

NEWPORT INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW, COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGES (NIJLCL)	
Volume 4 Issue 2 2024	

<https://doi.org/10.59298/NIJLCL/2024/4.2.354348>

The Right to Education for Girls in Nigeria: Barriers, Progress, and Policy Solutions

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ABSTRACT

The right to education is a fundamental human right essential for the empowerment and development of societies. In Nigeria, despite numerous legal frameworks and policies, girls continue to face significant challenges in accessing quality education. This paper explores the barriers that prevent Nigerian girls from exercising their right to education, including cultural, economic, legal, and infrastructural obstacles. It also highlights the progress made through government policies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international support. Finally, the paper offers policy recommendations aimed at overcoming these barriers and ensuring that every girl in Nigeria has equal access to quality education. By addressing these challenges through targeted interventions, Nigeria can unlock the potential of millions of girls, contributing to national growth and gender equality.

Keywords: Right to education, Girls' Education, Gender equality, Nigeria, Policy Solutions

INTRODUCTION

UNICEF estimates that globally, approximately 119 million girls are out of school, including 34 million of primary school age, 28 million of lower-secondary school age, and 58 million of upper-secondary school age. In conflict-affected regions, such as Northeast Nigeria, girls are more than twice as likely to be excluded from education compared to their peers in non-conflict countries [1]. Moreover, in many nations, even among girls who start primary school, only a small proportion will continue to secondary school, and far fewer will complete it [2, 3]. The right to education in international human rights treaties, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), both of which Nigeria has ratified under section 18 of the Constitution (as Amended) [4, 5]. However, despite these commitments, millions of Nigerian girls remain out of school, particularly in rural areas and conflict-affected regions [6, 7]. Educating girls is not only a moral imperative but also an economic one, as research has shown that educated women are more likely to contribute positively to their communities and the nation's economy [8]. This article focuses on Nigeria as a case study to examine the multifaceted barriers to girls' education, assess progress toward girls' education, and propose practical policy solutions to address the existing gaps.

EDUCATION

Education is a powerful tool in developing the full potential of every child, but it also helps promote understanding, respect, and friendship between nations, peoples, and religious groups [9]. A girl's education is an investment in her future. It's also an investment in the future of our world – a thriving, peaceful, and sustainable world [10]. Education is the process where an individual acquires or imparts basic knowledge to another. It is also where a person: develops skills essential to daily living, learns social norms, develops judgment and reasoning, and learns how to discern right from wrong [10].

GIRL EDUCATION

Girl education refers to the formal, informal, or non-formal educational opportunities and experiences specifically aimed at or involving girls [10]. It encompasses the process of providing girls with access to quality education at all levels primary, secondary, and tertiary, and includes vocational training, skills development, and other forms of learning. Girl education is crucial for empowering girls and breaking cycles of poverty and gender [1]. It enables

girls to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and cultivate confidence, equipping them to make informed decisions, secure better job opportunities, and participate fully in economic, social, and political life. Educating girls is also recognized as a powerful tool for fostering broader social and economic benefits, including improved health outcomes, reduced child marriage and fertility rates, and higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth [1, 11].

KEY ASPECTS OF GIRL EDUCATION

1. **Access to Education:** Ensuring girls have equal opportunities to attend school and receive quality education free from barriers like cultural norms, economic hardship, or gender-based discrimination [12].
2. **Retention and Completion:** Efforts to keep girls in school, ensuring they complete their education and progress through different educational levels.
3. **Curriculum Inclusivity:** Developing gender-sensitive curricula that consider the specific needs of girls and challenge gender stereotypes [12].
4. **Gender-Sensitive Learning Environment:** Providing safe, inclusive, and supportive environments where girls can learn without fear of violence, harassment, or discrimination. Girls' education goes beyond getting girls into school. It is also about ensuring that girls learn and feel safe while in school; have the opportunity to complete all levels of education, acquire the knowledge and skills to compete in the labour market; gain socio-emotional and life skills necessary to navigate and adapt to a changing world; make decisions about their own lives; and contribute to their communities and the world [12].
5. **Empowerment and Skills Development:** Education should empower girls with life skills, critical thinking, leadership abilities, and knowledge about their rights and opportunities. Individuals and countries benefit from girls' education. Educated women tend to be more informed about nutrition and healthcare, have fewer children, marry at a later age, and their children are usually healthier, should they choose to become mothers. They are more likely to participate in the formal labour market and earn higher incomes [12].
6. **Socio-Economic Benefits:** Educated girls are more likely to delay marriage, have fewer children, and raise healthier, more educated children, thereby contributing to national economic and social progress [12].

IMPORTANCE OF GIRLS' EDUCATION

Girls' education is essential for fostering sustainable development, reducing poverty, and promoting gender equality. Every child should be allowed to be educated irrespective of gender as both sexes can bring equal growth and contribution to society. According to an African proverb, "If you educate a boy, you educate one person but if you educate a girl, you educate a family and nation". An empowered woman is full of great potential, strength, courage, and knowledge which she passes down to society. This will empower and improve productivity in the society [13]. Educating girls uplifts an individual and empowers entire communities. When a woman receives education in her youth, it creates a ripple effect that extends far beyond her. Educated women are less likely to experience teen pregnancies, leading to a cycle of empowerment that benefits both women and their communities. Education enables girls to challenge societal norms, advocate for their rights, and promote gender equality, [14]. Some of the importance of girls' education include:

1. **Social Empowerment, Equality, and Development of life skills:** Education empowers girls to challenge societal norms that limit their opportunities, promoting gender equality. It gives them the confidence to participate in decision-making processes in their homes, communities, and beyond. Educated girls develop essential life skills, including self-confidence, the ability to participate effectively in society, and protect themselves from HIV/AIDS, and sexual exploitation [11]. When girls go to school, they grow into women who have more say over their lives and have an increased sense of their worth and capabilities. They are less likely to be subjected to domestic violence and will participate more in decision-making in households [15].
2. **Economic Growth:** Educated girls are more likely to contribute to the economy by participating in the workforce. Studies show that for every additional year of schooling, a girl's future earnings can increase by 10-20%. This enhances national economic growth and reduces poverty [11]. Education for girls and boys increases productivity and contributes to economic growth. Globally, women are not in the formal job market as much as men but many studies show there are economic benefits if they are allowed to join the labour force. A woman with an education can get a better job with higher wages which has the effect of addressing gender imbalances in the labour force. Increased levels of education have a greater positive impact on women's wages [15].
3. **Health and Well-being:** Educating girls leads to healthier families. Educated women are more likely to make informed health decisions, reduce child mortality, and improve family nutrition. They are also more likely to delay marriage and have fewer, healthier children. Girl's education also helps cut children and maternal mortality rates, contributing to national wealth and controlling disease and health status [11].

4. **Improved Civic Participation:** Educated girls are more likely to be engaged in civic activities, leadership roles, and policy-making. This enhances their ability to advocate for their rights and contribute to peaceful and democratic societies. Education helps women to gain the skills needed to take on leadership roles at local and national levels. Educated women are more likely to join bodies, whether volunteer or elected, where they can take part in making decisions that affect their lives and those of their communities [15]. Education also increases women's involvement in the political process as an educated woman can participate in politics and contribute effectively to the governance of society [13].
5. **Reduction in Child Marriage and Gender-Based Violence:** Girls with education are less likely to be married off at an early age, which often exposes them to domestic violence and limits their personal growth. Education provides them with knowledge and resources to make informed life choices [15].
6. **Breaking the Cycle of Poverty:** Educating girls leads to a ripple effect across generations. Educated mothers are more likely to send their children, especially girls, to school, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality in families and communities [11]. According to an International Labor Organization report, "Educating girls has proven to be one of the most important ways of breaking poverty cycles and is likely to have significant impacts on access to formal jobs in the longer term" [15].

CHALLENGES TO GIRLS' EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

In many countries, especially in developing regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, girls face significant barriers to education, including poverty, cultural norms, early marriage, and gender-based violence. Programs and policies addressing these challenges are critical for advancing gender equality and equitable quality education for all, geared towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5. Challenges to girls' education in Nigeria are multifaceted and deeply rooted in socio-economic, cultural, and institutional issues. Some of the primary challenges include:

1. Poverty: Poverty is a significant barrier, as many families in Nigeria, especially in rural areas, prioritize boys' education over girls. Girls are often kept out of school to support household chores or engage in economic activities to supplement family income [13]. Nigeria is a country with 70 percent of people living below the poverty line, many poor Nigerian families are known to force their girls out of school to make them work full-time. Often girls are sent to hawk on the streets. Extreme poverty also can make families unable and where there are so many children to care for. This belief is still on in some southern and northern parts of Nigeria [16].

2. Cultural and Religious Beliefs: Cultural norms and traditional beliefs in some Nigerian communities discourage the education of girls. Early marriage is common, with girls being married off before completing their education. Some communities also view education as unnecessary for women, believing their primary role is domestic [13]. A misinterpretation of the traditional norm or even Islamic holy text, the Quran may influence parents to keep their daughters out of school. Even some parents have the misconception that sending their daughters to school will bring about immoral behaviour among them. While some cultures see the education of the girl child as a wasted investment. This misconception stems from the view and belief that a girl is often not expected to assume leadership positions in the community and may end up not providing for the family upon completion of her education. Furthermore, a girl is expected to marry and leave her father's house. Even if she does, end up eventually providing for her family, she will most certainly earn less than her male counterparts because of the gender wage gap [16].

3. Early Marriage: According to research, the Northern region of Nigeria has one of the highest rates of child marriage in Nigeria. A news report has it that 78% of girls in the northern region of Nigeria got married before the age of 18, a new report launched today in Abuja by Save the Children reveals [17]. Early marriage often forces girls to leave school prematurely, reducing their chances of continuing education or gaining skills for economic independence.

4. Insecurity, Conflict, abduction, and Kidnapping: insecurity, abduction, and kidnapping play a major role in the early or forced marriage of a girl child in Nigeria. There have been a series of reports about the incessant spate of kidnappings of girls in Nigeria. There are a series of terrorist groups or organizations operating unabated in Nigeria. The Jamaat Ahi As-Sunnah Lid-Da'wah Wa'l-Jihad otherwise known as the Boko Haram and other terrorists' groups in Nigeria and surrounding West African countries are responsible for these inhuman activities. The abduction of the girl child in Nigeria with the highest number of international condemnations occurred on April 14, 2014. On the said date, 276 girls of the Government Girls Secondary School Chibok, Borno State; Northeastern Nigeria were forcefully taken from their hostel to an unknown location by the Boko Haram terrorists in the night when they were preparing for their West African School Leaving Certificate examinations. According to Amnesty International Report of April 14, 2023; nine years after the unfortunate abduction, 98 girls are still in the terrorist's captivity. The Amnesty International reports have it that some of the kidnapped girls managed to escape from their abductors. It was further reported that some of the escapees came back with children whom they had for their abductors while in captivity. Many of these girls were forced into marriage against their

will. The girls had amoral relationships with those who abducted them; thereby resulting in unplanned pregnancies. It is sad to note that before and after the April 14, 2014, abduction of the Chibok girls, there have been a series of reports of abductions of girls and women by different terrorist bodies in Nigeria. Quite a number of these abductions remain unreported and there appears to be little or no efforts by successive governments in Nigeria to curb the menace of kidnapping of our girls and the continued violation of their fundamental rights by their abductors. The Nigerian girl child is also exposed to rape which is often referred to as defilement or unlawful carnal knowledge. Section 218 of the Criminal Code Law of Delta State prescribes life imprisonment as punishment for the offense of unlawful carnal knowledge of a girl under the age of eleven years. The offense of attempted unlawful carnal knowledge attracts (14 years) fourteen years imprisonment. Where the victim is above (11 years) eleven years but below the age of thirteen (13), the punishment for attempted unlawful carnal knowledge is two (2 years) years imprisonment. Section 225 of the Criminal Code Law of Delta State prohibits the abduction of a girl under the age of eighteen (18) with intent to have unlawful carnal knowledge of her. In **Onwuta v. State of Lagos (2022) LPELR-57962(SC)**, the Supreme Court held that a girl under the age of eleven (11) is a child and she is not capable of consenting to sex. It was further held that a Court would hold that the girl did not consent to sex; even where it is established that she consented [18].

5. Inadequate Infrastructure: Many schools, especially in rural areas, lack adequate facilities like classrooms, toilets, and water supply. This disproportionately affects girls, as the absence of separate and safe sanitation facilities during menstruation discourages attendance [19].

6. Poor Funding for Education: The Nigerian education sector suffers from underfunding, resulting in poor-quality education, lack of learning materials, and insufficient teacher training. This is particularly detrimental to girls' education, as it further devalues their chances of receiving a quality education [19].

7. Gender Discrimination: Gender bias in schools and the wider society also limits girls' educational opportunities. Teachers may reinforce traditional gender roles, and girls are often discouraged from pursuing subjects like STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) [17].

8. Lack of Female Role Models: The scarcity of female teachers, especially in rural areas, can discourage girls from pursuing education. When girls do not see women in leadership or professional roles, they may be less motivated to stay in school and pursue careers.

9. Health Issues: Poor access to healthcare, particularly reproductive health services, affects adolescent girls' ability to remain in school. Teenage pregnancy, often resulting from a lack of education on sexual and reproductive health, leads to high dropout rates. Teenage pregnancy caused low female enrolment in secondary schools more especially in the Northern part of Nigeria where Islam permits girls to be married out early in life [20].

10. Government Policy and Implementation Gaps: While Nigeria has policies aimed at improving girls' education, the implementation of these policies remains weak. Corruption, inadequate monitoring, and lack of political will often hinder the effective enforcement of initiatives aimed at empowering girls through education.

11. Economic Factors: The economic situation in Nigeria could be seen as not palatable. Nigeria as a nation is undoubtedly characterized by very harsh economic conditions. This has given rise to a scarcity of resources. In the bid to meet up with the harsh economic situations, parents may be faced with the choice of whom to send to school. Most often, it is the girl-child that remains at home; girls get withdrawn from schools to help supplement family income. In some cases, the girls are given out as housemaids or given out to early marriage to get a huge bride price [16].

12. Fear of Safety of the Girl Child: In rural areas, girls often walk many miles before reaching their schools. The walk can take over an hour, which makes the girl child's parents concerned for the safety of their child on the way to school [16].

13. Low Self-esteem: Another hindering factor is the girl-child's low self-esteem. She sees herself as not being able to cope with the challenges of modern learning, so she begins to find excuses, like, that after schooling. There are no job opportunities so; it would be better for her to stay out of the reach of education. Solutions must be sought to these and other impediments because girl-child education is a must if the nation is to make any appreciable progress [20].

14. Sexual Violence and Abuse: Sexual violence and abuse could result in intimidating environments and when in the environment the girl-child may also be unwilling to come to school because of possible abuse that may face them there. A lot of consequences are associated with school-related violence, among which is sexual violence. In many schools in Nigeria, Corporal punishment is present and students may often get beaten for things they cannot help, such as not being able to afford and get a uniform or a book. Often, girls report having feelings of psychological adjustment due to being harassed by their male classmates and teachers. This act of sexual violence becomes a threat to girl child education [16].

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF GIRL-CHILD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The legal framework for the enforcement of girl-child education in Nigeria is rooted in several international, regional, and national legal instruments aimed at promoting gender equality in education and protecting the right to education for girls [21]. These laws and policies are designed to ensure that girls have equal access to education and address barriers such as cultural practices, early marriage, and gender-based violence [22].

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1. **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948:** Article 26 states that everyone has the right to education. Although not legally binding, it establishes the global standard for the right to education.
2. **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989:** Ratified by Nigeria, the CRC obligates state parties to make primary education compulsory and available to all children, including girls¹.
3. **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979:** Nigeria ratified CEDAW in 1985. Article 10 requires states to take steps to eliminate discrimination against women in education, ensuring equal access to opportunities at all levels of education.

REGIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1. **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) 1981:** This charter guarantees the right to education for all, including girls (Article 17), and has been domesticated into Nigerian law.
2. **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) 2003:** Ratified by Nigeria, the Maputo Protocol in Article 12 obligates state parties to take measures to eliminate gender discrimination and ensure equal access to education for girls and women.
3. **Maputo Protocol 2003:** A legal instrument to ensure women's rights in Africa, including equal access to education, it obligates Nigeria to remove gender-based barriers in education.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1. **Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999):** The Constitution guarantees the right to education under Section 18, which mandates the government to provide free, compulsory, and universal primary education. While not justiciable (non-enforceable in court), it sets the directive for the government's educational obligations.
2. **Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act (2004):** This law makes education free and compulsory for children up to Junior Secondary School (JSS) 3. It specifically requires parents and guardians to ensure their children (including girls) attend school, with penalties for non-compliance.
 - **Enforcement Provisions:** The Act empowers state governments to enforce compulsory school attendance for all children aged 6 to 15 years, targeting gender equality in enrollment.
3. **Child Rights Act (CRA) 2003:** This Act domesticated the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Nigeria. It guarantees the right to free, compulsory, and universal primary education². The CRA also addresses issues like child marriage and harmful practices, which affect girls' access to education.
 - **Enforcement:** The CRA provides sanctions for individuals or institutions that violate the provisions, including prosecuting parents who refuse to send their children (especially girls) to school.
4. **Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015:** This Act was enacted to prevent violence against persons, especially women and children. The Act defines rape³ and anyone convicted of rape against persons or children is liable to a sentence of a minimum of 12 years and a maximum of 20 years for gang-rape⁴ and compensation to victims of rape issued by the court. A register of convicted sex offenders is kept and accessible to the public⁵. Infliction of physical injury on a child by weapon, substance, or object is an offense punishable on conviction of 5 years imprisonment or a fine of 100,000Naira⁶. The Act prohibits female circumcision and genital mutilation with a penalty of less than 4 years and or a fine of 200,000

¹ Article 28

² Section 15 of the Child Rights Act (CRA) 2003

³ Section 1 (1) Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015

⁴ Section 1 (2) (b) and (2), *ibid*

⁵ Section 1(3), *ibid*

⁶ Section 2, *ibid*

Naira. Other harmful traditional practices attract a sentence of less than 4 years and or a fine of 500,000 Naira⁷ and incest attracts a penalty of 10 years imprisonment without an option of a fine⁸.

In practice however, the law has not been effective in curbing violence against children as the incidence of rape of minors has increased, this is more evident during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown in Nigeria, but a lot of these cases were unreported because of fear of stigmatization. The practices of female circumcision and female genital mutilation have remained unabated as female children are exposed to these harmful cultural practices without known health benefits. The Act prohibits forced isolation or separation from family and friends⁹ but children and women are abducted daily, especially in the north East region of Nigeria, the insecurity challenges seem to be overwhelming and the government is struggling to address the situation.

5. **Trafficking in Person (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act:** This act empowers the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) to investigate and prosecute individuals involved in child trafficking in Nigeria. The agency also plays a key role in providing counseling and rehabilitation for victims. The Act sets out penalties for violations, such as Sections 30 and 31, which impose fines of N200,000 and passport forfeiture for those who aid, abet, facilitate, or promote trafficking in persons (women or children). Corporate bodies found guilty of trafficking or assisting in trafficking face fines of N2,000,000, asset forfeiture, and potential closure. Commercial carriers who transport trafficked individuals in violation of the Act face up to two years imprisonment or a fine of N2,000,000. NAPTIP also works closely with the Nigerian Police Force, Nigerian Immigration Service, and Nigerian Customs Service to monitor and combat child trafficking. The agency has been instrumental in rescuing many children from traffickers and reuniting them with their families.
6. **Federal Republic of Nigeria (2007) National Gender Policy 2006:** This policy seeks to promote equal access to education for girls by addressing gender-based barriers to schooling, such as cultural norms, economic factors, and early marriage. It aims to ensure gender parity in school enrollment and completion rates.

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE GIRL CHILD EDUCATION [16]

Improving girl child education is essential for promoting gender equality, empowering women, and fostering socio-economic development in Nigeria.

1. **Community Engagement and Awareness:** Engage community leaders, religious figures, and influencers to advocate for girls' education, addressing cultural norms that discourage education for girls. Conduct educational campaigns highlighting the benefits of educating girls, such as improved family health, reduced poverty, and gender equality.
2. **Policy Implementation and Advocacy:** Strengthen and implement policies that promote free and compulsory education for girls, including incentives for schools that maintain gender parity. Advocate for the enforcement of laws against child marriage and other harmful practices that hinder girls' education.
3. **Economic Support for Families:** Provide scholarships, stipends, or conditional cash transfers to families to encourage them to send their daughters to school, reducing the economic burden. Offer free or subsidized meals at school to reduce the cost burden on families and improve girls' health and attendance.
4. **Infrastructure Development:** Ensure schools are safe, accessible, and equipped with separate sanitation facilities for girls, which are essential for encouraging attendance, especially during menstruation. Provide transportation to schools, particularly in rural areas where distance can be a barrier to girls' attendance.
5. **Mentorship and Role Models:** Establish mentorship programs where educated women mentor girls, serving as role models and providing guidance. Encourage female teachers in local schools, which can help challenge gender stereotypes and create a more supportive environment for girls.
6. **Addressing Cultural Barriers:** Engage in dialogue with communities to shift cultural norms that prioritize boys' education over girls' education.
7. **Curriculum Reform:** Integrate gender-sensitive curricula that reflect the challenges girls face and encourage their participation in all subjects, including STEM fields. Include life skills and vocational

⁷ Section 5(1), *ibid*

⁸ Section 25, *ibid*

⁹ Section 46

- training in the curriculum to provide girls with practical knowledge that can be applied to future employment opportunities.
8. **Teacher Training and Support:** Train teachers to promote gender equality and create an inclusive classroom environment that encourages girls' participation. Provide support to female teachers, particularly in rural areas, to reduce turnover and ensure continuity in girls' education.
 9. **Health and well-being:** Provide comprehensive reproductive health education to girls to help them understand their bodies and manage health challenges that may disrupt their education. Offer counseling and support services in schools to address any emotional or psychological issues that might affect girls' ability to stay in school.
 10. **Leveraging Technology:** Promote the use of e-learning platforms and digital tools to expand access to education for girls, particularly in areas where schools are distant or under-resourced. Use mobile phone technology to deliver lessons and educational content to girls who cannot attend school regularly.

RECOMMENDATION

- Strengthening laws that prevent child marriage, female genital mutilation, and other harmful cultural practices that hinder girls' education is critical. The government should ensure the strict enforcement of these laws and provide support services, such as counseling, legal aid, and rehabilitation, for victims.
- The government should introduce new policies and effectively enforce policies that eliminate gender-based violence and sexual harassment in schools.
- Community leaders, religious organizations, and local influencers play a critical role in shaping societal attitudes. Awareness campaigns should be intensified to shift cultural norms that discourage girls' education.
- Infrastructure improvements are essential to ensure schools are safe and accessible to girls. This includes providing adequate sanitation facilities, safe transportation to school, and gender-sensitive learning environments. Schools should be equipped with separate toilets for girls, and security should be a priority, especially in areas affected by insurgency and kidnapping.
- Establishing mentorship programs where young girls are paired with successful women who can serve as role models is vital. These programs can inspire girls to continue their education by providing guidance and emotional support. Additionally, the hiring of more female teachers, particularly in rural areas, would help create a supportive environment that encourages girls to stay in school.
- Integrate gender-sensitive curricula that promote girls' participation in all subjects, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Teacher training programs should emphasize gender equality, inclusive teaching practices, and the importance of fostering a safe and supportive learning environment. This approach would ensure that girls feel empowered to pursue a wide range of academic and career opportunities.
- Utilizing digital platforms for e-learning can help reach girls in remote and underserved areas. The government should invest in expanding internet access and providing digital tools to facilitate remote learning, especially in areas where traditional schooling may be inaccessible. This would allow girls who are unable to attend school physically to continue their education and reduce dropout rates.
- It is essential for governments at all levels to make a concerted effort to alleviate poverty at the grassroots level, as this will significantly address the financial barriers that prevent parents from sending their girl children to school. By reducing poverty, families will be better equipped to prioritize education, particularly for girls, and ensure their access to quality schooling.

CONCLUSION

The girl child education in Nigeria remains a critical issue that requires concerted efforts from the government, civil society, local communities, and international partners. Despite notable progress, significant challenges persist, including cultural barriers, financial constraints, and inadequate infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. While the legal framework for the enforcement of girl-child education in Nigeria is comprehensive, it requires stronger implementation to address the barriers that girls face in accessing education. Legal instruments such as the Child Rights Act, the Universal Basic Education Act, and the National Gender Policy provide a solid foundation, but effective enforcement remains a significant challenge. To overcome these obstacles, the Nigerian government, in collaboration with communities, civil society, and international organizations, must take concerted action. A holistic approach, which includes legal reform, community involvement, and targeted investments, is essential. By investing in the education of girls, Nigeria can unlock the potential of millions of young women who can drive sustainable development and lead the nation toward a more equitable future. Ensuring that all girls have access to quality education is not only a legal and moral imperative but a vital step toward achieving a more prosperous and gender-equal Nigeria.

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<p>CITE AS: Ukamaka Nnenna Ugwu (Esq) and Ndidiamaka Ebere Ugwu (2024). The Right to Education for Girls in Nigeria: Barriers, Progress, and Policy Solutions. <i>NEWPORT INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW, COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGES</i>, 4(2):35-43. https://doi.org/10.59298/NIJLCL/2024/4.2.354348</p>
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