How is gender equality included in education sector planning?

An analysis of power, voice and social change in Nigeria

Nigeria Country Report

Annex D.2 Nigeria Country Report

Contents

List of Acronyms

BESDA	Better Education Service Delivery for All
CSACEFA	Civil Society Action Coalition for Education for All
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DP	Development Partner
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationists
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Organisation
FME	Federal Ministry of Education
FOMWAN	Federation of Muslim Women Associations in Nigeria
GCI	Gender at the Centre Initiative
GEP3	Girls Education Project Phase 3
GPE	Global Partnership of Education
HE	His Excellency/Governor of State
HLWA	High Level Women Advocates
HOA	House of Assembly
IIEP	Institute for International Educational Planning
MDA	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOWA	Ministry of Women Affairs
NUT	National Union of Teachers
OAK	Oyo, Adamawa and Katsina
PTA	Parent-teacher Association
PWD	People with Disabilities
SBMC	School-based Management Committee
SUBEB	State Universal Basic Education Board
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Context and overview of planning process

Although the last two decades have seen considerable progress on global commitments to address gender disparities in education, many challenges remain. Girls in Sub-Saharan Africa are still furthest from equality in educational access and achievement, with factors such as poverty and location compounding with discriminatory gender norms to exclude girls from education (UNESCO 2022b). Through the Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI), a program that encourages Ministries of Education to embed gender equality at the heart of education systems, a study was commissioned to examine how gender equality is integrated in education sector planning in 8 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nigeria, Niger and Sierra Leone). The synthesis report identifies examples of good practice, opportunities and threats to promote gender transformative education systems. This country report presents the findings of the analysis for Nigeria.

The report assesses the extent to which a recent planning process in Nigeria (Katsina State Education Sector Plan (ESP) process) included gender transformative ambitions and intentions. If so, where and how (enablers) and if not, why not (blockers)? The following analysis focuses on the Katsina State ESP 2021-30 planning process in Nigeria. It was based on 10 interviews with stakeholders from ministry, civil society organisations (CSOs), and technical partners directly involved in this process.

Nigeria operates a federal system. National policies are expected to be domesticated at the state level, and funding for education is provided by all three tiers of government – federal, state and local government. While a national plan was developed in 2018[1], states are largely guided by their own Education Sector Plans. The current round of Global Partnership of Education (GPE) funding is focused on the three OAK states: Oyo, Adamawa and Katsina. The Federal Ministry of Education (FME) selected Katsina State's GPE-supported Education Sector Plan process as the case study for this piece of research. The planning process commenced in 2021 and while the plan is finalised, it is yet to be published.

Nigeria is currently 168th out of 170 countries on the Gender Inequality Index, scoring 0.680 and the most severe of these gender inequalities happen in the northern part of the country. Katsina State is situated in Northwest Nigeria. It has 34 Local Government Areas and a population of 8.3 million, of which just over 3.3 million (40%) are children and young people of school-going age (2019).[2] Statistics indicate nearly 900,000 out of school children in the state, and transition rates for children to secondary school show a fourfold drop for girls, while the coverage for boys almost halves. One of the major barriers to access for girls is early marriage. The state has witnessed increasing levels of banditry, kidnapping and violence over the last decade, affecting schools and communities.

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[1] Ministerial Strategic Plan (2018-2022)

[2] Education sector analysis: the Federal Republic of Nigeria: assessing the status of education in the federation and Oyo, Adamawa and Katsina States, 2021 (UNESCO-IIEP and the World Bank)

The planning process in Katsina State was supported by the state GPE team and by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and was managed by the State Ministry of Education (MOE). The process started with an Education Sector Analysis at the Federal level as well as in the 3 OAK states.[3] In addition to this, a review was conducted of the performance of the previous plan[4] and of state specific gender issues. The planning process consisted of two parts – internal government planning discussions and wider stakeholder consultation meetings.

Thematic Findings

Political Economy

Political will

All stakeholders interviewed mentioned the openness of the state government to share gender data and analyses as part of the planning process. However, lack of political will for deeper policy change, fund release and final approvals was discussed as a bottleneck to transformative change and to plan implementation.

Katsina State is yet to domesticate the revised National Policy on Gender Education, however senior planning staff from the state were involved in its formulation and as a result many of the activities from the Policy's implementation plan were included in the Education Sector Plan.

As mentioned below in more detail, there are two bills that have been put forward in Katsina State around gender equity – one is seen as non-confrontational, and has been passed, while the other one challenges men's position in the workforce (by targeting 35% allocation of education roles going to women) and after 4-5 years of lobbying and influencing by civil society, is still to be passed.

In Katsina State, political will was identified as a major bottleneck to plan implementation. Plans are agreed upon openly and in partnership with stakeholders, but political interest impacts on fund release or final approvals for activities to take place. This is an example of hidden power, where final decisions are made by those with vested interests (either financial, political or social), excluding wider stakeholders, and are not communicated more widely. Funding constraints were also seen as an umbrella under which other reasons for inaction were hidden – such as a lack of commitment to gender reform or to following through with accountability mechanisms.

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[3] Education sector analysis: the Federal Republic of Nigeria: assessing the status of education in the federation and Oyo, Adamawa and Katsina States, 2021 (UNESCO-IIEP and the World Bank)

[4] Katsina State Education Sector Plan (2011-2020)

Accountability

The state government is not currently being held accountable for gender equality in education upwards, by the federal government, however, there are clearer lines of accountability to development partners for institutionalising gender activities and to the citizens of the state through CSO budget tracking.

There is currently a disconnect between the federal and state levels in terms of accountability. This is to some extent due to the fact that the revised National Policy on Gender Education has just been approved and the FME is still at the stage of disseminating this to states for domestication. As mentioned earlier, education is seen as the responsibility of all three levels of government in Nigeria, and once the FME develops a policy, the expectation is that the states will set targets and monitor progress themselves. FME do not currently set national targets or track states contribution towards these, although when asked, it was mentioned that there is a plan to develop a monitoring framework for the national gender policy. At the state level, Katsina State respondents believe they are accountable to the federal government for domesticating the policy, but that target setting is a state issue. Development partners (DP) also hold the state government to account for including gender activities in state plans and budgets for sustainability.

> When discussing what influence means, it was described as "being able to bring a decision and the decision will be accepted." - CSO Representative, Nigeria

At the federal level, civil society was referred to as the third eye, in other words, they are responsible for holding government accountable for implementation. Accountability to communities in the Katsina State is limited to including their representatives in the planning process. There are clearer lines of accountability from CSOs, to government and then to the state legislature (the State House of Assembly (HOA)) and the Governor. These are through agreed monitoring processes with identified stakeholder groups. As a result of DP support, the High Level Women Advocates (HLWA) work with the state government and the HOA to monitor budget and plan implementation. The Civil Society Action Coalition for Education for All (CSACEFA) are also involved in this.

Relationships

Power and decision-making

Respondents at all levels felt that despite engagement with wider groups, final decision-making power still sits with those who control the resources and that this is still traditionally held by male leaders, especially at the state level.

At the federal level, power and influence sits with resources – in other words, with the departments within the FME who are given funding, or who control it, or the DPs who provide resources. DPs are only constrained by social norms, if they get buy in from the society they are working in, then they can do what they plan.

UNICEF were cited as the main technical partner of the FME on gender initiatives. It was noted that DPs are focussing on the Northern part of the country, which meant that other parts of the country were neglected as they were not receiving the same level of support. There was also some ownership expressed by FME gender experts to address this by engaging with "orphan states", but they did not feel that they had the required level of expertise or resourcing in-house to match the support provided by DPs to their partner states. Donors influence the process and format of the planning process at the federal level, as well as the timeframe. Since the plans are one of the conditions for GPE funding being approved and released, donors and government pushed for the process to happen quickly. For the ESA, it was reported that this led to a less consultative process, during Ih there was no time to build capacity.

Officially, within the Katsina State, power over decision making sits with the State HOA and ultimately the Governor. The MOE has a good relationship with the HOA on education planning and involves them in the process. In reality, decision making also sits where the resources are: with the heads of MOE and the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB); with the GPE State Project Coordinator; and with DPs who drive gender reforms. Katsina has been a focus for donor support over the last ten years, including from the World bank's GPE, Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) and Agile programmes and from UNICEF/Foreign Commonwealth and Development Organisation (FCDO) with the Girls Education Project Phase 3 (GEP3). One of the reasons given for this amount of support to the state was the responsiveness of the state government to providing counter-part funding and to integrating and sustaining donor programmes.

The two bills sent to the State HOA by HLWA are a good example of the degree to which influencing can impact on decision making. The first bill proposed equitable access to education and the protection of girls against school level gender-based violence. Since these aims align with the culture of the society within the state, and are not controversial, this bill was quickly passed by the SHOA, with high level support from the Governor. A second bill, which proposed affirmative action to

ensure that 35% of education positions in the state are female, is yet to be passed. While publicly, men in power support this bill, after consultation with wider stakeholders, they "go behind" and influence inaction. This influencing is invisible to the gender advocates as they are not part of those discussions. As a result, the bill has been awaiting approval for 3-4 years.

Networks and Coalitions

In Katsina State, all respondents mentioned the positive relationship between the MOE (especially the Gender Desk Officer) and CSOs and the ability of HLWA in particular to influence gender equality in education.

CSOs were involved in the policy formulation for the National Policy on Gender Education. The coalitions in Katsina State involve CSOs and networks such as the Federation of Muslim Women Associations in Nigeria (FOMWAN), CSACEFA and HLWA. They work well together and consult their members during planning activities. As one respondent mentioned, many of the members of CSOs in the state are former civil servants, so there is mutual understanding and trust across these networks and to a large degree between CSOs and government officials, which facilitates their working relationship. CSOs and the Gender Desk Officer usually have similar views on issues relating to gender, and CSO voices were given the opportunity to be heard during the planning process.

At both the federal and state level, there are women in key leadership roles, including at the Permanent Secretary and Director levels and in charge of GPE funding. However, it was reported that men continue to dominate meetings at both these levels and traditionally assign junior roles to women. The general feeling was that these are acceptable norms and that changing them takes time. Interestingly, one of the female Directors of the FME emphasised the need to ensure that identification of candidates for recruitment or appointment should be based on competency and not gender, perhaps demonstrating a lack of understanding of or empathy towards the challenges that women can face in a workforce largely dominated by men.

The involvement of HLWA in Katsina State has had a positive impact on the awareness of gender norms, with the proportion of female participants in planning meetings increasing and specific space given for females to talk and be heard during the planning process. It was felt that Gender Desk Officers are learning from HLWA, but that currently the CSOs have insufficient power to influence

change. The HLWA network was introduced by UNICEF in ten states and this has since been expanded to almost 20 states across the whole of northern Nigeria. There is interaction between the HLWA in different states resulting in capacity building and lesson sharing.

Voices

Gender Expertise

The voices of gender expertise within government are weak and the level of expertise is insufficient to drive change, however, high level voices such as HLWA are able to be heard.

Gender expertise in the FME has been fragmented by organisational changes that split the gender function between two different departments (Basic and Senior Secondary). This aligns to the expanded National Policy on Gender which now covers all levels of education. There is a plan in place to mitigate this by establishing a cross-departmental gender committee, with support from the Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI). As a result of this organisational change, gender is the responsibility of more than one Director, which potentially reduces the impact of gender initiatives. There is no identified Gender Champion at FME and the drive and voice of those in Gender Units for leading attitudinal and behavioural change are weak. To some extent this was accepted as normal by those interviewed, revealing some of the invisible power, institutional norms and exclusionary practices that operate in the FME, but also showing a lack of understanding and buy in to what is really needed for change to happen. The new National Gender Policy comes with an implementation guide for states to use.

There are considerable challenges in the organisational set up for gender planning at the federal level as witnessed during the ESA process. These include: the GCI

focal points not recognised by key stakeholders within the FME or by some external stakeholders and as a result their voices were not heard; there were limited links between the FME and state MOE Gender Desk Officers; during the

Comment by a stakeholder from the interview:

"The ESA development process in Nigeria brought to light some organisational challenges to gender mainstreaming. There was limited synergy between gender units and other key units and departments in the FME and the GCI focal points were not systematically consulted by key stakeholders within the FME. However, through the leadership of UNESCO-IIEP, their participation was guaranteed in the process and their voices were included in the gender analysis. There were limited links between the FME and state MOE Gender Desk Officers. This was taken into account in the gender analysis in the ESA and later in the development of IIEP's capacity-building strategy."- UNESCO-IIEP Representative, Nigeria

ESA preparation the capacity of the Gender Units in the FME was not built as they were not involved; there was limited synergy between gender units and other key units and departments in the FME. It was also mentioned that Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) were not involved in the ESA, despite IIEP requesting for this. In the end, the ESA was written by IIEP and national consultants.

In Katsina State, gender expertise comes in two forms: through gender desk officers, who are all female, at state and local government levels; and from DP-supported programmes and CSOs. During the planning process, the MOE Gender Desk Officer was involved in the external stakeholder meetings and to a limited degree in some of the internal planning discussions. Other stakeholders with a focus on gender were included in the stakeholder consultations such as HLWA, CSACEFA and UNICEF facilitators of the He for She programme. The Ministry of Women Affairs and the Mothers Association also participated. There was a general feeling among all respondents that there was a need for greater gender expertise among these stakeholders and generally across all of those involved in planning. There were mixed views on the extent to which these voices were heard. While some respondents felt gender voices were heard, such as the HLWA, it was generally felt that others contributing do not have influence on the decision making. One respondent from the Ministry of Education mentioned that they have to take into account the cultural norms of society so that plans will be implemented, so some recommendations are excluded from the plan if they are likely to be controversial to more conservative and traditional sections of society.

Voices of young people and communities

The state-level planning process included structured participation and contributions from wider civil society and community representatives, but many respondents felt this resulted in consultation rather than ownership of decision making.

At the federal level, there was no evidence of consultation with civil society during the ESA process for Katsina State or the other states involved.

As mentioned, during the Katsina planning process, there were several stages for stakeholder consultations. These were funded by DPs, but MOE sent out the invitations. This includes participation from civil society such as School Based Management Committees (SBMCs), National Union of Teachers (NUT), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), CSOs (such as CSACEFA, HLWA, Mothers' Association), religious leaders, traditional leaders, etc. There was no consistency in the responses on whether Youth Associations and People with Disability (PWD) representatives were included. The youth representative interviewed, attended in his capacity as a facilitator of a UNICEF programme, and the other youth representative interviewed did not attend. An interview with a PWD representative was not conducted due to time constraints.

Specific stakeholders from this list are invited to make comments, such as the SBMC representatives. At each meeting, updates to the plan are read out and stakeholders are able to comment. This was considered transparent by the MOE. Both MOE and CSO representatives interviewed felt that the stakeholder workshops were for consultation purposes and that the real decisions were made outside of the stakeholder meetings. The MOE felt that this was appropriate; the CSOs did not.

Society

Social norms

The beliefs of religious and traditional leaders in Katsina are respected and considered during the planning process and time has been spent on engaging with these powerful stakeholders to change attitudes and behaviour related to gender.

Religious and traditional rulers were always invited to the Katsina stakeholder meetings in the planning exercise. The sense is that if these stakeholders don't buy in to an intervention, it will not work, resulting in planners being cautious in what they discuss and suggest.

Resistance

There is still considerable resistance in Katsina State towards full gender equality. Examples were given which demonstrated that awareness of the issues is not sufficient to change attitudes, behaviours or social norms. *"Men accept the problem, but don't yet address it"*[5] For example, in discussions around the bill for 35% of posts in education to be filled by women, the response from men has been, *"where are the women?"* It was often quoted that despite openness on the part of policy makers and education managers to give more roles to women, women either don't apply, or even turn down opportunities. The barriers to women's readiness to engage in new roles are known to be cultural, but there is a lack of will on the part of policy makers or politicians to begin to address these in a sustainable and meaningful way. It appears that the reasons behind this are two-fold. On the surface, some of this is related to a fear of challenging entrenched ideas and stirring up powerful traditional and religious leaders. While a more hidden reason is related to the attitudes of powerful men within the education planning process, who themselves do not buy-in to gender equality, either in their own homes or in society. Good examples of DP programmes that have challenged this include from the He for She programme, where men have bought into gender equality and had a voice in challenging some of these social norms with their peers.

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[5] HLWA respondent during KII

SWOT Analysis

3.1 Strengths

The State government is getting better at considering gender in their planning and budgeting processes and even in putting gender front of mind through a review of the sector data and evidence and wider stakeholder consultation.

The active participation of HLWA and other CSOs in the planning process was a definite strength, with their voices being strongly heard and responded to.

Some gender activities in previous plans have been budgeted for and implemented, but these are generally activities focused on advocacy or dealing with the symptoms of inequality rather than the root causes.

3.2 Weaknesses

The participation of gender experts (both from within government and from external experts) was mainly requested when DPs organise meetings, rather than at all relevant government-led meetings.

There is a need for more sensitisation about women in decision making roles, especially in the civil service, to highlight the benefits of involving women in these roles.

Underlying social norms related to gender are yet to be tackled in a deep and meaningful way.

3.3 Opportunities

The gender experts in Katsina State have an incredibly strong voice. Stakeholders need to understand the benefits of including these gender experts in their planning processes. If some progress can be made, and some targets can be met, this will encourage others to get on board.

3.4 Threats

Some high level and powerful stakeholders still don't consider gender issues as important.

When women's voices are raised and men undermine this, attitudes still need to change, or women will be discouraged.

Power and social norms still need to be fundamentally addressed if gender equality is to be achieved.

Stakeholder Analysis

Interviewees were asked to plot where they felt various actors sat on the following scale. While opinions varied, the matrix below does give an indication as to which groups could be targeted with different engagement strategies.

Stakeholder matrix

Within key informant interviews the researchers included a stakeholder mapping exercise. KII's were asked to plot actors on two axes: level of power and influence; and commitment to positive change on gender equality in education.

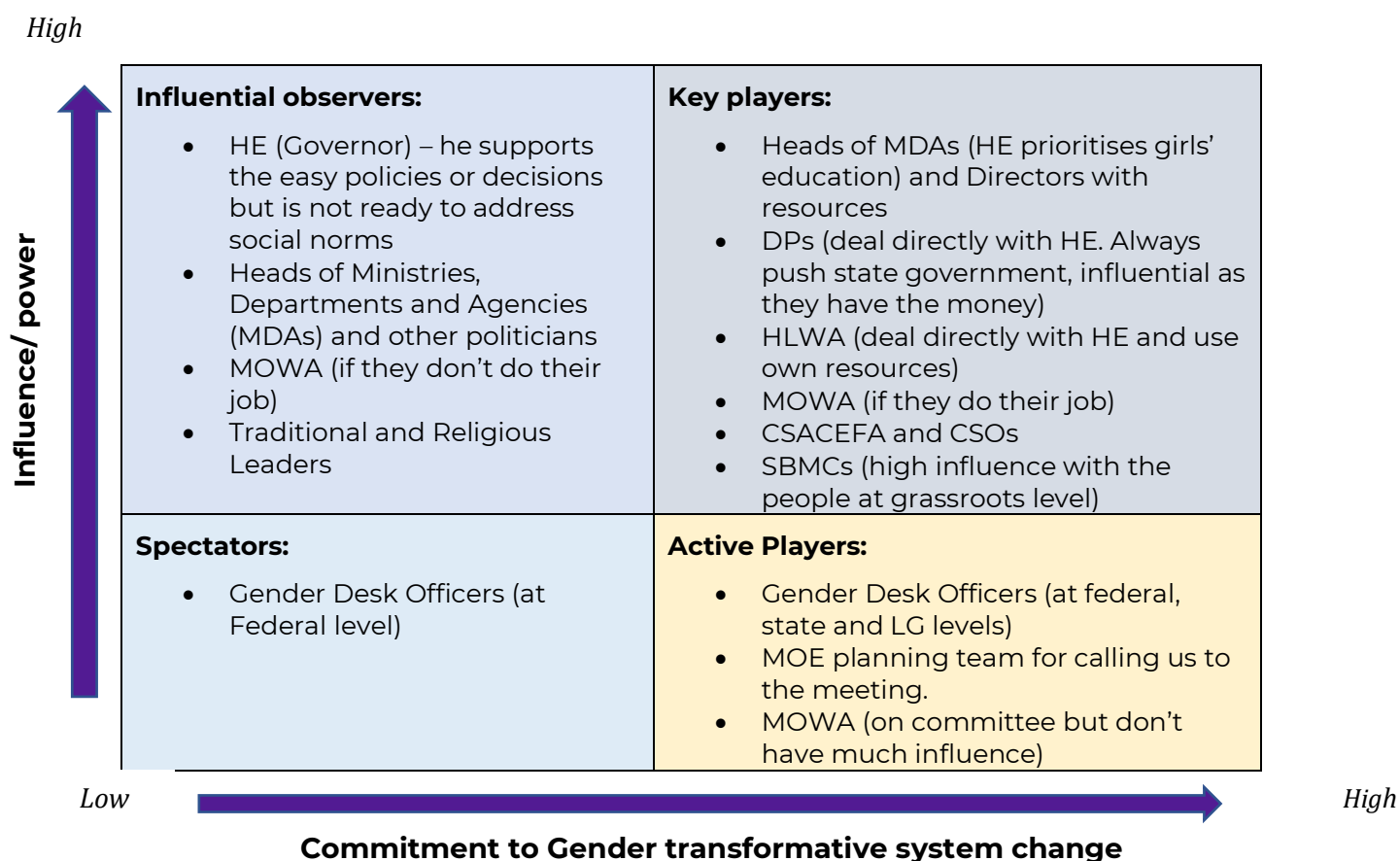This exercise resulted in a mapping of actors in four groupings:

Influential observers: High power, low commitment to gender equality
Key players: High influence and high commitment
Active players: high commitment, lower influence
Observers: Low influence, low commitment

The results are valuable at country level to consider methods of influence to engage different actors or targeted in advocacy campaigns.

High

Influence/ power →

Influential observers:	**Key players:**
• HE (Governor) – he supports the easy policies or decisions but is not ready to address social norms • Heads of Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and other politicians • MOWA (if they don't do their job) • Traditional and Religious Leaders	• Heads of MDAs (HE prioritises girls' education) and Directors with resources • DPs (deal directly with HE. Always push state government, influential as they have the money) • HLWA (deal directly with HE and use own resources) • MOWA (if they do their job) • CSACEFA and CSOs • SBMCs (high influence with the people at grassroots level)
Spectators:	**Active Players:**
• Gender Desk Officers (at Federal level)	• Gender Desk Officers (at federal, state and LG levels) • MOE planning team for calling us to the meeting. • MOWA (on committee but don't have much influence)

Low   High

Commitment to Gender transformative system change

List of Documents Reviewed

1. FME. (2021). *'National Policy on Gender Education and its Implementation Guide.'* Federal Ministry of Education (FME), 2021.
2. GCI. (2021). *'Gender at the Centre Baseline Study: Country-level Report - Nigeria.'* April 2021.
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8. Katsina State Analysis of Context. Updated Report.
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