

Nigeria: Researched and compiled by the RDC on 5 March 2009

Information on education in Nigeria. School standards generally, how they compare comparatively internationally, and any particular systemic or noted difficulties that undermine either the educational system generally, or the operation of education in practice. Also, whether any particular categories of children are discriminated against in the school system.

A *Europa World Online* entry on education in Nigeria states:

“Education is partly the responsibility of the state governments, although the Federal Government has played an increasingly important role since 1970. Primary education begins at six years of age and lasts for six years. Secondary education begins at 12 years of age and lasts for a further six years, comprising two three-year cycles. Education to junior secondary level (from six to 15 years of age) is free and compulsory. According to UNESCO estimates, in 2003/04 60% of children in the relevant age-group (males 64%; females 57%) were enrolled in primary education, while the comparable ratio for secondary enrolment in 1998/99 was 19% (males 19%; females 20%). In 2005 724,856 students were enrolled at Nigerian universities. Expenditure on education by the Federal Government in 2005 was ₦82,797m., equivalent to 5.0% of total expenditure in the federal budget.” (*Europa World Online* (5 March 2009) *Nigeria – Directory: Society & Media – Education*)

In a paragraph titled “Primary Education” an *International Organization for Migration* document states:

“The Primary Education system is run by the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC) which is a formal Government body. Primary school is 6 years in duration. Primary education is similar to that of European primary education European although in some parts of the country full time Koranic schools are based on teachings from Islam.” (*International Organization for Migration*) (Undated) *Nigeria: Education*)

A paragraph titled “Secondary Education” states:

“Secondary Education consists of two cycles, the Junior cycle and the Senior cycle, each stage being of three years duration. The Junior cycle consists of studying

1. English , Mathematics, and one Nigerian Language
2. two subjects from each of the categories below
 - a) Physics, Chemistry or Biology,
 - b) English Literature, History, Geography, Agricultural Science or a vocational subject.” (ibid)

In a section titled “Structure of the Education System” (paragraph 16) a document published by the Nigerian *Federal Ministry of Education* states:

“According to the constitutional provisions, the main responsibilities of the Federal government in basic education are in the realm of policy formulation, coordination and monitoring. Direct control by the Federal government is preponderantly at the tertiary level. Only a handful of institutions at the secondary level (the Unity Schools and technical colleges) enjoy federal direct control. The bulk of secondary schools in the country are under the purview of state governments, which are also directly responsible for a considerable proportion of the nation’s tertiary institutions. Local governments have statutory managerial responsibility for primary education, with the federal and state governments exercising appropriate oversight functions.” (Federal Ministry of Education (Education Sector Analysis Unit) (May 2005) *Nigeria Education Sector Diagnosis – A Condensed Version*, p.23)

Paragraph 17 of this document states:

“The National Policy on Education stipulates a 6-3-3-4 structure offering six years of primary, three years of junior secondary, three years of senior secondary and four years of higher education. The hierarchical structure of the educational system has as its base, Early childhood education in which government’s role has been limited to setting standards, providing curriculum guidelines and training teachers with the private sector providing educational service. Primary and junior secondary education constitutes basic education that is free and compulsory. A special nomadic education programme for the children of migrant herding and fishing communities is also encompassed in the basic education package.” (ibid, p.23)

In a section titled “Leadership and Direction” a report published in 2004 by *The World Bank* states:

“At the national level, Nigeria has an excellent vision, with two very clear sets of objectives for the education sector. One relates to what kind of society Nigerians want to build and the other relates to the types of values the schools should nurture. It has also charted a number of strategies to achieve these objectives. The broad central goal is to attain universal basic education (UBE) by the year 2015. The key complementary objectives include improving equity, quality and learning, as well as the expansion of early childhood care and education and adult literacy. These objectives have been broken down to a larger number of sub-objectives. Most of the objectives and sub-objectives are clear and many specify target outputs and the time by when they must be achieved. With some exceptions, the broad goal of UBE is known to all and understood by all. But its interpretation, as well as the knowledge and understanding of its complementary objectives and sub-objectives, are not shared by all, particularly at local government level. Senior officials in state and local governments throughout the system give different interpretations and state different objectives, in different orders of priority, when asked to tell what is their vision for education. Most of them refer to the overarching goal of UBE. However, many do not mention early childhood education, or adult education, for example. Some do not hold the view that all girls must be at school for the duration of basic education and do not refer to the elimination of gender disparities. Some are not happy with the curriculum, saying that it is too thin on moral content. It would be wrong to assume that the

37 states and 774 LGAs share fully a common basic set of objectives. The most that can be said about them is that they share broadly the goals of 'increased enrolment in basic education' and 'good education', but they give these goals different interpretations. There is no full common understanding of, and agreement on, the universality of education and the meaning of good education." (World Bank, The (April 2004) *The Capacity of the Nigerian Government to Deliver Basic Education Services* Orbach, Eliezer, p.9)

This report also states:

"The commitment of the federal and state governments to the stated objectives is not as high as the statements made by them suggest. This is reflected in the allocation of financial resources among the various sectors as well as the allocation of financial and human resources within the education sector itself. During the years 1997 to 2002, during which UBE has become the central theme of the national education vision, the recurrent expenditure on education as a share of the total federal expenditure declined from 12.3% to 9.1% and the share of capital expenditure has remained unchanged. The federal and state governments are not allocating sufficient financial resources to accommodate even today's enrolment, let alone resources to prepare for those who will come if UBE is to be achieved." (ibid, p.9)

In a section titled "Human Resources and Capacity" this report states:

"The management of human resources in the education sector requires great improvement. MOEs, SPEBs and LGEAs are bloated with non-teaching staff. There is no link between the sizes of the education systems that need to be managed and the sizes of the administrations that manage and service them. Larger systems are managed and serviced by smaller administrations and smaller systems are managed and serviced by larger administrations. In the states where this assessment was carried out, the ratio of teachers to all non-teaching staff varied from 2.2:1 to 20:1 – usually closer to the lower limit. In the SPEBs there were between 8 to 32 administrators for every 100 teachers. In the MOEs there were between 3 to 66 administrators for every 100 teachers, and in the LGEAs the figures were between 3 to 70. There is on average about one non-teaching staff somewhere in the system for every two to three teachers. In a system whose only business is teaching, the presence of so many non-teaching staff is highly questionable. It is a drain on financial resources and it exerts pressure on office space and facilities. It also consumes management time, and reduces the efficiency of everybody around. One of the most important measures that the government can take, therefore, is to establish the necessary norms and standards, conduct analyses of work, as well as staffing reviews in all the organizations in the sector, and then embark on a program to adjust the non-teaching labor force." (ibid, p.12)

A shortage of resources is referred to in a section titled "Material Resources and Capacity" which states:

"There is a great shortage of material resources in the education system. Generally speaking, the shortage has resulted from inadequate funding. But the

funding is inadequate, among others, because of the huge proliferation of states and LGAs between 1975 and 1996, which affected not only the number of staff deployed in the system, but also the requirements for material resources. The lack of funds is so severe that the shortage of material resources includes even the most basic resources such as office space, desks, chairs, filing cabinets, typewriters and electricity. The shortage is 'mild' in the SPEBs and slightly worse in the SMOEs, but it is critical in LGEAs. It is also different among the LGEAs themselves." (ibid, p.13)

The Summary of a *Human Rights Watch* report on corruption in Rivers State says:

"The human rights impact of those losses has been profound, as funds that government could have spent on basic health care and primary education for Nigeria's citizens have instead been squandered or embezzled. Nigeria's public schools and clinics have been left to crumble and wither away and Nigerians have suffered greatly from the decay of those vital public services. Accurate statistics do not exist, but one million Nigerian children are believed to die each year before the age of five, and most of those children lose their lives to diseases that are easily preventable or treatable at low cost. The country is also thought to have the world's second-highest number of maternal deaths each year, trailing only India. Public primary schools have reached the point of near collapse in many areas, with many children passing through the system without learning to read." (Human Rights Watch (31 January 2007) *Chop Fine – The Human Rights Impact of Local Government Corruption and Mismanagement in Rivers State, Nigeria*, p.1)

In a section titled "State and Local Government in Nigeria" this report says:

"In the area of education, local governments bear the main responsibility for ensuring the implementation of government education policies and for running Nigeria's primary schools on a day-to-day basis through their Local Government Education Authorities (LGEAs). Their practical responsibilities include building and maintaining primary school facilities and providing them with educational materials and other basic amenities. Where local governments do not meet their responsibilities, the basic physical infrastructure of the school system is left to decay, teaching materials are scarce or nonexistent, and effective oversight of the quality of teaching on offer in the schools is not carried out. In the area of primary education, practical federal government intervention has been more substantial than it has been in health. Most controversially, the federal government has essentially stripped local governments of their responsibility for paying primary school teachers by deducting the money to pay their salaries from local government allocations 'at source.' Essentially, the federal government appropriates money that would otherwise go into local government coffers and uses it to pay primary school teachers' salaries directly. This came about because of the widespread failure of many local governments to pay their teachers. State governments have also inaugurated State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) beginning in 2006, which are meant to coordinate the use of increased federal and state support to primary education." (ibid, pp.12-13)

In a section titled "Impact of Local Government Corruption and Mismanagement on Primary Education and Primary Health Care in Rivers State" (subsection titled "Primary Education") this report states:

"As discussed above, the federal government deducts primary school teachers' salaries from local government allocations 'at source.'¹⁶⁶ Beyond that, many local governments allocate next to nothing in their budgets to support primary education, and much of the money they do allocate disappears. This problem exists throughout Nigeria; one recent World Bank study found that while 'Very good mechanisms to control expenditure at all levels of government already exist in [Nigeria's] education sector,' those mechanisms 'are not being properly used and the actual control of expenditure is very weak.' Most local governments allocate funds for school rehabilitation and maintenance in their budgets. While the amount is often a tiny fraction of what is needed, even that money is often not spent in pursuit of any legitimate purpose. In most of the local governments visited by Human Rights Watch, local education officials and civil servants said that their chairmen had not renovated or repaired a single school building during their entire tenures of three years or more.¹⁶⁸ Some claimed that they were not even aware that such allocations had existed on paper to begin with. The secretary of one local government's Education Authority, asked why the local government had not begun renovating any of its schools despite budgeting more than N22 million (\$169,000) for that purpose in 2004 and 2005, replied, 'How should I know what the chairman does with his money?'" (ibid, p.50)

In a section titled "Academic Freedom and Cultural Events" the *US Department of State* country report for Nigeria states:

"State governments continued to restrict academic freedom by controlling curriculum at all levels, including mandating religious instruction. Student groups alleged that numerous strikes, inadequate facilities, and the rise of gangs on campuses, particularly in the south, continued to hamper educational progress." (US Department of State (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor) (25 February 2009) *2008 Human Rights Report: Nigeria*)

In a section titled "Children" this report states:

"Public schools continued to be substandard, and limited facilities precluded access to education for many children. The law calls for the government, 'when practical,' to provide free, compulsory, and universal primary education; however, compulsory primary education rarely was provided, and the numerous required school fees meant schooling was not free. A 2004 NDHS survey showed primary school net attendance rates of 64 percent for boys and 57 percent for girls, with approximately 96 percent of those attending completing five years of primary education. Secondary school net attendance was considerably lower, at 38 percent for boys and 33 percent for girls. In many parts of the country, girls were discriminated against in access to education for social and economic reasons. When economic hardship restricted families' ability to send children to school, many girls were directed into activities such as domestic work, trading, and street vending. Many families favored boys over girls in deciding which children to

enroll in secondary and elementary schools. The literacy rate was 58 percent for men but only 41 percent for women.” (ibid)

A section titled “Acceptable Conditions of Work” refers to a teachers strike in 2008 as follows:

“On June 28, the National Union of Teachers began a nationwide strike which lasted almost two months, closing schools and sending pupils home. The union called for a standardized national wage structure and an increase in salaries to a living wage. The government, through the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education, refused to negotiate with the union, since teachers' wages are set at the state level.” (ibid)

In a section titled “The cost of neglect” an IRIN News report states:

“In 2005 almost half of all children in Nigeria did not even attend primary school according to the 2006 census, putting the country among the United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) top ten of worst countries in the world for school attendance. And for those children who do get to secondary school, the standards are often so low that the failure rate for those sitting for the final year exams is around 76 percent. Many public school teachers admit that the education they provide is of little or no benefit to children. 'Our school is now mainly for houseboys and housemaids, with demoralised teachers who lack the tools to provide meaningful instruction.' said Maria Akinwale, a teacher at Gbaja Primary School in Lagos. The result has been that almost any parent who can scrounge up the money to pay for a privately run school will do so, according to a World Bank report on the state of education issued in February. In poor urban and periurban areas of Lagos State, 75 percent of schoolchildren are in private schools, according to research conducted by James Tooley, Professor of Education Policy at Newcastle University in the UK. The majority are make-shift schools, usually in private homes in congested neighbourhoods, without playgrounds and other basic facilities. They are also poorly regulated and many parents complain they have been fleeced. Still, parents say they are better than public schools and the Bank has said it is going to encourage this growth industry, and called on the government should do the same. Not only should it foster existing schools but where possible privatise those that are public, the Bank says.” (IRIN News (13 July 2007) *Nigeria: Privatising Schools And National Unity*)

An IRIN News report refers to classroom shortages as follows:

“The success of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme which aims to provide free education to every child in Nigeria caused the number of primary school leavers to more than double in 2007, creating a backlog that the secondary education system is struggling to cope with. Over 49,000 children in the northern Nigeria city of Kano who completed primary school in 2006 and wish to attend secondary school may not be admitted due to a severe shortage of trained teachers and classrooms.” (IRIN News (15 January 2008) *Nigeria: Classroom Shortages Threaten Primary Education Targets*)

See also *IRIN News* report which states:

"'We realised we had a lot of problems in our school system, including overcrowding in the classrooms, lack of furniture, low numbers of girls and few qualified teachers, so we started by setting up a community dialogue to discuss the problem,' said Alhaji Nuhu Gaya, leader of a community coalition. Further, the school system is run-down, over-stretched and low on teachers, with classrooms designed for 40 holding 150 students, according to Gaji Abdullahi of the Kano state Universal Basic Education Board.'" (IRIN News (19 December 2008) *Nigeria: Improving Education for Girls in North*)

An article published in the online edition of the Lagos-based newspaper *Vanguard* states:

"Nothing was seen to have been done in 2008 to implement and consolidate the integrity efforts. Leakages of public examinations question papers even days before sitting were so widespread that they were being hawked in the streets of Lagos and some other major cities across the country. Whether WAEC, JAMB, NECO, NABTEB, leakages were rampant, indicating that persons associated with the process of conducting these examination, evaluation and assessment were not ethics-friendly, prone to corrupt tendencies. Examination Ethics is defined as the respect for the rules, regulations, expectations, codes of conduct and moral principles governing the conduct of assessment and evaluation systems, not only in educational institutions, but in all sectors of endeavour. Even internal examinations at primary, secondary and tertiary institutions witnessed a lot of malpractices, sale of marks and grades to undeserving students. Attainment of examination ethics gives practical meaning to the concept of academic excellence." (Vanguard Online Edition (1 January 2009) 2008: *Education still in limbo* Edukugho, Emmanuel)

A *Vanguard* article comments on illiteracy as follows:

"The number of children who are out of school and adult illiterates or those relapsing into illiteracy is growing daily and this is giving stakeholders a lot of concern as this situation contradicts the objectives of Universal Basic Education programmes. Current school census report indicates that about 10 million school age children are out of the formal school system, with more than 60 percent of this figure being girls residing in the northern part of the country. Equally disheartening is the fact that many children are dropping out of formal school system particularly in some states in the South-East and South-South, due to poverty or parents apathy to education without achieving permanent literacy, thereby compounding the illiteracy problem of the country. This figure of illiterate boys and girls as well as youths has been rising due to poor funding of mass education programmes by all tiers of government over the years." (Vanguard Online Edition (22 January 2009) *Rising figure of children, adult illiterates worry stakeholders* Adenipekun, Olubusuyi)

A *This Day* article on the crisis in the Nigerian education sector states:

“What all this boils down to is that the crisis in the education sector requires a comprehensive response by governments at various levels, parents and other stakeholders. To be sure, the poor teachers' pay is only an aspect of the problem. What the teachers are simply telling the nation is that the collapse in the education sector is not only about school buildings, curriculum, school management and other policy issues. It is also largely about the welfare of the professionals running the sector. It is a complex manpower issue. Those who downplay teachers' pay and welfare in their analysis of the crisis in the education sector at all levels are doing a disservice to the future of this country. If you entrust the moulding of those who would be in charge in the future in the various sectors in the hands of teachers, you must be prepared to pay them adequate remuneration.” (This Day (3 March 2009) *Nigeria: What to Do With Public Schools* Komolafe, Kayode)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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