

**Access and Equity**

**Introduction**

Inequalities in educational opportunities stem from the way education is organised, policies, unwritten rules, and the attitudes of both those who provide education and of the parents, families and communities who send their children to be educated. For example, facilities for children with disabilities are limited, and prevailing attitudes mean that far more boys than girls acquire post-primary education in the north, whereas more boys drop out in parts of the south east.

All states working with ESSPIN commit to improving access and equity in basic education, and to reducing gender inequality. All states, to a greater or lesser extent, involve civil society in making plans to address access and equity, integrate gender issues in Medium-Term Sector Strategies (MTSS) and use data disaggregated by sex in annual education performance reports.

**What is ESSPIN's approach?**

ESSPIN takes a cross cutting and exploratory approach at all levels in the education system. The aim is to find ways to reduce inequality and give all children opportunities for education. State governments are key partners in identifying areas where changes can be made.

**Strategy**

The first step in developing a strategy to address access and equity is to understand the issues – what educational opportunities children have, and whether or not all children have equal opportunities. ESSPIN therefore supports the development of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) at federal, state and community level and the gathering of relevant data on schools and the children who attend them – or not.

<b>ESSPIN support for information management for access and equity in education</b>	Collecting robust data on the current situation:	ASC Censuses of Islamiyya, Quranic and Tsangaya schools Information on unregistered private schools	Annual education performance reviews Surveys of public attitudes to state, Islamiyya, Quranic and Tsangaya schools Analyses of data
	Using information in planning and costing MTSSs:	Helping states turn access and equity objectives, eg: improved school attendance of girls and children with disabilities, into detailed MTSS work plans and budgets and helping government staff monitor progress to improve performance	Creating opportunities for civil society organisations experienced in gender policy issues to take part in state MTSS planning processes

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## Strategy continued

A key component of this work is to help ministries of education conduct a comprehensive national Annual School Census (ASC) covering public, private and faith based schools and household surveys of out of school children. To get an even better understanding of school attendance, ESSPIN also assesses how many children attend schools outside the formal education system, as is particularly the case in northern Nigeria (see also ESSPIN briefing note 8: Islamiyya, Quranic and Tsangaya Education).

This information provides an overview of the extent to which government, the private sector, religious groups, non-government and civil society organisations collectively meet or do not meet the educational needs of different groups of children. ESSPIN then works with the various education providers to find ways to fill significant gaps.

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## Support for access and equity

### Cash transfers

ESSPIN is working with Kano State Government to pilot a scheme of cash payments to families to improve 3,000 girls' attendance at school. ESSPIN has supported states to develop ways to involve communities in choosing recipient families for cash transfers and in checking that girls are in fact attending school.

### Partnership with mission schools

1200 poor children from marginalised communities in Enugu state benefit from a Challenge Fund to gain quality basic education in 30 mission schools. Student fees and school supplies are provided and school are supported to improve their teaching capacity and strengthen their School-Based Management Committees (SBMCs).

### Community and nomadic schools

In Jigawa state, 40 nomadic community schools are assisted to track the attendance of 3,154 children on a data base. 90 Nomadic School Support Committees have been trained on school management. 40 community based teachers and nine zonal inspectors have been recruited and trained by the State School Improvement Team (SSIT) with an emphasis on child-centred approaches to teaching.

## Rural teachers' housing

ESSPIN is targeting the enrolment of girls and minority ethnic groups and has supported the construction of 2 rural teachers' houses and 12 classrooms in 2 communities in Kaiama Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) and provided uniforms and equipment. Empowered communities with SBMCs in place have recruited 25 teachers to be trained by SSITs. The Local Government Authority (LGA) is using its own money to support the project.

## Girls Education Initiative

ESSPIN's Girl's Education Initiative in Jigawa provides essential items like uniforms, books and sanitary materials to girls from poor families to help 6000 more girls go to school. Schools are provided with sports equipment to encourage games and other sporting activities for girls. Local governments have been assisted with educational materials, water and sanitation and improved school infrastructure. Gender officers have been trained to guide and support girls through school. A clear state-level coordination and management mechanism is in place.

## Inclusive education

Inclusiveness is about meeting the learning needs of all children, acknowledging and respecting groups that are often marginalised because of their gender, disability, ethnicity, HIV status, poverty etc. ESSPIN is promoting the development and implementation of clear state policies on inclusive education. Schools must adopt practices that ensure a welcoming classroom environment for all kinds of learners and must develop the teaching skills to be able to meet individual needs in classes of 50 students or more. SBMCs have a crucial role in getting out-of-school children into school.

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## Future challenges

Planning, funding, accountability and capacity are significant challenges to access and equity in education in Nigeria. Better planning and budgeting will only result in better education if those organisations responsible for putting plans into action (governments, the private sector and civil society) are systemically strengthened and develop the necessary skills to deliver quality education for all Nigeria's children.