




MALALA³²
FUND



**Preliminary Report
and Recommendations
on Policy Priorities
from School-Based
Needs Assessment
with Schools
Governing Board (SGB)
in Oyo State.**

Prepared by Aid for Rural Education Access Initiative (AREAi)

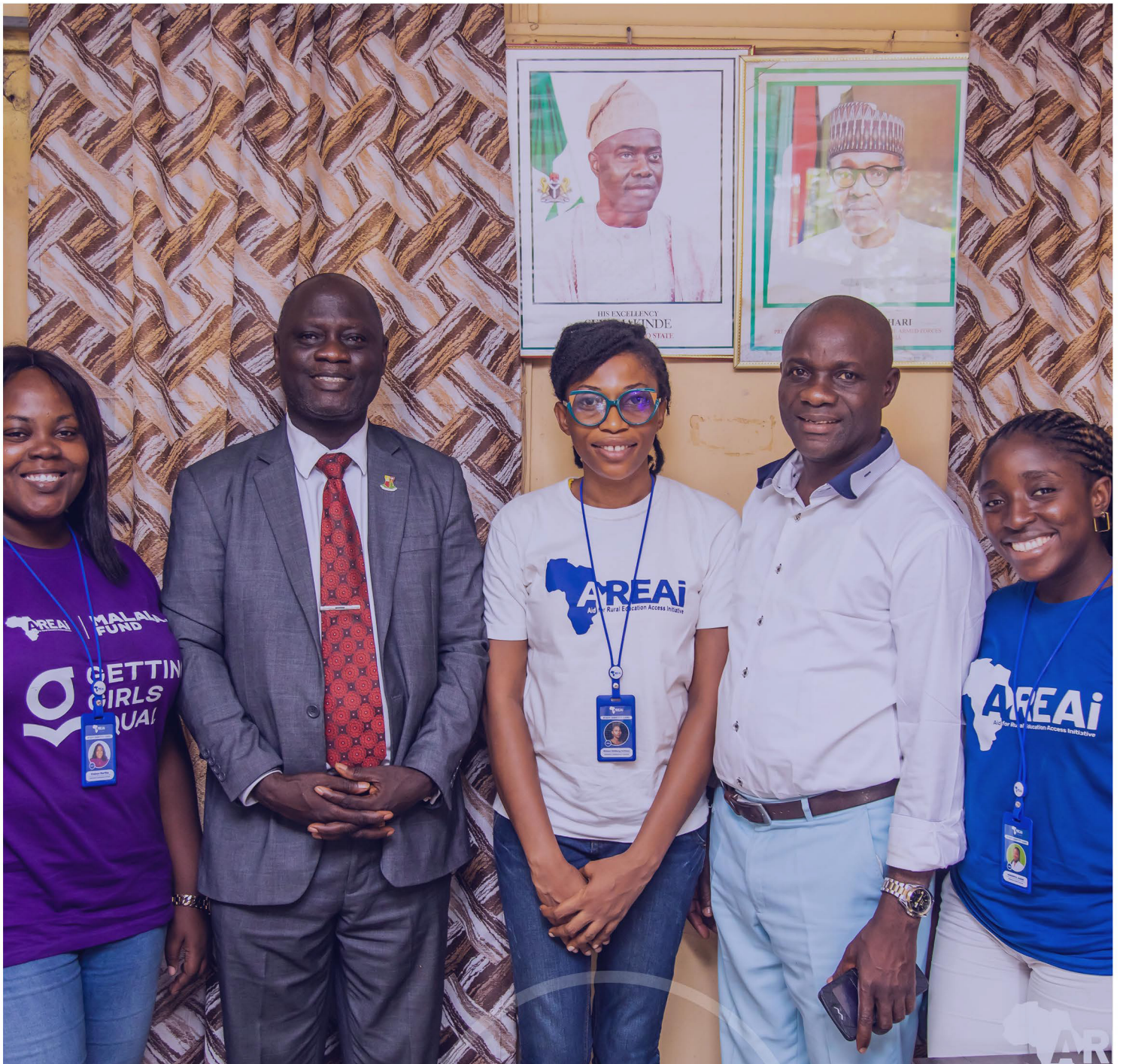
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Synopsis

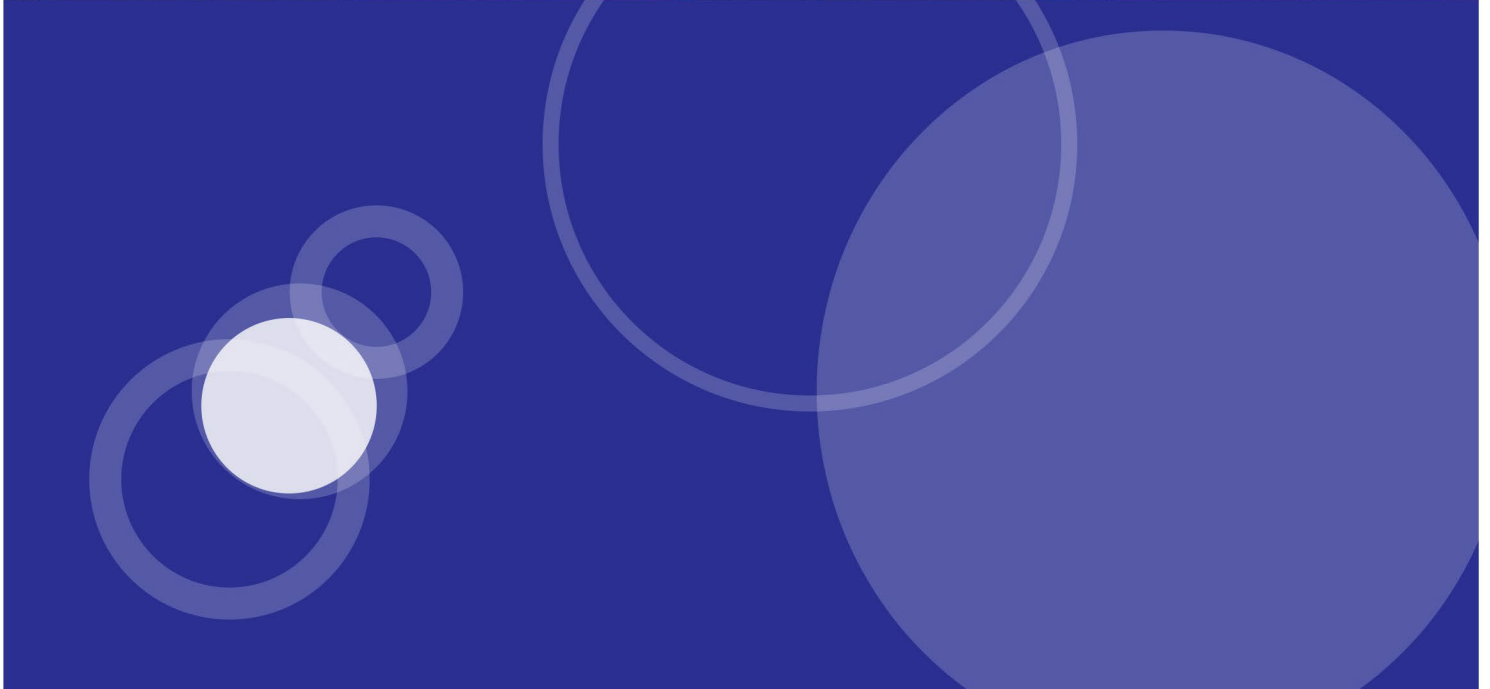
The purpose of this pre-programming assessment exercise is geared towards understanding our target population, identifying their tailored needs, developing appropriate impact strategies, and obtaining key stakeholder inputs necessary to successfully carry out the key program objectives of the Getting Girls Equal (GGE) initiative. This is also aimed at deepening the rationale and theory of change underlying our various intervention and program activities to promote gender transformative programming and policy development in Oyo state.

The assessment process involved a review of existing literature and engagement with members of the various Schools Governing Board (SGB) of over 30 schools across the 3 senatorial districts in Oyo State. Data collection was obtained through open-ended surveys, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews. The data collected revealed that women and girls face significant challenges globally, including discrimination, limited access to quality learning, healthcare, and economic opportunities, as well as insufficient representation in decision-making processes.

Adolescent schoolgirls in low-income schools and disadvantaged communities in Oyo state are particularly vulnerable to these challenges. As a response to address these challenges, the data was analyzed to identify the most pressing needs of thousands of adolescent girls within our selected schools, and recommendations were developed to address these needs.

These recommendations include the Provision of Infrastructural Support and School Amenities, Improvement of Teacher Quality and Teaching practices, Mobilizing Parents/Guardians, and Community Support.

The implications of the assessment include the need for governments, organizations, and individuals to prioritize gender equality and to take action to address the identified needs of women and girls. The assessment findings can inform the development of effective gender transformative interventions and policies that promote gender equality and empower women and girls globally.



Acknowledgments

We extend profound gratitude to the Oyo State Ministry of Education Science And Technology for the ongoing collaborative support to engage meaningfully in various transformative efforts for girls' education in Oyo State.

Special Appreciation to the Permanent Secretaries as well as Local Education Inspectors across all the local governments whose effective leadership helped drive a smooth delivery of the various engagement plans in all our host schools.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the school leaders, teachers, members of the Parent-Teachers Association as well as School Governing Boards of all GGE participating/host schools in Oyo state, Nigeria for their patience and cooperation in conducting our various research activities. With their enormous support, we reached a significant milestone in completing and documenting the outputs of the needs assessment exercise.

Summarily, and in no particular order, we are appreciative to all our host schools.

Host Schools:

Ibadan Grammar School	Community Grammar School, Kudeti
Government Secondary School, Orita Aperin	Ibadan City Academy School, Academy
Yejide Girls Grammar School, Kudeti	People's Girls Grammar School, Molete
Queens School, Apata	St. Theresa College, Oke Adio
Oke-Bola Comprehensive Grammar School, Oke-Bola	Oluyole Extension High School, Oluyole
School of Science	Oranyan Grammar School 1
Olivet Baptist High School	Anglican Methodist Secondary School 2
St. Benardine's Girls Grammar School	Baptist Grammar School, Ilora
Baptist Secondary School, Oke Isanmi Ilora	Community High School, Amuworo
Ansar Ud Deen High School, Opapa	Ansar Ud Deen Grammar School, Opapa
Muslim Grammar School	Ogbomoso High School
Molete High School, Old Osogbo Road	Laugun Adeoye Memorial, Otamokun
Ogbomoso Baptist High School, Otamokun	Anglican High School, Sabo
Nurudeen Grammar School, Lautech	Ori-Oke Community Grammar School
Soun High School, Kuye	Ogbomoso Girls High School

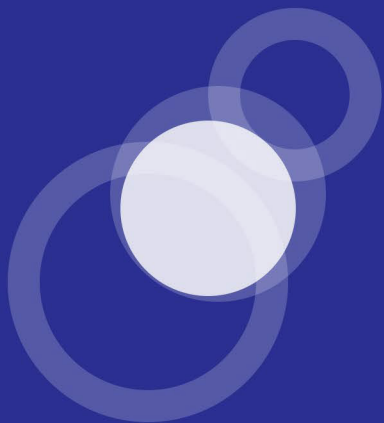
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Overview of Getting Girls Equal Initiative

Getting Girls Equal (GGE) is an initiative of Aid for Rural Education Access Initiative (AREAi), a non-profit, for-purpose impact grassroots organization that works with under-resourced schools and marginalized communities to improve learning outcomes and promote tangible academic achievement by providing technical and infrastructural support.

Getting Girls Equal aims to strengthen education quality for girls in Oyo State through the development of and advocacy for the implementation of gender-responsive educational structures and policies across the school, community, and state levels, to promote effective service delivery on girls' secondary school education spending and needs-based support for girls education and mobilize communal support for girls' education thereby improving learning outcomes, and increasing girls' access to education across 30 schools in 3 Senatorial Districts for the next three years.

The GGE initiative would also play a critical role in improving teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and practices towards delivering gender-responsive classroom instruction and use of data for classroom decision-making, thereby increasing the retention rate among girls in secondary schools across the three (3) senatorial districts.



Introduction To School-Based Needs Assessment

The school-based needs assessment was conducted with members of the school governing board (SGB) through a series of focus group discussions to elicit information about school-based needs to enhance programme delivery at school and community levels and inform advocacy tools for educational infrastructure and policies in the state. A total of 128 (57 Female, 71 Male) school's governing board (SGB) members participated in the assessment.

The following recommendations have been highlighted to facilitate an increase in rates of girls' enrolment and retention in schools across the state, particularly in the 30 host schools where AREAi is implementing the GGE Initiative.

Provision of Infrastructural Support and School Amenities

1. More classrooms should be constructed, and dilapidated classrooms renovated to ensure schools can manage the growing population of students. Globally every week, children and students from around the world show up to school, where they are exposed to salient educational and social skills that will be imperative for future ambitions. While the emphasis is currently placed on education, it must also be placed on education infrastructure as it has the potential to improve instruction, enhance student outcomes, and increase school enrolment and attendance. According to participants of this needs assessment, while educational infrastructures in public schools are porous, others are below par and, in some cases, non-existent.

Aside from a lack of laboratories and depilated classrooms, as confirmed by 80% of respondents, public sanitary facilities, which primarily affect girls, are absent. Renovation and refurbishment of dilapidated classrooms to an acceptable standard by the Oyo state government will change students' negative perceptions towards school, improve the health and safety of learners, alleviate overcrowding, and cut class size. Research has shown two reasons why infrastructures are often not renovated.

The first is a lack of funds, and the second is a poor maintenance culture. The government should therefore allocate funds for periodic maintenance and repairs, and the Ministry of Education, tasked with overseeing this process, to ensure that renovations are uniform and not piecemeal while also enculturating schools on maintenance culture.



A sneak peek at the state of some of infrastructure and classrooms we visited in Oyo State, in the course of the implementation of our program.

2. WASH facilities should be provided to ensure safe, gender-separated latrines and hygiene spaces with locks, soap, and water, with covered bins for menstrual waste disposal. Access to clean water, basic toilets, and good hygiene practices keep children thriving and girls in safe school environments.

According to UNICEF (2021), nine out of ten schools in Nigeria have no place for children to wash their hands, and this indicates a downward trend in the fight against infectious diseases. In many societies, menstrual hygiene is still considered taboo, with inadequate knowledge and misconceptions as a significant challenge as access to adequate facilities. Over the last few years, research has revealed the biased and discriminatory nature of several school environments as regards the provision of WASH facilities for girls. The absence of separate toilets with doors and the lack of bins to safely dispose used sanitary pads and water to wash hands have and are still preventing girls from adequately managing their monthly cycle with dignity, safety, and privacy.

The absence of all of these results in school absenteeism either by the girls intentionally missing school because of the poor facilities or as a consequence of frequent episodes of WASH-related ill-health (CDC, 2022). According to UNICEF (2019), all around the world, 1.8 billion people menstruate, and with the onset of menstruation comes a new phase and new vulnerabilities in the lives of adolescent girls, with many of them facing stigma, harassment, and social exclusion during their cycle.



A sneak peek of the exterior of some schools visited.

Some of the girls
in their classrooms.



A total of 128 (100%) respondents of the needs assessment stated the absence of menstrual management materials within the school system, highlighting the urgent need for the provision of menstrual supplies through dignity kits to help ensure girls' regular participation in school as students leave schools abruptly due to the unavailability of these facilities/materials and do not return, thereby missing out on academic activities.

To ameliorate this, funds should be allocated by the Oyo state government for the construction and renovation of safe and accessible toilets disaggregated appropriately for girls and boys as well as for male and female teachers with locks to ensure students, especially girls, have access to safe hygiene facilities with water, to control truancy and increase retention.

Menstrual hygiene and management awareness should also be promoted within schools for male and female students to break the taboos associated with menstruation. Just like first aid kits, menstrual kits should be made available and replenished termly as the need arises to ensure girls can access menstrual materials within the school to manage their periods efficiently.

3. Digital technologies are shaping our day-to-day practices and virtually all fundamental aspects of today's societies. These growing levels of digital transformation have birthed unprecedented multidimensional inequalities with variations in the degree of digital participation among the male and female genders. Globally, almost one billion girls (i.e., 65% of all girls and young women under 24) lack basic digital skills. Regarding digital skills, available data indicates that women are less likely than men to have advanced digital skills.

Unfortunately, the lack of basic digital skills to functionally use the Internet and digital technology, particularly for learning, further exacerbates existing educational inequalities. And If adolescent girls are not equipped with ICT skills, they will have difficulty navigating online learning platforms and are at risk of not being able to access online services or rewarding careers as adults (World Bank, 2019).

Similarly, girls from Sub-Saharan Africa stand a chance of being further left behind. For instance, Deloitte Global and the Global Business Coalition for Education report revealed that 230 million jobs will require digital skills by 2030. Only 50 percent of countries in Africa have 'computer' skills as part of their school curriculum, compared to 85 percent of countries globally.



Despite this, women are the primary victims, as research has shown that men are twice likely to have Internet access than women.

According to Intel's report (Women and the Web), "on average across the developing world, nearly 25 percent fewer women than men have access to the Internet, and the gender gap soars to nearly 45 percent in regions like sub-Saharan Africa." This further means that the likelihood of women entering the STEM field will be limited, especially when combined with the absence of laboratories.

24 out of the 30 schools who participated in the focus group discussion highlighted the need for the provision of equipped and fully functional ICT centers and science laboratories to ensure students learn what they are taught to promote the inclusion of girls in STEM fields. In other words, with functional laboratories in Oyo state, students/learners can perform experiments and research or get exposed to new knowledge through internet facilities.

This will enhance students learning as it helps them remember the studies more efficiently by conducting their experiments (experiential learning). Thus, it is safe to assert that a school possessing ICT and Science laboratories not only increases the likelihood of more women in STEM fields but also offers them first-hand experiences and better learning opportunities.

4. Additional Chairs and desks should be made available for teachers and students to ensure the learning environment is conducive for both teachers and students to make up for the insufficiency stated by 60% of SGB respondents. To a significant extent, classroom ergonomics are pivotal for learning environments and should be paid attention to. Students globally spend a minimum of five hours in school majority of which they sit.

Thus, their physical comfort must be guaranteed. Interestingly, schools constantly improve their curriculum to meet educational standards/best practices, but more attention should be given to furniture as stated by 60% of SGB respondents.

Poorly constructed or worn-out classroom furniture may result in body pains and distract the student during learning sessions, thus hampering, to a significant extent, facilitation by the teacher.

Classroom furniture is as important as curriculum, and for effective learning, efforts must be devoted to improving structures within the schools/classrooms in Oyo state, taking into cognizance seating arrangements and desks that enable free movement and enhance good posture.

Improvement of Teacher Quality and Teaching Practices

1. In-service and ongoing professional development opportunities remain integral to supporting teachers and enhancing their practices to deliver gender-responsive pedagogy. In today's global environment, where significant capacity building/development is required to remain relevant, measures must be implemented to ensure teachers have rewarding careers. Thus, teacher capacity building is necessary as educational institutions improve their curriculum to meet national or global standards.

While 100% of respondents confirm that there has been some sort of capacity building for teachers in Oyo State, this capacity building has totally failed to be inclusive as they are often restricted to science fields like mathematics and physics. However, to ensure effective classroom delivery, seminars should be organized more frequently for teachers across different fields.

The Oyo State Ministry of Education could champion this capacity building by bringing teachers across each senatorial district or local government and taking the form of workshops or seminars targeted towards improving pedagogic skills and keeping teachers abreast of international best teaching practices for improved classroom delivery and learning outcomes.

These seminars could also include social-emotional learning (SEL) training. Teachers are in contact with students weekly, and most of these students have varied emotional needs. Equipping teachers with these skills will enable them to have better relationships with students, know how to navigate challenging situations, and, most importantly, equip students with SEL, which is salient for school, work, and life success.

Classrooms that include SEL are organized around the principles of respect, kindness, and empathy. SEL teachers and lessons engage students in learning and practicing embodying those qualities. Social and emotional development affects learning by providing a kind environment; it helps to encourage optimal brain development as well as social connection and collaboration. In other words, SEL affects learning by shaping children's developing neural circuitry, mainly executive functions (UNICEF 2022).

2. Deployment of more female teachers by the government to schools with large female students, as 60% of the schools are understaffed, taking gender parity in the employment and deployment process as it has been found to improve education outcomes, particularly for girls, and provide strong role models that can challenge harmful gender norms.

African countries are facing the world's worst teacher shortage. To shore up the deficit and achieve universal primary education by 2030, 6.1 million primary school teachers must be hired alone in Africa (UNICEF, 2019).

Countries often face difficult decisions when hiring, training, and deploying recruits (UNESCO, 2018). However, when hiring, state actors such as the government of Oyo State should take into consideration the need to employ teachers of the female gender, as research has shown that there is a nexus between the availability of female teachers in a school and the rate of enrolment and retention of female students.

In other words, female teachers substantially improve girls' educational outcomes (UNICEF, 2012). Interestingly, the presence of female teachers, especially in STEM-related courses, will spur female students to pursue STEM-related careers, with these teachers serving as positive female role models.

3. 53% of the respondents affirm that the provision of relevant resources, e.g., textbooks relevant to syllables, learning aids, and digital access, will equip teachers to deliver effectively as they teach. Learning and teaching materials are critical ingredients, and the intended curriculum cannot be easily implemented without them.



Over the past forty years, the importance of adequate Learning and Teaching Materials provision (including textbooks, teachers' guides, and supplementary materials) to support educational development and quality upgrading has been recognized by governments worldwide and by most development partners.

There is now substantial research evidence that textbooks are one of the most critical inputs that have a demonstrable impact on student learning (The World Bank, *A Chance to Learn*, 2001). Moreover, constructing physical libraries and E-libraries and equipping them with contextually relevant textbooks will increase learning outcomes for students in Oyo state. Libraries, when fully equipped, facilitate the classroom teacher's work and ensure each student has equitable access to resources, irrespective of home opportunities or constraints.

Inclusive Curriculum and Classroom Delivery

1. Promotion of sexual health education in schools and homes to prevent girls from dropping out of school due to early and unwanted pregnancy. According to a 2021 UNICEF survey, globally, 14 percent of adolescent girls and young women give birth before age 18, leading to school dropout and derailing healthy development into adulthood, negatively impacting education, livelihoods, and health.

Sexual education, when taught over several years by integrating age-appropriate information both in school and outside of school in Oyo state, will contribute towards developing the capacities of young people. School Governing Board (SGB) representatives across the 30 schools affirm that this will help students, especially girls, explore and nurture positive values regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights as they develop self-esteem and life skills that encourage critical thinking, clear communication, responsible decision-making, and respectful and empathetic behavior that will see them through school.



This can be achieved by adopting comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) through the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, an Evidence-informed approach designed by UNESCO for the Global education 2030 Agenda.

Comprehensive sexuality education is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that will empower them to: realize their health, well-being, and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their well-being and that of others; and understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives.

2. Comprehensive curriculum review to include and make compulsory vocational and entrepreneurship education for all students and employment of skilled teachers to facilitate such subjects to ensure students' retention in school, especially girls, as most parents/guardians prefer to enroll their children/wards into entrepreneurship training instead of schools as the returns are immediate.

A 2021 World Bank report states that the development of skills can contribute to structural transformation and economic growth by enhancing employability and labor productivity helping countries to become more competitive.

The report further states that huge gaps exist in basic literacy and numeracy of working-age populations, as 750 million people aged 15+ (or 18 percent of the global population) report being unable to read or write. This calls for deliberate actions to ensure the students within the school system are taught valuable skills relevant to thrive in the labor market.

This can be achieved by introducing practical sessions in vocational and entrepreneurship classes and employability lessons and deploying qualified and skilled teachers, as confirmed by 90% of SGB respondents who participated in the school-based needs assessment to facilitate student entrepreneurial/vocational skills development. This will not only contribute towards skills development within the school system but also curb the existing gap of working-age people who do not have basic literacy and numeracy skills due to increased enrollment rates as parents see that their children can both learn entrepreneurial/vocational skills for both immediate and future gains.

3. During the school-based needs assessment with the SGB, 53% of the participants stated the need for the Guidance and Counseling units in schools to be empowered and made fully functional in schools to provide counseling and mentorship for students.

The complexity of the changing world poses a challenge to many young learners in secondary schools as they need help making informed decisions on evolving career paths. Findings by the Center for School Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation have shown that school counselors play a significant role in the total development of students concerning career choices as they support the provision of information to guide them to make well-informed choices.

Guidance and Counselling units should therefore be established within schools and, where in existence, be empowered through continuous upskilling and with resources to effectively and efficiently plan and implement guidance and counseling sessions to help students make informed career decisions concerning their skills, abilities, and interests.

Quality assurance and standard Officers from the Ministry of Education should be assigned to supervise these programs to ensure they meet up with standards and the demands of the evolving world. Counselor-parent consultation concerning students' career choices as against their ability and interests should also be promoted within the school system in Oyo state to ensure students get the needed support and guidance in school and at home.



4. Adjustment of timetable to create room for a reading period within the conventional school learning period. A 2002 research from OECD revealed that reading enjoyment is more important for children's educational success than their family's socio-economic status.

Developing a positive reading habit will improve students' performance in school and build positive reading attitudes, comprehension, increased general knowledge, and pleasure in later life.

Similarly, inculcating reading periods in school will promote a reading culture in students for academic success. 14 out of 30 SGB respondents are convinced that inculcating and accommodating reading periods within school learning hours will help cultivate a reading culture in students, especially those who do not have time to read at home because they work after school to support their families.

5. A 2020 publication by City Press affirms that repeating a grade could have long-term psychological effects on students if they do not get support from parents and teachers. 16% of SGB respondents highlighted the importance of counseling sessions for students repeating a class. They believe this will serve as a panacea for mental/emotional trauma and deal with the shame of retaking a class that makes some students drop out of school.

The Guidance and Counseling unit should be mandated to include in their programs sessions for students repeating a class to identify their fears and provide tailored counseling to inspire them and build their self-esteem for academic success. These should be recurring sessions and not one-offs to ensure these students get needed guidance throughout the session until they can move to the next class.

Mobilizing Parents/Guardians and Community Support

1. Scale innovative strategies for public enlightenment to enhance knowledge on the need for training and to empower their girl child as against the traditional belief about educating a girl.

According to a 2021 UNICEF report, around the world, 129 million girls are out of school, including 32 million that are of primary school age and 97 million of secondary school age. While enrolment rates may have increased at primary and secondary levels, completion rates are still low, especially in developing countries.



When a girl is educated, she is empowered and can make her decisions, raise the standard of living of her family, create more job opportunities, and reform society as a whole (UNESCO, 2022). 83% of SGB respondents affirm the need for awareness-creation activities in rural communities in Oyo state.

This will ensure that parents and communities understand the value of girls' education and the opportunity to leverage the free education policy in the state, which has already taken over 43,000 out-of-school children off the street (Nigerian Tribune, 2021).

The Parents Teachers Association meeting should also be strengthened to receive inputs and concerns from parents across public schools in the state to ensure parents have a genuine sense of participation and commitment.

Sensitization activities on specific topics should also be included in the PTA agenda to continuously motivate parents towards the retention and transition of their children and wards through educational levels, from primary education to tertiary education.

General Policy Recommendations for Optimised Educational Processes

1. Creation of maintenance structure/policy for infrastructural development within the school to curtail the deteriorating rate of school infrastructure, as confirmed by 80% of the respondents. According to the UNICEF 2000 model for quality education, one of the important components for quality educational processes is “environments that are healthy, safe, protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities.”

In order to ensure the infrastructure within the school system does not deteriorate to a level that is no longer safe to use, a maintenance policy and structure should be put in place with a fund to ensure that these assets are preserved to include minor repairs annually, improvements (capital maintenance) to eliminate the cause of defects and to avoid excessive repetition of routine maintenance efforts.

This can be done with school alumni, philanthropic organizations, and other interested groups. Regular reports should be provided by the school governing board (SGB) regarding school infrastructure status and management, followed by subsequent monitoring visits by the Ministry of Education.

2. The shortage of teachers across schools, as highlighted by 40% of the participants, can be addressed through the employment and deployment of qualified teachers. This process should be deliberate about increasing the quota of female teachers as one of the most compelling arguments for increasing the number of women teachers in schools relates to the positive impact that doing so has on girls’ (and boys’) educational achievements.

The availability of female teachers in school provides encouragement and role models for girls to complete their studies, as they can share their problems with them to provide guidance and support where necessary (UNESCO, 2006). Deliberate efforts should be made to increase female teacher employment and deployment at the secondary school level in the state, especially in STEM subjects, to ensure girls have accessible role models to emulate.

3. The government should subsidize the cost of registering for transition examinations into higher education. The 2009 Socioeconomic Indicator by the American Psychological Association shows that a student’s socioeconomic background influences the transition into higher education. This is particularly true for students who cannot afford transitional examination fees because of their socio-economic background, as stated by 93% of the school’s governing board representatives.

In addition to the free and qualitative educational policy currently being implemented in the state, the Oyo state government should make a bursary fund available where transitional examination fees, especially WAEC and NECO, are subsidized to make them more affordable for students who cannot afford to transition into higher education successfully.

4. Scholarship opportunities should be scaled up for outstanding female students who cannot afford higher education in the state. Scholarships enable students to obtain an education they would otherwise not have access to. A 2021 Study by UNFPA highlights the potential of scholarships to girls from minority groups as a great enabler of girls' transition to secondary and university education. 90% of SGB participants in the focus group discussion believe that providing full scholarships for outstanding students, especially girls who can otherwise not afford tertiary education in Oyo state, will promote girls' retention and transition to higher education.



This can be done through the Ministry of Education in partnership with tertiary institutions and other MDAs in the state, where each institution agrees to a particular number of students they can sponsor per academic session. Calls will be placed for qualified students to apply, and selection will be made in line with merit-based criteria agreed upon by partnering MDAs and institutions.

This will ensure that more students from low-income homes access education through fully funded scholarships. This will lay a foundation where past beneficiaries will successfully fund these scholarships to give back to society, thereby reducing the pressure on the government and sustaining the scheme's impact on a larger population.

Final Notes

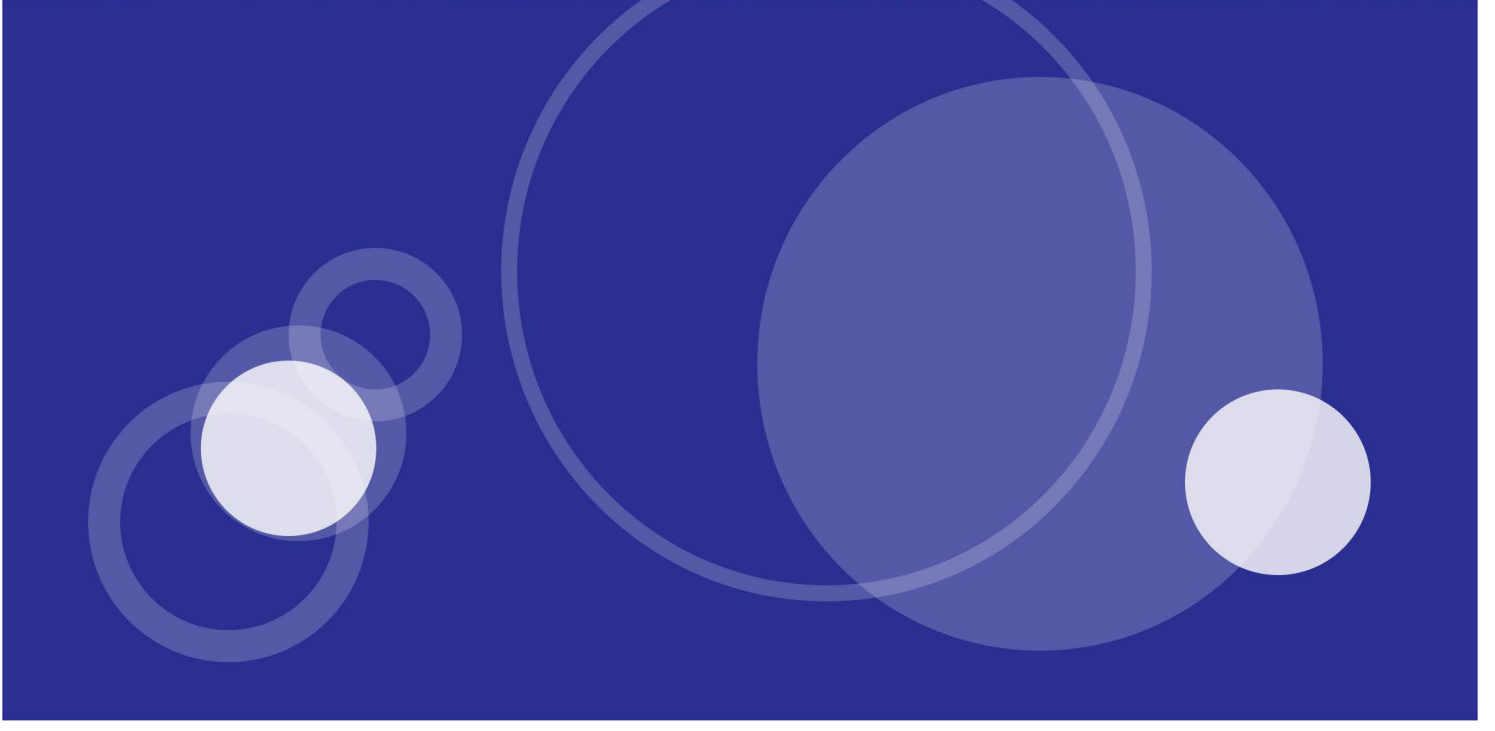
This report was produced as an outcome document from a series of need assessment surveys conducted across 30 schools from the 3 Senatorial districts of Oyo state.

The surveys and the resulting activities are in line with Objectives 1 and 3, geared towards advocating for the increased mobilization of resources to improve the physical infrastructure of schools and strengthening the implementation and evaluation of gender-responsive education policies at the state level.

The research and baseline data collection from stakeholders from across the secondary schools in the project's focal senatorial districts focused extensively on understanding the perceptions and perspectives of including issues of enrolment, retention, and completion levels. Primarily, data was collected from several consultative meetings with SBMCs for a school needs assessment.

In all, 30 baseline studies were conducted in 30 schools, and over 30 School Governing Boards (SGB) consultative meetings were held across 30 communities in Oyo State.

Through these interactive dialogues, we synthesized key insights to influence commitments from stakeholders on education budgetary allocation and ensuring specific school infrastructural development projects are completed. Copies of this policy report have been presented to the Office of the Commissioner for Education through the Directorate of Schools for subsequent action.







NOTICE

This document was designed and produced by Aid for Rural Education Access Initiative (AREAi) as an output material under the Getting Girls Equal (GGE) initiative for the Malala Fund Joint Action Grant program.

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