1.2 (03)                           | 3.2 (11)         | 3.1 (09)         | 2.6 (23)     |
| Women education is a waste                        | -                                  | 0.3 (01)         | 7.6 (22)         | 2.6 (23)     |
| Gender determines who go to school                | 0.4 (01)                           | 1.5 (05)         | 3.5 (10)         | 1.8 (16)     |
| Girls not interested in education                 | 3.7 (09)                           | 10.6 (36)        | 2.4 (07)         | 6.0 (52)     |
| No problem                                        | 0.8 (02)                           | 1.2 (04)         | 2.1 (06)         | 1.4 (12)     |
| Others                                            | 2.1 (05)                           | 14.4 (49)        | 8.3 (24)         | 8.9 (78)     |
| No reason/don't know                              | 89.3 (217)                         | 62.5 (213)       | 59.2 (171)       | 68.8 (601)   |
| <i>C. Children</i>                                |                                    |                  |                  |              |
| Loss of parents                                   | -                                  | 2.2 (08)         | 9.1 (32)         | 4.4 (40)     |
| Financial handicaps                               | 1.0 (02)                           | 26.0 (94)        | 19.4 (68)        | 17.9 (164)   |
| Education already completed                       | -                                  | 1.1 (04)         | 1.1 (04)         | 0.9 (08)     |
| Dad refused to change old ideas                   | -                                  | 9.4 (34)         | 8.8 (31)         | 7.1 (65)     |
| Teachers' strike                                  | -                                  | 0.3 (01)         | 0.9 (03)         | 0.4 (04)     |
| Government policies/actions                       | -                                  | 1.4 (05)         | 0.3 (01)         | 0.7 (06)     |
| Examination failure                               | -                                  | 0.3 (01)         | 0.6 (02)         | 0.3 (03)     |
| Others                                            | 28.6 (58)                          | 23.8 (86)        | 28.8 (101)       | 26.8 (245)   |
| No reason/don't know                              | 70.4 (143)                         | 35.5 (128)       | 31.1 (109)       | 41.5 (380)   |

The causes of disparity at the household level were much more specific and were related to personal experiences and community characteristics. In the less literate communities of Ola-Oluwa, that "female education ends in marriage" was a major disincentive. Female education was also believed to be destabilizing as many educated women now agitate for change in traditional roles and decision-making processes. In this predominantly Muslim local government area, girls marry early and attend Islamic schools, which help to preserve traditional gender roles.

Mothers and children presented a wider range of explanations. Financial constraint was the most emphasized in Ola-Oluwa and recalls the poverty of the local government area. Attitudinal factors appeared to be secondary to the women. In Ogo-Oluwa, some mothers believed that girls

were not really interested in education. Finance was also the most important constraint mentioned by the children particularly in Ola-Oluwa and Ogo-Oluwa (Table 2). Also indicated were the fear of early pregnancy and the belief that female education was a waste.

Given the country's present economic crisis, parents are forced to selectively train their children and train boys rather than girls. Intricately tied to this was the fear of early pregnancy, which would lead to the loss of resources already expended on the training of girls. Also, financial constraint was the most important cause of the disparity in education experienced by girls. In both Ogo-Oluwa and Ola-Oluwa, 28.8 percent and 22.8 percent of the children identified this factor. The belief that female education was a waste and the fear of

early pregnancy were also important to the children.

Table 3 shows that distance to school was not a strong causal factor for primary enrolment since there was at least, one primary school in every community studied. The distance walked to a primary school of choice was less than one kilometer in 69.7 percent households. Although secondary schools are shared by several communities 63.6 percent walked less than three kilometers to school. The distance between home and school was the least constraining factor identified in Ola-Oluwa, which had the highest disparity rate. Generally, girls tended to walk fewer distances to school than boys.

Both household heads and mothers believed that the infrastructure for both primary and secondary education was inadequate. Over 84 percent of household heads and 74 percent of mothers believed that the number of primary school in these communities was generally inadequate. Ironically, smaller proportions said secondary schools were inadequate. Table 3 further shows the negative assessment of teaching facilities, that is buildings, and teaching materials/equipments by parents. Field observations showed that most of the buildings

were dilapidated. In many cases, children were taught in the open air with tree foliage providing coverage from the hot sun, especially in cases where school buildings had crumbled under rainstorms or whirlwind. Parents believed that the inadequacy of school facilities generally led to poor academic performance of school children. Despite this, many of them indicated that, to a large extent, the inadequacy of facilities in schools did not influence which child to send to school. Although most parents would send both boys and girls to school in spite of this inadequacy, the 25.9 percent household heads and 19.5 percent of mothers who showed preference for boys rather than their girls were of the opinion that if the infrastructure in a school did not augur well for learning, this would expose girls to early pregnancy.

How these and other factors constrained the enrolment of girls, were extensively discussed during the focus group discussion sessions. Some of the middle-age women interviewed put the blame on the girls and their parents. They explained that parents sent boys to schools and kept them there longer because the major aspiration is for girls to get married. On the other hand, since this is the general norm, girls tend not to take school work seriously and either terminate school before completing the first tier or without going on to higher level.

The traditionalism attributed to parents was believed to be the main factor of the gender differences in adult literacy. One adult female lamented being denied the opportunity to go to school, which she said was her major aspiration. Participants in a focus group discussion at Iwo-Ate explained that:

“At a much earlier period in the history of education in the community, it was common to prepare girls for marriage during the school age period when boys were in school”.

In a lot of cases, girls were pawns and were denied access to school.

In analyzing the causes of the problem of gender disparity, most of the focus group discussion participants emphasized the importance of marriage to girls and the propensity to work towards it at an early age. This was believed to be the major reason why the girls were not serious with school work and their susceptibility to early marriage. Some male participants observed that girls should not take all the blame. The unfavourable attitudes of parents and the gender division of labour at the

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents by distance walked to school, teaching facilities, adequacy of primary schools and available teaching facilities in their community, 1999**

|                                       | Household Head | Women       | Total        |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>A. Distance</b>                    |                |             |              |
| Less than one kilometer               | 56.9 (551)     | 54.3 (527)  | 55.6 (1078)  |
| 1-2 kilometer                         | 24.7 (239)     | 25.4 (246)  | 25.0 (485)   |
| 2-4 kilometer                         | -              | 4.1 (40)    | 2.1 (40)     |
| 5+ kilometer                          | -              | 3.4 (33)    | 1.7 (33)     |
| No response                           | 18.5 (179)     | 12.8 (124)  | 15.6 (303)   |
| <b>B. Teaching Facilities</b>         |                |             |              |
| Adequate                              | 3.6 (35)       | 6.5 (63)    | 5.1 (98)     |
| Inadequate                            | 83.6 (813)     | 77.3 (750)  | 80.6 (1563)  |
| Not sure                              | 7.8 (76)       | 3.4 (33)    | 5.6 (109)    |
| No response                           | 4.6 (45)       | 12.8 (124)  | 8.7 (169)    |
| <b>C. Adequacy of Primary Schools</b> |                |             |              |
| Adequate                              | 4.1 (88)       | 10.7 (104)  | 9.9 (192)    |
| Inadequate                            | 84.4 (818)     | 74.3 (721)  | 79.4 (1539)  |
| Not sure                              | 3.7 (36)       | 3.6 (34)    | 3.6 (70)     |
| No response                           | 2.8 (27)       | 11.4 (111)  | 7.1 (138)    |
| <b>D. Child Sent to School</b>        |                |             |              |
| Boys                                  | 25.9 (251)     | 19.6 (190)  | 22.7 (441)   |
| Girls                                 | 2.9 (28)       | 3.0 (29)    | 2.9 (57)     |
| Both                                  | 67.2 (651)     | 64.5 (626)  | 65.9 (1277)  |
| No response                           | 4.0 (39)       | 12.9 (125)  | 8.5 (164)    |
| Total                                 | 100.0 (969)    | 100.0 (970) | 100.0 (1939) |

household level were considered impediments to female education. According to some of them:

“...some girls do not value education; instead of schooling, they prefer to do something else because they will end up in someone else’s house”.

Some further observed that:

“... out of the number of girls we have in the school, few of them know why they are in school... The majority would leave home under the pretext that they were going to school and would end up in a man’s house or in a brothel”.

Others still noted that:

“If a girl has her fiancée who has been promising her marriage, there is no way her mind will be in whatever she is being taught in school...”

An adolescent female admitted that:

“Our parents prefer boys’ education because they often say that whatever a girl attains will be taken to another man’s house but the boys will remain in their fathers’ house”.

Data from the interview survey for children also complement some of these focus group discussions’ findings. Children in Iwo-Ate and Ogbagba itemized the following as the causes of gender disparity in education: poverty in families, fear of pregnancy among young females, parental bias and their preference to train male children, and the general belief that “female education is a waste”. Notably, children from Ibokun did not hold many of these views. Rather, majority of the children in Ibokun said that their mothers were mainly responsible for their upkeep and schooling. Such mothers tried within their limited means to train both boys and girls. In cases where females drop out of school, it might be because of unplanned pregnancy or lack of motivation on the part of the girl and not often because of cultural preference for the education of the male child.

Parents did not deny some of these allegations, but they also held girls responsible. Some of the male adults said some mothers were indulgent and were responsible for their children not staying in school. Mothers emphasized the fear of pregnancy as a prime reason for not encouraging girls to stay for a long time in the educational system.

Finally, in Ogbagba, which is predominantly a Muslim community, it was obvious during the focus group discussions that the norm of early marriage was derived from religion. It was a

common practice to stop girls at the primary level after which they marry and go into *purdah*. Those not ready for marriage are sent to Arabic schools to learn Koran.

### Problems Ensuing from Disparity in Education

The most frequently mentioned problems of gender disparity in education by household heads and mothers included: female under-development and backwardness, hatred and intra-familial squabbles, poverty and illiteracy, high school drop-out rates, poorly motivated children, control of public posts by men and unemployment of women. Other problems recognized were early marriage, premarital pregnancy and premature motherhood. The under-development of women, illiteracy and backwardness were pointed out in most households in the three local government areas and especially in Ola-Oluwa, which is indicated by the data had the highest disparity rate. Also problematic in the local government area were the high drop-out of girls and poverty (Table 4). Children were not aware of a wide range of problems created by gender disparity in literacy and school enrolment. The most important problems identified by the children was the poor access of women to highly paying jobs, and the likelihood that such uneducated girls in the family will eventually serve the other educated siblings, and would always occupy positions of less value in the family compared to others who are educated.

### Closing Gender Gap in Education

The “Education for All” drive dates back to 1948, when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights effected the right of everyone to education. But, it was not until the World Declaration on Education for All in January 1990 that the Federal Government and International Agencies in Nigeria initiated new strategies for promoting “Education for All” including “Education for Girls”.

Prior to the Education Conference in Jomtein, the Nigeria Government had started to draw attention to female education in response to several global initiatives. Such initiatives include the 1975-1985 United Nations Women’s Decade with the theme “Equality, Development and Peace”, the 1991 Lagos Plan of Action in which member countries of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) formulated strategies for economic

development in Africa for 1980-2000. It stressed the need to give priority to women in the areas of organizational machinery; education, training and employment, communication and mass media; health, nutrition and family life; data collection and analysis, legislative and administrative matters. The 1985 Nairobi "Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women" promoted and identified three strategies for the development of women namely health, education and employment (Afonja and Aina, 1995).

Nigeria produced a blueprint on women's education in 1986, the outcome of a national workshop on Women Education in Nigeria. The workshop came up with a series of recommendations in order to improve women's access to education through both formal and non-formal systems. It was observed that conditions for post-primary education require cooperation between and among the different agents of education. Also, subsequent to the national implementation of the resolution arrived at, both at the 1982 Harare Regional Conference of

Ministers of Education and the Jomtein World Conference on Education for All in 1990, the Federal Government of Nigeria promulgated a Decree 17, which established the National Commission for Mass Literacy and Adult Non-Formal Education in June 26, 1990 with the objective of providing functional literacy to women. The Federal Government of Nigeria in collaboration with UNICEF established Women Education Centres for both women and men all over the country.

Many of these educational programmes, particularly the "Women Education Centres" have not been able to meet their noble objectives because of lack of finance, and the present economic crisis (Osemwegie et al., 1993). Also, little has been done in practical terms to fulfil the conditions for improving female access to formal education as laid out in the Nairobi blueprint on women's education, as the country is still battling with political problems and economic hardships.

In order to reduce the gender disparity in education in Nigeria, it was emphasized that

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents by effects of disparity by local government area, 1999**

|                                    | Local Government Area |            |            |            |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                                    | Obokun                | Ogo-Oluwa  | Ola-Oluwa  | Total      |
| <b>A. Household Heads</b>          |                       |            |            |            |
| Underdevelopment                   |                       | 18.2 (18)  | 19.7 (91)  | 39.4 (156) |
| Engenders hatred                   |                       | 5.1 (05)   | 1.5 (07)   | 1.8 (17)   |
| No problem                         |                       | 3.0 (03)   | 0.9 (04)   | 18.4 (73)  |
| Differences in education           |                       | 9.1 (09)   | 5.0 (23)   | 2.0 (08)   |
| Children not properly trained      |                       | 8.1 (08)   | 5.0 (23)   | 1.0 (04)   |
| Men better placed in society       |                       | 2.0 (02)   | 2.2 (10)   | 3.8 (15)   |
| Women dependent                    |                       | 1.0 (01)   | 1.5 (07)   | 1.3 (05)   |
| Men dominance                      |                       | 7.1 (07)   | 1.5 (07)   | 2.5 (10)   |
| Illiteracy/backwardness            |                       | 21.2 (21)  | 28.9 (134) | 22.7 (90)  |
| Others                             |                       | 25.3 (25)  | 33.9 (157) | 7.6 (30)   |
| <b>B. Mothers</b>                  |                       |            |            |            |
| Underdevelopment/Backwardness      |                       | 15.6 (38)  | 24.3 (83)  | 30.5 (88)  |
| Hatred/intra family squabbles      |                       | 4.9 (12)   | 3.5 (12)   | 3.8 (11)   |
| Poverty/illiteracy                 |                       | 8.6 (21)   | 17.9 (61)  | 8.3 (24)   |
| High drop out rates                |                       | 4.9 (12)   | 15.8 (54)  | 27.0 (78)  |
| Children are discouraged           |                       | 7.0 (17)   | 7.9 (27)   | 23.5 (68)  |
| Public posts controlled by men     |                       | 0.4 (01)   | 0.3 (01)   | 5.5 (16)   |
| Women unemployment                 |                       | 1.7 (04)   | 4.4 (15)   | 1.7 (05)   |
| No problem                         |                       | 3.7 (09)   | 4.7 (16)   | 6.2 (18)   |
| Others                             |                       | 40.7 (99)  | 43.7 (149) | 11.1 (32)  |
| No response                        |                       | -          | 22.6 (77)  | 17.7 (51)  |
| <b>C. Children</b>                 |                       |            |            |            |
| Lack of women in professional jobs |                       | -          | 1.1 (04)   | 0.9 (03)   |
| Over Population                    |                       | 1.0 (02)   | 0.6 (02)   | 0.6 (02)   |
| Others                             |                       | -          | 0.3 (01)   | 2.0 (07)   |
| No response                        |                       | 99.0 (201) | 97.8 (353) | 96.6 (339) |

**Table 5: Distribution of respondents by ways to improve girls education, 1999**

| Ways                       | Heads        | Women        | Total        |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Public enlightenment       | 17.5 (218)   | 17.9 (240)   | 17.7 (458)   |
| Provide facilities         | 25.5 (317)   | 22.8 (305)   | 24.1 (622)   |
| Free education             | 9.5 (118)    | 8.4 (113)    | 9.0 (231)    |
| Introduce sex education    | 2.3 (28)     | 1.1 (15)     | 1.7 (43)     |
| Counseling girls/parents   | 6.3 (78)     | 9.4 (126)    | 7.9 (204)    |
| Counsel to stop purdah     | 0.8 (10)     | 1.0 (13)     | 0.9 (23)     |
| Free medical check up      | 0.8 (10)     | 2.1 (28)     | 1.5 (38)     |
| Scholarships               | 1.7 (21)     | 2.4 (32)     | 2.1 (53)     |
| Encourage girls            | 12.2 (151)   | 2.5 (33)     | 7.1 (184)    |
| Improve teaching standards | -            | 9.4 (126)    | 4.9 (126)    |
| Organise women classes     | -            | 2.7 (36)     | 1.4 (36)     |
| Job opportunities          | -            | 1.9 (26)     | 1.0 (26)     |
| Others                     | 23.5 (292)   | 18.4 (246)   | 20.8 (538)   |
| Total                      | 100.0 (1243) | 100.0 (1339) | 100.0 (2582) |

parents need to be mobilized and sensitized (Table 5). These are to ensure equal opportunities for both boys and girls and generate a change of attitudes so that equal value could be placed on both boys and girls. It was also suggested that parents should stop the institution of *purdah*, while government should legislate against it. It was considered important for communities to run scholarship programmes for girls. There could also be public enlightenment and mobilization programmes that could encourage girls to show more interest in schooling. Finally, to reduce the disparities in education, the political will for change at the very top levels of government must be matched by a demand from parents and communities, that is, full grass-roots participation. These essentials are still lacking, hence the crisis in education persists with grave consequences.

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