

Closing the inequality gap in Nigeria's schools

Inequalities directly impact upon the learning opportunities of Nigeria's children. A School Improvement Programme (SIP) across six key states is driving better results in overall school inclusiveness, reducing the gender gap and tackling wealth, location and other disparities. Recent evidence demonstrates significant and persistent weaknesses in learning outcomes across states. Whilst this may reflect sociocultural patterns, a large-scale roll-out in 2013-14 of the SIP is addressing the poorest and most disadvantaged children directly, increasing school inclusiveness across the country.

The UK and Nigerian governments are committed to enhancing the inclusiveness of Nigeria's education system through technical support from the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN). The School Improvement Programme must continue to be supported by states in order to improve inclusive practices in schools and improve learning outcomes for all Nigeria's children.

The full reports can be accessed on ESSPIN's website www.esspin.org

THE KEY FINDINGS ARE:

The poorest children are benefiting significantly in the SIP schools where the consequences of wealth gaps are reduced

The difference in test scores between rich and poor students in schools benefiting from the SIP is up to 12% less than in schools receiving no interventions. However, learning outcomes still differ by wealth.

“Pupils from the richest 20% of households in each state score twice as highly as those from the poorest, especially in English literacy.”

However more data on the wealth of children is required to establish proper causation.

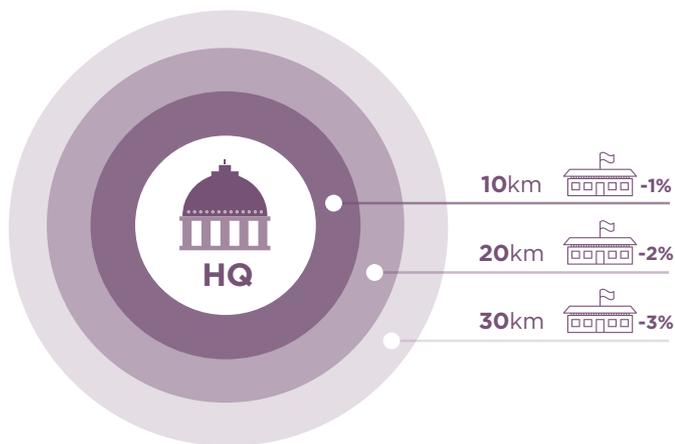
There is no evidence of gender differences in pupil test scores

Despite large gender gaps in enrolment in northern states – only 76 for every 100 boys in Jigawa – girls learn just as well as boys once in school.

“Pupils in urban schools performed better than those in rural schools.”

The rural/urban gap, though less pronounced in schools supported by ESSPIN, is still significant. Test scores are significantly lower in more remote schools.

“For every increase of 10 kilometres in distance between the school and the headquarters of the local government authority, average test scores dropped by around one percentage point.”



Children who speak minority languages do not seem to score better or worse in numeracy or literacy than others. The 21% of over-age pupils perform better than their age-appropriate peers, contributing to overall school inclusiveness.

Programme schools are more inclusive in school management and participation of women and children

Access for disadvantaged children and varying assessment methods have increased. Schools benefiting from ESSPIN interventions have improved inclusiveness, despite a worsening trend overall between 2012-14.

Though evidence points to less effort by headteachers to improve pupil attendance state-wide,

“50% of the SIP schools met women’s inclusiveness criteria, and 1 in 5 schools met the criteria for children.”

The participation of children in school management is still seen as ‘not accepted’ due to sociocultural norms, as children are not welcomed at meetings or expected to speak in front of their elders. Teachers, head teachers and community members should be encouraged to address this.

Teachers in ESSPIN-supported schools encourage more children, especially girls, to participate in lessons

68% of teachers in the SIP schools encourage children from all parts of the classroom to participate.

“55% ensure boys and girls participate more equally.”

Overall gender inclusivity across schools improved only slightly and teachers were actually measured as less spatially inclusive in 2014 than in 2012.



The proportion of female teachers who passed tests in English and Maths is twice that of male teachers.

The functionality of SBMCs improved across the six states, especially in the SIP schools which met 70% of criteria, compared to 18% of other schools

School management has improved overall, though few schools increased women and children’s inclusiveness.

“Women’s participation was seen as ‘highly constrained’ across states.”

50% of ESSPIN-supported schools met the standards for women’s participation in SBMCs, compared to 3% of other schools, with more women raising issues and contributing to solutions. SBMCs also secured more resources for schools through engagement with community sources.

There is strong evidence that the SIP improves equitable access to better quality education for Nigeria’s children. State governments need to consistently fund school improvement in their states to raise standards across schools and improve long-term prospects for Nigeria’s economic and social development.