Teachers as agents of change

How teachers are working in schools to improve girls' education and gender equity in two states in Nigeria

June 2021

In partnership with

Education Development Trust

Contents

Chapter 1
Introduction

Nigeria is estimated to have 10.5 million children out of school – more than any other country in the world. The majority of these children are girls and proportionately more out of school in the north of the country. Girls in northern states, including Kano state, face complex and multi-dimensional constraints to accessing education, including a high prevalence of early marriage, high rates of early childbearing, and cultural and gender norms which prevent many from accessing and completing secondary education.[1] On average, a girl in northern Nigeria has a 35.6% chance of getting married by age 15 and a 45% chance of pregnancy by age 18.[2]

The current federal Education Strategic Plan includes a commitment to reducing the gap in education between girls and boys through the development of gender sensitive school environments and implementation of the Universal Basic Education Policy.[3]

Research around girls' education has tended to focus on girls' access to education. Studies such as Unterhalter, (2014) Snilstveit et al (2016) and Sperling and Winthrop (2016) find that the provision of information about the availability of and possibility of returning to education, as well as material support in the form of scholarships or cash transfers, can be effective in increasing girls' access and enrolment. There is a less robust evidence base on what is effective in increasing girls' learning. A recent review by the Population Council highlights some promising practices with the potential to improve learning. These practices include improving pedagogy through ongoing training and coaching for teachers and improving school governance and accountability. The review, however, found little evidence of approaches to improving pedagogy being tested for girls.[4]

There is also some evidence that clubs for girls which increase their aspirations and confidence can have positive impacts on enrolment and completion rates, with less conclusive evidence on their impact on learning outcomes.[5] However, much less research considers the role of teachers in transforming the experience of education for girls, particularly outside of safe spaces and girls' clubs.

This research seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how to improve the quality of girls' education and gender equity in schools. In preparation for the project, the British Council has consulted globally with education regional leads on priorities in gender research, priorities within its strategy, and conducted a literature review which identified a number of areas for further exploration and research. This included the need for classroom-level studies that examine teacher practice.

Nigeria is estimated to have 10.5 million children out of school – more than any other country in the world.

[1]World Bank, 2020. [2]World Bank, 2020. [3]Federal Ministry of Education, 2019. [4]Psaki et al, 2021. [5]Marcus et al, 2020
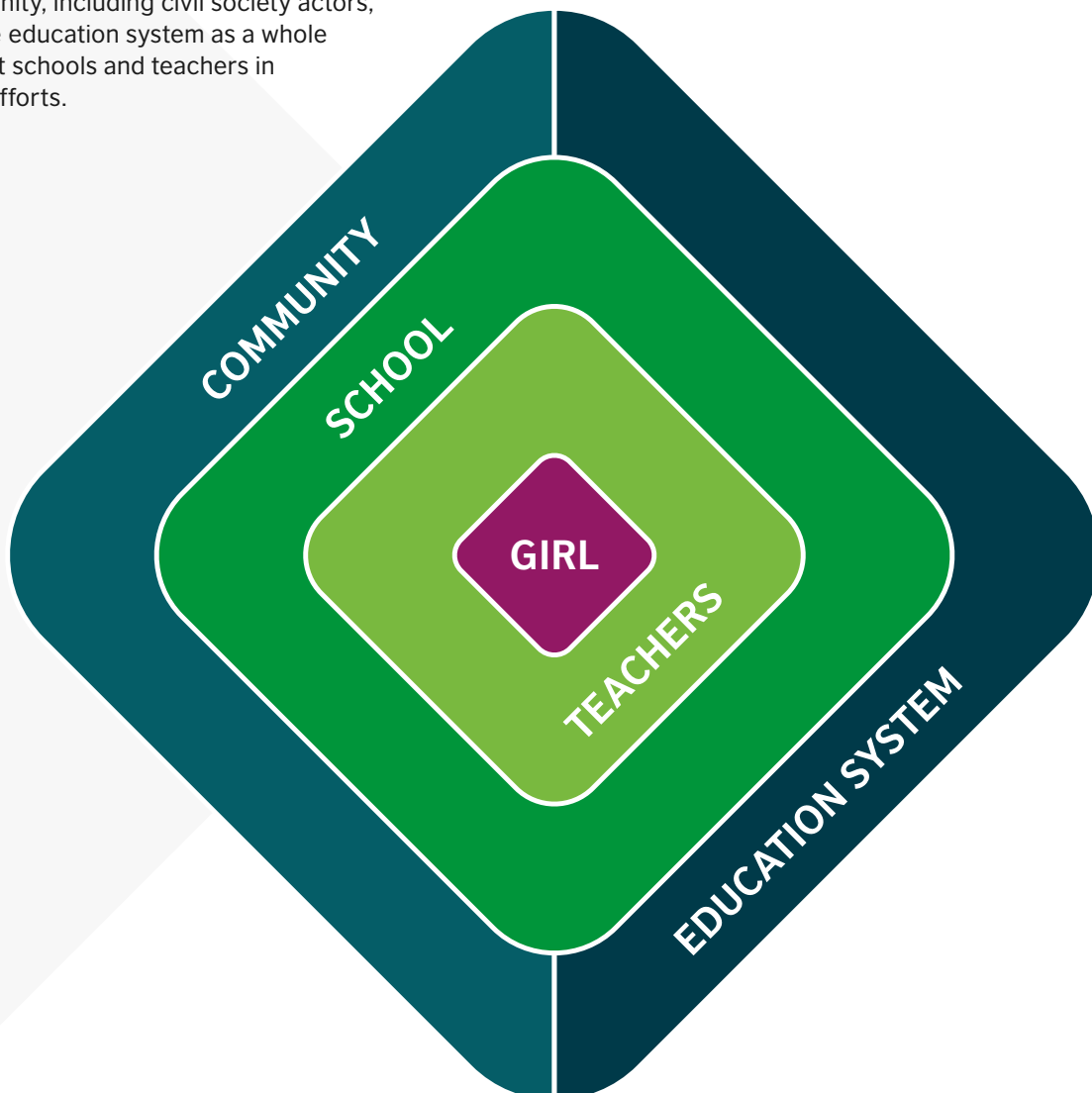
Chapter 2
Research framework

The research focused on the question: How are teachers working to improve girls' education and gender equity in their schools? To answer this, the project focused on exploring teacher practice and specifically how teachers can act as change agents to overcome barriers in their contexts and improve girls' education and gender equity in their schools.

The conceptual framework for this research study focuses on teachers as key agents for change in girls' education and gender equality within education, since it is the teachers that have most direct contact and interaction with students. The study considers the ways in which school policies, practices, culture and overall environment can serve to support, or frustrate, teachers' efforts to promote gender equity and girls' participation, wellbeing and learning. The study also takes into consideration how the wider community, including civil society actors, and the education system as a whole support schools and teachers in these efforts.

How are teachers working to improve girls' education and gender equity in their schools?

COMMUNITY

SCHOOL

GIRL

TEACHERS

EDUCATION SYSTEM

Chapter 3
# Research methodology

3.1. Design and data collection

The research drew on a mixed-method approach which combined a survey with the development of 'bright spot' case studies through in-depth interviews. A strength-based approach facilitated a focus on teacher and principal good practice and success – respondents were asked to reflect on how they drive positive changes in their schools and how other actors support and facilitate them in doing this. The research was designed as a pilot study which aims to contribute to the development of a framework for future research looking at teacher practice around girls' education that can be transferable to other countries in which the British Council works.

The research considers two states in Nigeria: Lagos and Kano. These states were selected by the British Council due to existing or previous relationships and programming in these areas. Lagos state covers a predominantly urban context in which girls often outnumber boys in both primary and secondary school[6]. Kano state is in the less well developed north of the country. It includes more rural schools and is a context in which boys outnumber girls in school – girls make up 58.9% of the out-of school population amongst secondary school aged children.[7] For the purposes of this report, unless otherwise specified, 'Lagos' refers to Lagos state (as opposed to Lagos city), and 'Kano' refers to Kano state (as opposed to the city of Kano).

The differences between the states were also seen as helpful as part of the pilot, as we were able to apply the most relevant data collection techniques in each context, where we relied on remote data collection methods with different levels of connectivity and access to technology.

Separate teacher and principal surveys were developed for the study. Both surveys focused on the

Kano state: 160 schools

Lagos state:
317 schools
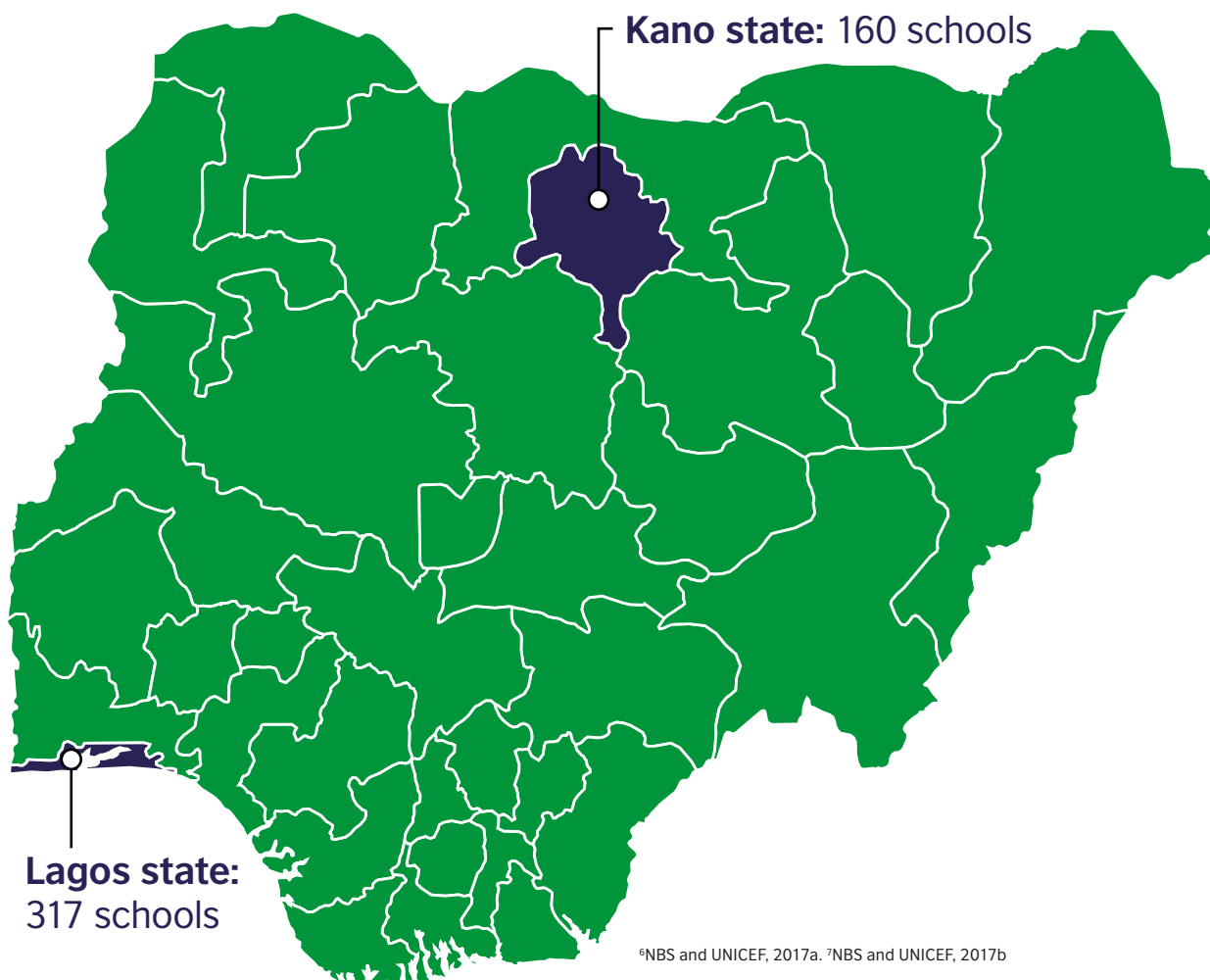
[6]NBS and UNICEF, 2017a. [7]NBS and UNICEF, 2017b

same thematic areas, with principals responding to questions about teacher practices within their schools, rather than their own practices. The surveys were designed so that they could be completed either online (as an e-survey) or as a telephone interview. The surveys used multiple question types, primarily scales and closed-response questions with limited open-response questions, and questions were available in both Hausa and English. Where an email address was available, potential respondents were emailed a link to the survey. Where no email was available, or the email bounced, a team of two female Nigerian research assistants, who were fluent Hausa speakers, attempted to reach as many respondents as possible by phone which allowed respondents to answer in either English or Hausa.

As a pilot, the survey did not aim to achieve a fully representative sample of teachers and principals. Survey data was collected, and initial analysis conducted using the 'Survey Anyplace' platform.

Responses to the survey were used to identify ten 'bright spot' schools – five in Kano state and five in Lagos state. To identify these schools, the research team looked for survey responses that showed signs of good or promising practice, drawing mainly on responses to open-ended questions. We viewed answers where respondents gave detailed descriptions of their practices, were able to express and describe their practices in their own words, or where respondents had given interesting responses in the open-ended questions as indicating potential as a bright spot school. The selected teachers were contacted by the research team and all confirmed their willingness to be interviewed. At the end of their interview, teachers were asked to put the researcher in contact with their school principal. For every bright spot school, individual remote interviews were conducted with a teacher and the principal at the school.

Interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded. Interviews were conducted in English where possible. When this was not possible, interviews were conducted in Hausa, with translation of detailed research notes or transcripts produced by Nigerian research assistants. Thematic analysis of the interviews was conducted in NVivo using a combination of notes and transcripts.

Where open-ended survey responses are quoted in this report, these are listed as such with an identification number for the response. Similarly, bright spot schools for which the teachers and principals were interviewed have also been given identification numbers. Interview answers quoted in this report are listed as such along with the school identification number, where relevant.

3.2. Ethical considerations

The research was conducted using fully remote methods in order to limit travel and to avoid any unnecessary risks or exposure to Covid-19 for either the respondents or the research team. Data was collected in March and April 2021. The team maintained regular communication to debrief using a combination of WhatsApp, email and calls. The use of remote methods also allowed respondents to engage with the project at times convenient to them, minimising disruption in schools.

The study received ethical approval from the Ministries of Education in Kano and Lagos states. Informed consent was received from all respondents, confidentiality was assured by de-identifying all data and preliminary findings and the storage of those data in secure locations. All ethics protocols for this study have been reviewed by colleagues at the British Council and Education Development Trust.

The survey tools were piloted with the research assistants who made amendments to questions to take cultural sensitivities and context into account. One example of this contextualisation was the addition of the option 'talk to the girl's husband' in survey questions where we asked what action they would take if a girl in their class was pregnant.

3.3. Sample and response rate

The survey sample was drawn from teachers and school leaders who are connected to the British Council. This included a total of 317 schools in Lagos state and 160 in Kano state with a total staff population of 1,214 teachers and 455 school leaders.

In total, 315 teachers participated, 33 of whom were teaching at all-boys schools and thus did not complete the full survey, making the true total 282. 94 principals participated, four of whom were teaching at all-boys schools and thus did not complete the full survey, making the true total 90. This gave an overall true response rate of 23% for the teacher survey and 18% for the principal survey.

The survey was administered through a combination of phone surveys and via email. All contacts who had an email address listed were sent the survey via email, and all participants who only had a phone number as a contact mechanism were targeted for the phone survey. Table 1 gives more detail on the response and completion rates for the different ways the survey was administered. Response and completion rates were much higher for surveys carried out by phone.

Table 1: Overall response and completion rates

Survey type	Response rate (from all requests sent)	Completion rate of all respondents
Phone survey		
Teachers	60%	45%
Principals	36%	53%
Email survey		
Teachers	14%	41%
Principals	12%	36%

None of the questions in the survey were mandatory, which means that each question has differing totals in the reporting throughout.

For the teacher survey, 40% of respondents were from Kano state and 60% from Lagos state. For the school principal survey, 41% of respondents were from Kano state and 59% from Lagos state. Table 2 outlines the total number of respondents reached in each state.

There was a particularly low rate of email responses. Explanations for the low response rates for the email survey can be attributed to the following:

• There was a 24% bounce rate on emails sent to teachers, with only 725 out of 982 emails being delivered.

• There was an 18% bounce rate on emails sent to school principals, with only 230 out of 281 emails being delivered.

Explanations for low response rates in the telephone survey include the following:

• Research assistants conducting phone surveys reported that contacts in Lagos state were resistant to being contacted via phone. They advised they had received a large number of cold calls in the months prior to when the phone survey was conducted and were suspicious of numbers not in their contact lists. Research assistants attempted to mitigate against this by sending contacts SMS messages prior to phone calls to give them the opportunity to opt into the phone survey.

• A small number of contacts had retired or were no longer teachers.

• A small number of telephone numbers were no longer active.

Respondents (both teachers and principals) were predominately male, as shown in Table 3.

Only a small proportion of the respondents were teachers or principals in combined (i.e. combined primary and secondary) schools (eight teachers and three principals). A greater proportion of principals who responded were from primary schools (59%). This contrasted with teachers, where a greater proportion of respondents were from secondary schools (58%).

Table 4 shows the gender of respondents by type of school they work in and by state. This breakdown illustrates the higher number of male respondents reached, particularly in Kano state, where 80% of

Table 2: Number of respondents by state and survey type

Participant type/ state	Survey type	Total population targeted	Total sample size achieved	Total (as a percentage of respondents)
Teacher survey				
Kano	Phone	139	77	113 (40%)
	Email	165	36	
Lagos	Phone	96	64	169 (60%)
	Email	845	105	
Total		**1,214**	**282**	**282**
Principal survey				
Kano	Phone	85	31	37 (41%)
	Email	74	6	
Lagos	Phone	67	23	53 (59%)
	Email	207	28	
Other states	Email	–	2	
Total		**433**	**90**	**90**

Table 3: Survey respondents' gender and school level

Gender	Teachers (n=273)	Principals (n=90)
Male	148 (54%)	49 (54%)
Female	125 (46%)	41 (46%)
School Level	**Teachers (n=281)**	**Principals (n=90)**
Primary	110 (39%)	53 (59%)
Secondary	163 (58%)	34 (38%)
Combined	8 (3%)	3 (3%)

Table 4: Survey respondents' gender by school level and state

School Level	Teachers (n=272)		Principals (n=114)	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
Primary	64 (60%)	43 (40%)	36 (68%)	17 (32%)
Secondary	75 (48%)	82 (52%)	11 (32%)	23 (68%)
Combined	8 (100%)	0 (0%)	26 (67%)	1 (33%)
State	**Teachers (n=243)**		**Principals (n=84)**	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
Lagos	73 (43%)	95 (57%)	17 (35%)	32 (65%)
Kano	60 (80%)	15 (20%)	31 (89%)	4 (11%)

teachers and 89% of principals were male. While the majority of teachers at primary level were male, a relatively high number of respondents from secondary schools (teachers and particularly principals) were female.

Table 5 shows the gender breakdown of the original contact database, from which we can see that there was a higher number of potential male respondents amongst both teachers and school leaders in Kano. We should note that the response rate for both male teachers and school leaders was higher than for women: 27% of male teachers responded, compared to 21% of female teachers, and 27% of male school leaders responded, compared to 19% of female school leaders. In Lagos, more female teachers were included in the database, although the response rate was higher for male teachers (21%) than female teachers (17%). Female school leaders in Lagos were the group with the highest response rate, with 28% of those in the database completing the survey.

Table 5: Breakdown of contact database gender by school level and state[8]

Region	Teachers		School leaders	
	Male	**Female**	**Male**	**Female**
Lagos	344	555	143	115
Kano	225	70	116	21

[8]Note gender of one teacher respondent in Lagos was missing from the database

Overall, 80% of teachers were from mixed schools (i.e. those which teach both boys and girls), and 10% were from all-girls schools. 88% of principals were from schools that teach both boys and girls, and 8% were from all-girls schools. Around a quarter of teachers and principals identified that their classrooms were made up of less than 50% girls (see Table 6).

Table 6: Proportion of girls in respondents' classrooms

Proportion of girls in class	Teachers (n=280)	Principals (n=88)
Less than 50%	81 (29%)	22 (25%)
About 50%	170 (61%)	59 (67%)
They are all girls	29 (10%)	7 (8%)

91% of surveyed principals (n=90) taught at government schools, along with 88% of surveyed teachers (n=280). A further breakdown of respondents is provided in the Annex.

3.4. Limitations

There are a number of limitations to the research associated with the available sample for the survey. As the research was conducted fully remotely due to Covid-19, we were only able to reach teachers and principals with access to either a phone or the internet. This is likely to have excluded teachers in the most rural and marginalised communities, particularly in Kano.

The research relied on a contact database provided by the British Council to identify and contact respondents – this limited the initial pool of schools selected to participate. The research team were able to contact fewer teachers and principals by email than had been anticipated, due to bounced emails, which meant that more calls were made by the research assistants to conduct the survey over the phone. The additional time that this required meant it was not possible to dedicate the same resources to the principal survey as the teacher survey, despite experiencing a similar response rate to emails. This constrained the number of principals reached and meant the sample size for the principal survey is very small.

The remote methods also meant the research team was unable to observe any of the bright spot schools or engage with students and staff at the schools, which would have added depth to the understanding of how positive actions are implemented and supported and enabled us to place the experiences of girls themselves closer to the heart of the research.

Chapter 4
Findings

This section draws together the qualitative and quantitative data collected through the survey and bright spot interviews. The study outlines the data on what barriers were perceived to exist to girls' education, details actions at the classroom level and school level, and finally explores perceptions of any additional support or policy that supports girls' education. Descriptive analysis of survey responses is presented alongside analysis of bright spot interview questions on the same theme in order to highlight promising practice. In most cases, combined responses for Lagos and Kano states are presented, with exceptions where there were clear differences in the experience between states or other groups of respondents.

4.1. Perceptions of barriers to girls' education

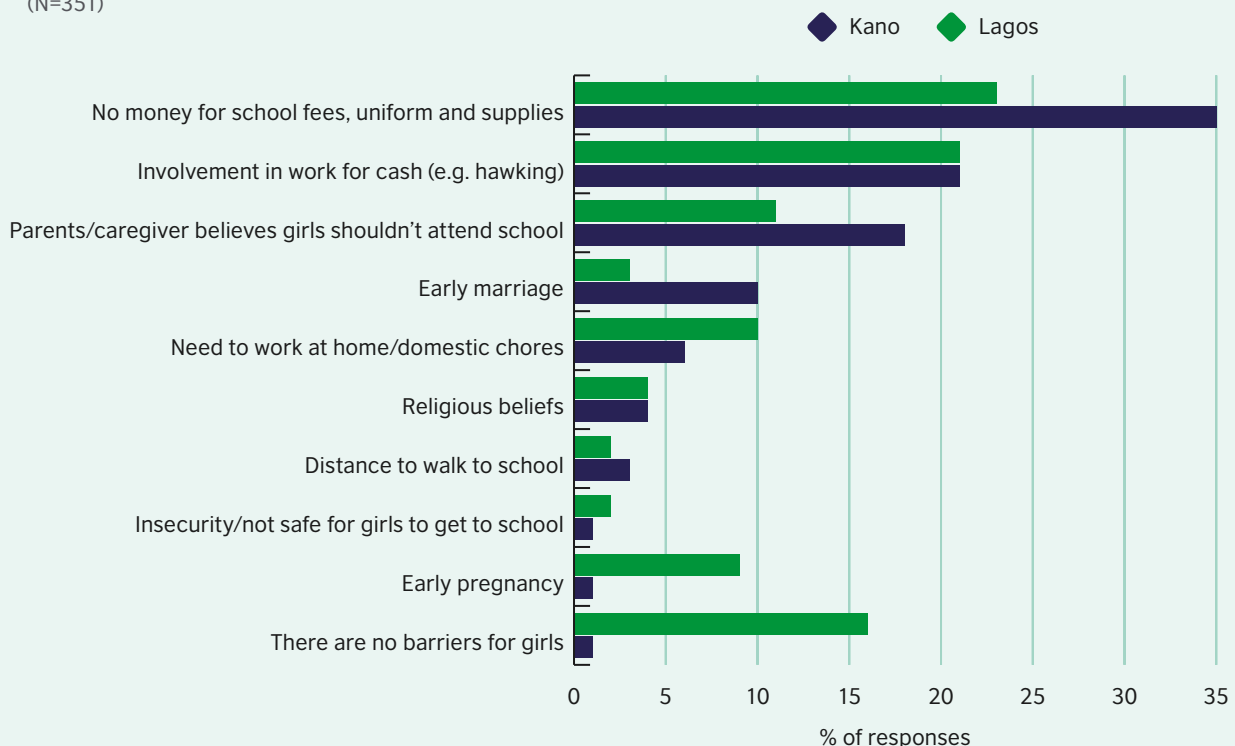Initial questions in the survey and bright spot interviews explored perceptions of the barriers and challenges that girls face in enrolling and staying in school. Teachers were asked 'in your community, why do girls not enrol in school?' and to select the top three reasons. Across both states, the three most frequently mentioned barriers were: 1) no money for school fees, uniform or supplies, mentioned by 49% of teachers; 2) girls' involvement in work for cash, mentioned by 38% of teachers; and 3) parent or caregiver beliefs that girls should not attend school, mentioned by 23%.

The two most frequently mentioned barriers by respondents were economic factors: 35% of teachers in Kano said that a lack of money for school fees, uniform and supplies was a barrier and 21% said that a need to work for money caused girls to not be enrolled at school. This compares to 23% of teachers in Lagos who said that a lack of money for school fees, uniform and supplies was a barrier and 21% who believed that involvement in work for cash caused girls not to be enrolled in school.

3% of responses highlighted that either a physical disability or learning disability was a cause of girls not

Chart 1 Economic factors and parental beliefs were believed to be the top three barriers to girls' education
Teachers in all school types: In your community, why do girls not enrol in school. Please tell us the top 3 reasons (N=351)

◆ Kano   ◆ Lagos

Barrier	
No money for school fees, uniform and supplies	
Involvement in work for cash (e.g. hawking)	
Parents/caregiver believes girls shouldn't attend school	
Early marriage	
Need to work at home/domestic chores	
Religious beliefs	
Distance to walk to school	
Insecurity/not safe for girls to get to school	
Early pregnancy	
There are no barriers for girls	

% of responses

enrolling at school, while 17% of teachers said that they felt there were no barriers to enrolment in school for girls.

In Kano, the number of teachers who responded that early marriage was a cause of girls not enrolling was 10%, compared to 3% of teachers in Lagos state. As Chart 1 shows, other reasons given by teachers in Kano for girls not enrolling in school include the distance to school, and parent and caregiver attitudes towards their attendance.

In Lagos state, a higher proportion of teachers reported that they felt that there were no barriers to girls enrolling in school (16% of responses). The most noted barriers remained economic constraints. Teachers in Lagos also responded that early pregnancy (cited by 9% of respondents) was a more prevalent barrier than early marriage (cited by 3%), in contrast with those in Kano state.

To explore attitudes towards early marriage and pregnancy further, teachers and principals at secondary schools were asked whether they agreed that pregnant or married girls should be encouraged to come to school. This revealed some remaining negative attitudes towards school attendance for these girls, among both teachers and principals.

Amongst teachers, a spread of opinions was evident: 47% of teachers in Lagos and 40% in Kano stated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that pregnant
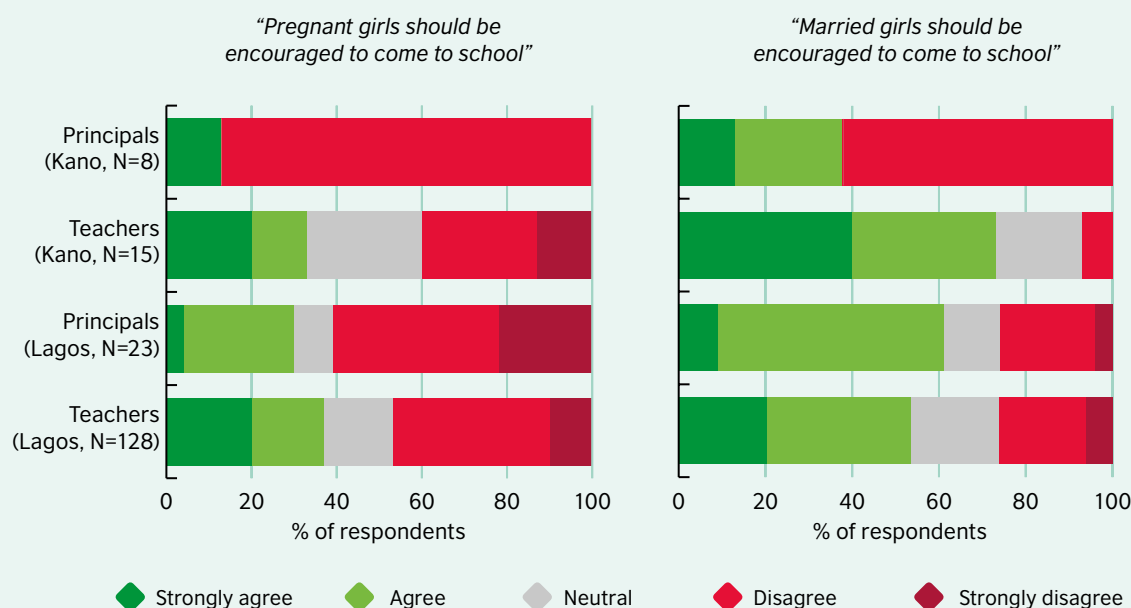
girls should be encouraged to come to school. By contrast, 37% of teachers in Lagos and 33% of teachers in Kano agreed or strongly agreed that these girls should be encouraged to attend. Attitudes of principals to pregnant girls attending school appear to be more strongly negative (see Chart 2): 68% of all principals responded that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that the pregnant girls should be encouraged to come to school, although it should be noted that the sample size for the principal survey was very small – just eight principals in Kano answered the question.

In Kano, teachers showed more positive attitudes towards married girls attending school than teachers in Lagos: 73% of teachers in Kano agreed or strongly agreed that married girls should be encouraged to attend school, compared to 53% in Lagos state. When asked about married girls' attendance, principals shared more varied responses. In Lagos, 61% of principals responded that they either agreed or strongly agreed that married girls should return to school, while in Kano state, 62% of respondents disagreed.

These responses may provide something of a litmus test of attitudes towards girls' education, as circumstances around which respondents are more likely to have strong feelings and potentially opposing views provide some contrast to the broadly positive views expressed by teachers and principals elsewhere in the survey. It is possible that respondents stated

Chart 2 **Mixed views on whether pregnant and married girls should be encouraged to attend school**
Secondary school teachers and principals were asked their agreement with the following statements:

"Pregnant girls should be encouraged to come to school"

"Married girls should be encouraged to come to school"

% of respondents

◆ Strongly agree   ◆ Agree   ◆ Neutral   ◆ Disagree   ◆ Strongly disagree

what they believed to be state or federal policy around girls continuing and re-entering school once married or pregnant – several open responses in the survey stated that it was illegal for girls to continue at school once pregnant, which is not actually the case in either state. It should also be noted that the difference in attitudes to married girls attending school may in part reflect differences in the prevalence of child marriage. In Kano, child marriage is more prevalent, so many married girls would be of school age.

In interviews, respondents mentioned similar barriers and attitudes to girls' education, enrolment, and attendance. Teachers and principals often spoke about parents' or caregivers' lack of interest in education, combined with poverty which meant that parents were not able to afford fees or materials. Involvement in hawking was a particular concern and respondents described girls being pressurised to provide income for their family. Several teachers mentioned that the barriers to girls' education intensify as they enter secondary school, when they encounter more pushback from parents and the community. One teacher in Kano state described the impact of negative attitudes to education at both the community and household level.

> ## As soon as they transition to secondary level, the teachers receive pushback by the parents and the community. Some parents cannot tolerate, so they withdraw or even get her married. They allow boys to go through the schools but in most cases, they marry the girls off because they don't believe in the importance of education.
>
> **Interview – male teacher, School 234, Kano**

Teachers in both states spoke about girls who had been removed from school due to early marriage or pregnancy, sometimes expressing regret that girls would not be able to fulfil their potential. Teachers in Lagos expressed concerns about girls' relationships and experiences of abuse and violence. One teacher mentioned girls at her school who work as housemaids who are 'part-time' students and experience sexual abuse from their employers.

Respondents were also asked about the extent to which they believe that teachers should be involved in shaping students' views about gender roles. Teachers and principals were overwhelmingly positive that they had a role in shaping students' beliefs about gender roles. At secondary level, just four teachers and two principals disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

There was little difference in responses between teachers in Lagos and Kano. For instance, 38% of teachers in primary and combined schools in both states stated that they strongly agreed that 'every student needs to learn about gender issues.' Differences between male and female teachers' and principals' perceptions were also small overall, although one area of difference does stand out. While 93% of female teachers in primary and combined schools agreed or strongly agreed that every student needs to learn about gender issues, only 81% of male teachers felt the same.

These responses should be interpreted with some caution, however. We cannot be sure that teachers and principals consider their roles to include promoting equity and girls' education, and it is also possible that teachers interpreted statement as teaching or reinforcing more rigid or traditional gender roles.

4.1.1. Perceptions of classroom practices towards gender equity

A series of survey questions asked participants to share what classroom practices they implemented to create a safe and supportive learning environment for girls. Research assistants reflected that in the phone survey interviews, it was evident that many respondents were only really considering these issues for the first time as a result of the survey questions, and that participants had received little training in this area. Nonetheless, respondents were very able and keen to consider how their practice and actions in the classroom impacted girls.

As Chart 4 illustrates, teachers largely reported that they agreed that teachers should use activities that encourage equity in the classroom. 62% of primary teachers across both states reported that they strongly agreed that teachers should encourage male and female students to carry out the same activities in class and a further 34% agreed. Teachers were equally positive when asked about their own classrooms; 91% of secondary teachers reported that they agree they have created a safe and supportive environment for girls in their classroom

Chart 3 **The vast majority believe every student needs to learn about gender**
Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with the following statements:

"Every student needs to learn about gender roles/issues" (N=367)

"Teachers should be involved in shaping their students views and beliefs about gender" (N=369)

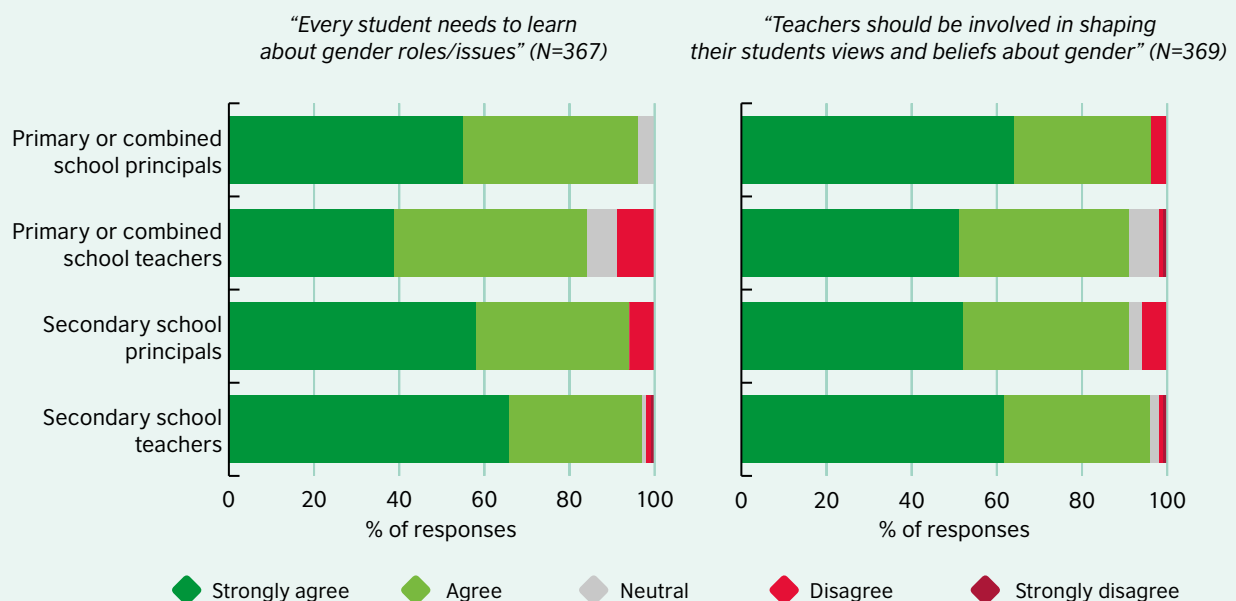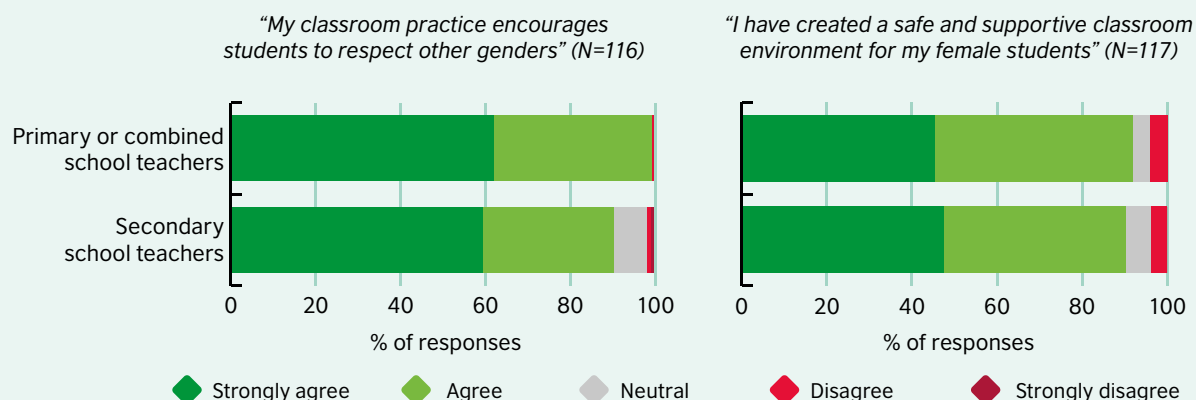◆ Strongly agree ◆ Agree ◆ Neutral ◆ Disagree ◆ Strongly disagree

Chart 4 Most teachers believe their classrooms are safe and supportive for female students
Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with the following statements:

"My classroom practice encourages students to respect other genders" (N=116)

"I have created a safe and supportive classroom environment for my female students" (N=117)

Legend: ◆ Strongly agree ◆ Agree ◆ Neutral ◆ Disagree ◆ Strongly disagree

Principals were asked about their perceptions of teacher practice in their schools and whether they felt that teachers tried to discourage gender stereotypes (see Chart 5). The majority of responses were positive: most principals agreed that teachers in their school take action to discourage gender stereotypes. However, eight respondents (25%) at secondary level disagreed with this statement, along with four (7%) at primary level.

Chart 5 Most principals believe that teachers in their school discourage gender stereotypes
Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with the following statements (N=87):

"Teachers in my school try to discourage gender sterotyped behaviour in their classes"

Legend: ◆ Strongly agree ◆ Agree ◆ Neutral ◆ Disagree ◆ Strongly disagree

4.1.2. Inclusive and child-centred pedagogy

The survey also showed that teachers and principals generally reported that they believe they have a role to play in work to improve girls' education. This positive attitude translated into a range of classroom practices (listed below) which are associated with improving the learning experience of girls.[9]

In the survey, teachers in primary and combined schools were asked how often they implemented five specific practices:
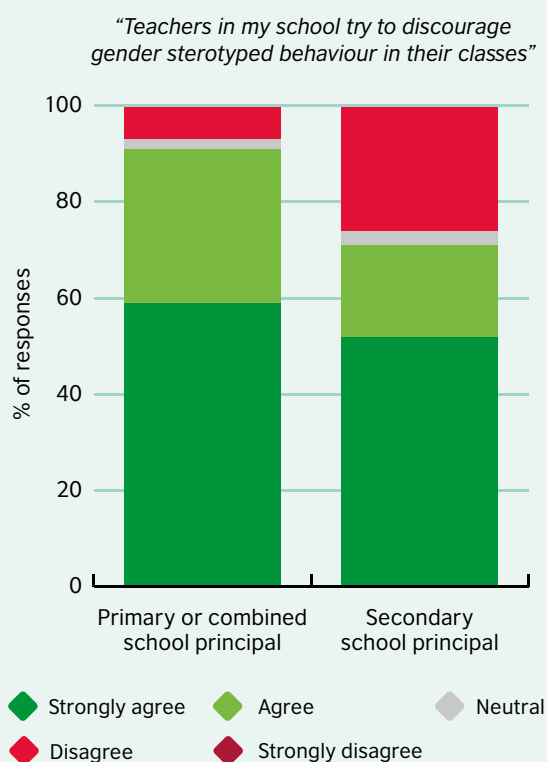
• Asking male and female students questions equally often

• Listening to the views of male and female students equally

• Setting tasks that encourage peer learning between male and female students

• Checking on girls' progress in lessons

• Organising group work between male and female students.

Responses to this question are shown in Chart 9.

There were no substantial differences in answers correlating to the sex of the respondents, although there were differences in the types of activities that teachers reported occurring 'all the time' and 'most of the time' in the different states. For instance, 49% of

Chart 6 The majority of teachers reported that they listened to male and female students equally but only half of principals reported that teachers in their schools did this all of the time
Teachers were asked their agreement with a number of statements about their own teaching. Principals were asked about the practices they observed from teachers in their school. Respondents who answered "All the time" to the following statements (teachers N=115-117, principals N=56):

◆ Primary or combined school **principals**   ◆ Primary or combined school **teachers**

Asking male and female students questions equally often

Listening to the views of male and female students equally

Setting tasks that encourage peer learning between male and female students

Checking on girls' progress in lessons

Organising group work between male and female students

40   50   60   70

% of responses

surveyed teachers in Lagos said that they checked on girls' progress all the time, compared to 38% of teachers in Kano. Teachers in Kano reported using group work more frequently, with 73% saying that they do this all the time or some of the time, compared with 62% of their counterparts in Lagos. There were also only small differences between states in the proportion of 'never' responses given by teachers. The largest difference between states related to the use of group work, with 10% of teachers in Lagos stating that they never organise group work between male and female students, compared to just 3% of teachers in Kano.

In the principal survey, respondents were asked about their observations of the same teacher practices and behaviours in the classroom (reported in more detail in section 4.3). The majority of responses were positive, although not as positive as responses from teachers themselves. Principals reported that teachers were largely seen to be implementing these practices all or most of the time.

In bright spot interviews and open-ended responses to survey questions, teachers and principals both described how they base these behaviours in ensuring that boys and girls are treated equally. Both teachers

and principals used the language of equality to describe practices and based their answers around the measures they took to ensure that girls were able to participate equally to boys. We cannot be sure of the motivation behind these answers or how teachers and principals understood them to contribute to gender equity.

❞

All teachers in my school have zeal and willingness to teach both boys and girls. We don't give preferences; we give equal opportunities all of the time. That energy that teachers give in the classroom always encourages participation and understanding.

Interview – female teacher, School 20, Kano state

In these responses, teachers in both Lagos and Kano shared a little more detail on the strategies they used in the classroom and how they tailored their approach to respond to the needs of specific students. Reported practices included group work, the use of teaching

aids, ensuring that girls were encouraged to answer questions and the use of practical demonstrations. In interviews, respondents sometimes mentioned that they fostered competition within the classroom as a way of motivating students and building confidence – teachers reported that they sometimes create a competitive atmosphere between boys and girls in their classes.

4.1.3. Gender in grouping and seating arrangements

In the open-ended responses to survey questions about teaching practices in their classrooms, many teachers reported that they were intentional in thinking about seating positions for girls and boys. Teachers said that they make sure that boys and girls are sitting together, and one respondent described how they made *"sure to always make them realise that they are all students and all equal"* (open survey

response, ID 1973, female teacher, Lagos state). Another teacher in Lagos described how they place a lot of emphasis on fair seating arrangements, as *"students need to learn to share, sacrifice and have empathy for each other and see themselves as students and equals"* (Interview – female teacher, School 684, Lagos state).

A few teachers in Kano noted cultural barriers to seating girls and boys closely together in the classroom, particularly at secondary level. One teacher instead shared that they focused on ensuring equal participation in classroom activities (survey response 1069, male teacher, Kano state.)

When they discussed the organisation of group work within the classroom, teachers and principals said that they were keen to encourage boys and girls to work and learn together as peers. One teacher in Kano described how they ensure that girls have their voices heard and are able to participate on an equal footing with boys:

Bright spot

School 20

School 20 is an urban primary school in Kano state. It is a mixed-sex school with quite a high percentage of girls amongst their students.

The teacher and principal from the school discussed the use of practical demonstrations in lessons in order to interest the students and help the lesson to stick in their memories. The teacher described an inclusive classroom in which students are encouraged to work together, and their voices are listened to and taken seriously. The teacher described how the use of groups in their classes had a positive impact on girls learning:

"

Students are assigned tasks based on groups, this method helps in encouraging peer learning in the classroom, it also makes the girls become more relaxed and free to learn.

Interview – male teacher, School 20, Kano state

> **In group work, we don't allow the boys to dominate the group or the leadership. So for instance, if this group leader is a boy the secretary will be a girl while the next group leader will be a girl and a boy secretary. We are just trying to include them in all class activities.**
>
> Interview – male teacher, School 294, Kano state

Teachers in Lagos state described why they felt that girls and boys working together in groups was particularly important: to build girls' confidence and to develop a sense of equity amongst boys and girls.

> **We also make sure they work together because each child has his/her strengths and weaknesses. Putting them together, they will work as a team and bring friendship. If you look at it, the females are already segregated where they feel they are weaker, and cannot do some tasks but we make sure they know "no task a man can do, a woman cannot do." They must work together as a team. We always try to let the boys know they are supposed to work together and shouldn't feel bad. We didn't make the boys superior and they are supposed to work together. That is why every time we assign prefectship or group work, if a leader is a boy, the assistant will be a girl and vice versa. Once we make the leaders boys, we are sending a wrong signal not to make sure one side is better than the other.**
>
> Interview – male teacher, School 36, Lagos state

> **I assign a task either in the class or at home with a leader for each group usually female and allow for presentation by each group leader in front of the class. This method builds the confidence of the girls a lot, [and] their performances during exams have improved.**
>
> Interview – male teacher, School 494, Lagos state

4.1.4. Play

The use of play-based learning was also mentioned as a pedagogical technique that was particularly effective to support girls' learning and participation in lessons in all types of schools. Teachers described how girls particularly benefited and engaged with play-based methods, referred to by some teachers in Kano as 'play-way' methods.

One teacher in a mixed-sex primary school in Kano described this method in particular detail:

> **The play-way method is the best because they (girls) like to sing and dance. When a teacher comes down to the level of the children and play[s] with them, you will see the performance of the girls in the class is encouraging.**
>
> Interview – male teacher, School 234, Kano state

> **Play method is the best. Like during our play method using jolly phonics, we make a circle and we give each of the child an alphabet. We come out to the school grounds and when an alphabet of each child is pronounced, she/he will have to come and dance. This has been really effective in promoting equity to see themselves as equal and capable of learning together.**
>
> Interview – male teacher, School 234, Kano state

Teachers also discussed the use of role-play in lessons. One teacher described the use of drama in one of their lessons, which appears to have had a lasting impact on the students.

"

There was a time in Civic Education on the subject "leaders" where we talked about traditional leaders etc. We dramatize[d] the subject, where we selected leaders and for the Legislator, the class selected a girl. Up to now, the class members are still calling her "Honourable." Each of the leaders had their roles and zones, we made up scenarios and challenges that each of the leaders had to deal with. It took us a long time to plan and execute the drama, but it was a success.

Interview – male teacher, School 294, Kano state

4.1.5. Roles within the classroom

There were also examples of teachers and principals who described making sure that girls were taking leadership roles in the classroom and that typically gender-stereotyped classroom chores were distributed equitably between boys and girls. In the open-response survey questions, teachers linked the sharing of chores, in particular, with treating girls and boys equally and fairly.

"

I give equal opportunities like leadership to both girls and boys. School and classroom leadership are always assigned fairly and equally. We have both females and males as class reps and school prefects.

Interview – male principal, School 20, Kano state

"

Duty roster for sweeping the classroom is made for both male and female [students]. Cleaning of class board is for both male and female [students]. Mopping of the classroom is for both male and female [students].

Open ended survey response 1597 – female teacher, Lagos state

4.1.6. Strong relationships between teachers and students

Teachers saw these methods as part of a broader goal to create friendlier environments for girls to learn and build their confidence. Teachers discussed with female students that they should be treated equally with boys and that helping girls build positive aspirations for themselves is part of their professional responsibility.

"

We are working on their psychology right now and preparing them for the task ahead in the future when they are in tertiary institutions. For now, they are all girls but that doesn't mean we shouldn't be talking to them about gender equality because we need to prepare them even in the community where there are boys and they have friends too.

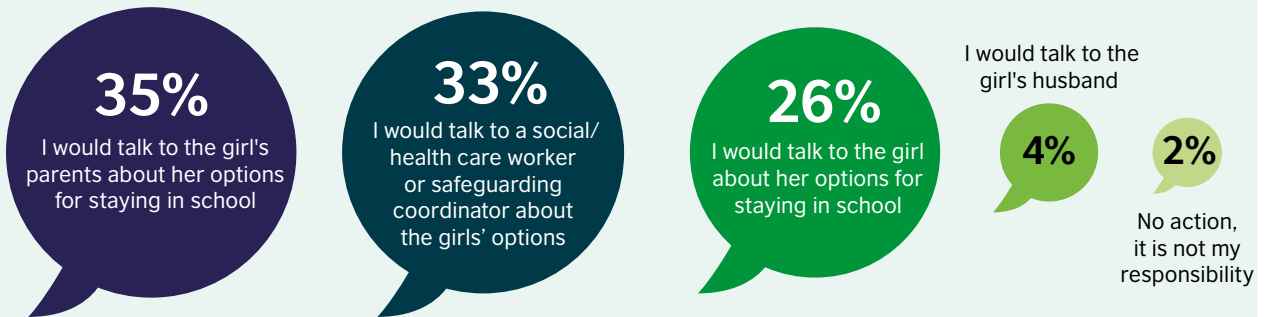Interview – male teacher, School 42, Lagos state

Teachers also spoke about how these environments and relationships open the door for students to talk with teachers about their personal struggles (a topic covered further in the following section).

In the survey, secondary school teachers were also asked about what action they would take in two different circumstances: if a girl in their class were to become pregnant, and if a girl did not turn up to class one day. The responses (see Chart 7) showed that teachers would overwhelmingly take some action to talk to the girl, her parents or husband. In both circumstances, teachers reported being more likely to take action themselves than to inform a social worker or safeguarding coordinator about the situation.

As shown in Chart 7, very few teachers responded that they would take no action, but the sample was very

Chart 7 Most teachers said they would take some action if a girl in their class became pregnant
Teachers were asked which of the following actions they would take if a girl in their class were to become pregnant:

35%
I would talk to the girl's parents about her options for staying in school

33%
I would talk to a social/health care worker or safeguarding coordinator about the girls' options

26%
I would talk to the girl about her options for staying in school

I would talk to the girl's husband
4%

2%
No action, it is not my responsibility

small, the majority of teachers who said they would take no action were in Lagos. In both circumstances, teachers most often said they would engage with the girls' parents: 51% of respondents in Lagos reported that they would talk to a girl's parents if she stopped attending school and 35% said they would do so if she became pregnant.

4.1.7. Challenges faced by teachers in the classroom

The interviews focused on the positive steps that teachers were taking to improve gender equity in their schools, but there was also some discussion of the challenges teachers face in promoting gender equity in their classrooms and schools.

When teachers mentioned boys in their classrooms, they were largely positive about boys' relationships and interactions with girls, and teachers perceived the importance of both boys and girls understanding and valuing gender equity. In some cases, teachers mentioned that boys did not like it when girls were doing well academically, but that they used this to create a sense of competition in the classroom and try to ensure that the boys engage with the idea of working together. Teachers also mentioned lack of resources and facilities in schools which had negative impacts on teaching and learning for all students.

Male teachers working in all-girls schools also appeared to face a particular set of challenges in their work for gender equity. In several interviews, teachers spoke about challenges they faced around ensuring they were not seen to be engaged in inappropriate behaviour or relationships with the female students. In one case, this seemed to have caused the teacher to take a step back from supporting girls.

"

We face challenges at times being young male teachers. For example, I teach mathematics and I try to make it fun, thereby encouraging the students to talk to us. So sometimes the female teachers are concerned that the students are hanging around us. We try to resolve that by making our interactions open with other teachers around [or] counsellors… in the classroom. There are limitations, checks and balances to avoid negative perceptions by your colleagues or give opportunity to the girls to cook up bad stories about you. I cautioned myself not to get over stressed in trying to help them.

Interview – male teacher, School 405, Lagos state

4.2. Actions at the school level to support girls' education

4.2.1. Perceptions of the role of school environment in supporting teachers' work for gender equity in schools

Our survey included a series of questions around how the school environment supports girls' education and gender equity. The survey asked whether teachers come together to support each other and discuss techniques or particular students. There were also questions about what actions the school principal took, which aimed to establish where a whole-school approach to support girls was more evident.

Responses to these questions are shown in Chart 8. The responses given by teachers at both primary and secondary levels were positive, with the majority of teachers responding that they agree or strongly agree that teachers discuss issues around girls' education in schools and gender equity and that the principal supports teachers to be gender responsive. Responses were slightly more positive from teachers in primary or combined schools than in secondary schools: 18% of teachers in secondary schools responded neutrally when asked whether the school principal gives guidance and training on how to effectively educate girls, while 9% of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Within this data, a larger proportion of respondents in Lagos state gave the most positive response: 63% of respondents in Lagos state responded that they strongly agreed that the principal at their school encourages teachers to be gender responsive, compared to 50% in Kano. These responses appear to paint a more positive view of the school environment and support for girls' education than we might expect

Chart 8 Most teachers reported being supported by their colleagues and principals to promote gender equity
Respondents were asked to state their levels of agreement with the following statements:

◆ Strongly agree   ◆ Agree   ◆ Neutral   ◆ Disagree   ◆ Strongly disagree

Primary or combined school teachers (N=115-117)

Secondary school teachers (N=161-163)

in light of the low numbers of teachers who indicated that they had received training specifically around girls' education. In interviews, teachers did not discuss school-level communities of practice or meetings that took place around girls and gender – rather, support from relationships with other teachers seemed more piecemeal and dependant on individual relationships.

Amongst principals, there were broadly positive views of their own actions towards gender equity in the school. A very small number of principals disagreed with the statements. indicating that they were not currently taking action or supporting teachers around these issues.

Amongst principals, more positive statements of agreement tended to come from principals who identified as female – no female respondents indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the
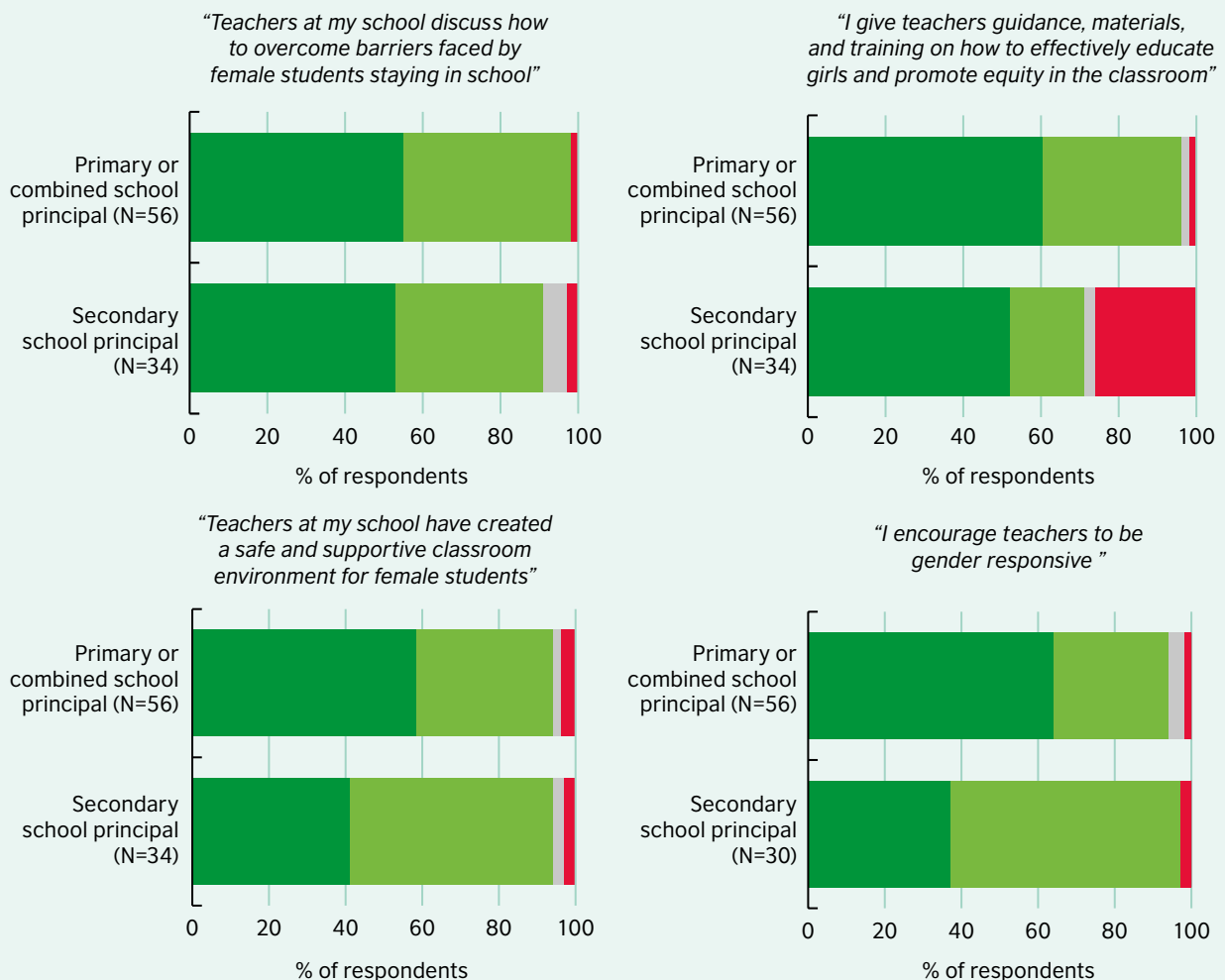
statement 'I encourage teachers to be gender responsive' or the statement that 'I give teacher guidance, materials and training in how to effectively educate girls and promote equity in the classroom. There were no strong differences between principals in Lagos and Kano states in this respect. In contrast to these positive responses, there were few mentions in bright spot interviews with principals of their practices in observing lessons or directly supporting teachers to improve their practice, which suggests that they might not be fully engaged with teaching practice in their schools. Moreover, while there was more mention of school staff coming together to discuss teaching and learning in the school, there was little evidence that this included any specific discussion of girls' education or gender equity.

The following section describes the areas of action which stood out in bright spot interviews.

Chart 9 School principals reported that teachers in their school were supported to be gender responsive
Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with the following statements:

◆ Strongly agree   ◆ Agree   ◆ Neutral   ◆ Disagree   ◆ Strongly disagree

"Teachers at my school discuss how to overcome barriers faced by female students staying in school"

"I give teachers guidance, materials, and training on how to effectively educate girls and promote equity in the classroom"

"Teachers at my school have created a safe and supportive classroom environment for female students"

"I encourage teachers to be gender responsive"

4.2.2. Girls in leadership roles

Teachers and principals in bright spot schools spoke about actively taking measures to ensure that girls are represented in school-wide activities. This included the opportunity for female students to lead teams by representing the school in external competitions, participating in sports and involvement in cultural activities. One principal in a Lagos school explained, *"Whenever we have external competitions, we give to boys and girls to make sure we equalise the gender"* (Interview – female principal, School 405, Lagos state). Principals also reported that they had also taken decisions to ensure that school leadership positions, such as prefect roles, were distributed between girls and boys. One principal in Lagos described how *"leadership opportunities give students a sense of purpose and make them become more accountable."* (Interview – female principal, School 684, Lagos state).

4.2.3. Prevention of sexual and gender-based violence

Descriptions of sexual and gender-based violence experienced by girls were common in the interviews and open-ended survey responses. Teachers and principals spoke about how girls had experienced violence and abuse in their families and communities, but some also highlighted that girls had experienced such abuse or violence from peers at school. In some cases, teachers and principals spoke about how a safe environment in schools enabled girls to open up and seek support for challenges they face.

4.2.4. Promoting female role models

In both states, teachers and principals discussed how they used role models as a means of raising girls' confidence and aspirations and highlight the values of

Bright spot

School 684

Bright spot school 684 is a mixed-sex comprehensive junior college (secondary school level) in Lagos state which shows a particular commitment to tackling school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) as the foundation of their strategy to improve girls' education.

The principal has been with the school for seven years and reported that she had previously had some training organised by the government on domestic violence, gender-based violence and gender discrimination.

The principal explained how she has advocated for the creation of a supportive environment within the school, in which students feel comfortable and 'free to speak up when they have struggles', so that the school can assist them or

refer them to necessary external services. She described how providing an environment where girls are able to open up has turned lives around. She has created this atmosphere in part through the use of school assemblies to talk through topics around gender roles and issues. The teacher in the school who completed the survey also spoke about how she teaches about gender roles in her class, and how she works to be friendly and 'encourage students to open up' with their challenges and concerns.

their remaining in education. In several of the bright spot schools, teachers and principals told us that they used themselves and their own past experiences as an example, to help students understand the barriers and challenges they may face and overcome. The principal of School 684 in Lagos state explained:

"

I always use myself as an example. I grew up in a less privileged home with uneducated parents. I had to push to be allowed to complete my education. My parents had wanted me to get married early but in the end, they had to give up and I am now a proud principal.

Interview – female principal, School 684, Lagos state

Prominent women and other aspirational figures were also discussed as role models that teachers and principals would use in their discussions with girls. These were described as clear instances where women have 'changed the narrative'.

"

We motivate and encourage girls by mentoring and setting examples with career women that have achieved and are performing beyond expectation. We give them examples of women like Ngozi Okonjo Iweal as the Director General of the WTO.

Interview – female principal, School 494, Lagos state

Respondents also spoke about how they made links between education and having a successful career as an entrepreneur. They described how they felt that this would encourage girls to think about the longer term, rather than drop out of school to begin to earn money. One teacher in Kano described how they used discussions of scenarios for the future in conversation with girls to illustrate how useful basic skills in mathematics and literacy are likely to be (Interview – male teacher, School 294, Kano state).

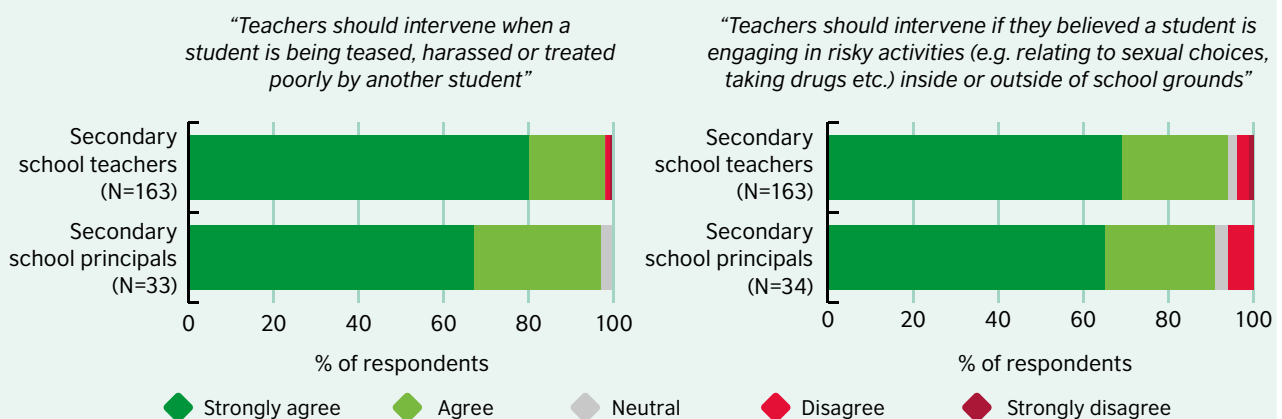## 4.2.5. Supporting girls outside the classroom

Teachers and principals were asked a series of questions about the actions they would take, if any, to intervene when students were experiencing a negative or risky situation. Most teachers and principals agreed or strongly agreed that they would take action to support the student. As shown in Chart 10, however, there were some teachers and principals who reported that they did not feel it was their place to intervene in these circumstances.

The bright spot interviews illustrated some ways in which schools organised and understood mentoring and counselling and delivered interventions in these kinds of circumstances. Arrangements varied from individual teachers who worked individually to build relationships with students to the organised allocation of students to an assigned mentor teacher.

Teachers also spoke about the referral of students to dedicated counsellors or guidance and counselling teams within their schools, who provide specialist support. One principal in Kano explained:

Chart 10 Most teachers and principals reported that they would take action to support a student
Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement with the following statements:

"Teachers should intervene when a student is being teased, harassed or treated poorly by another student"

"Teachers should intervene if they believed a student is engaging in risky activities (e.g. relating to sexual choices, taking drugs etc.) inside or outside of school grounds"

Legend: ◆ Strongly agree ◆ Agree ◆ Neutral ◆ Disagree ◆ Strongly disagree

"

The teachers are also friendly and accommodating. This method makes the students very comfortable and they sometimes open up to the teachers about personal struggles which the teachers through our guidance and counselling team help them [with], until they are well and stable.

Interview – female principal, School 78, Kano state

Teachers from some schools mentioned how they were assigned students to mentor or households to visit to follow up on concerns about an individual girl. Some teachers explained that they took a collaborative approach to resolving family issues to best ensure that girls are able to continue attending school. Some also spoke about how they supported girls within the school by building their confidence and aspirations for the future.

Bright spot

School 249

School 249 is a mixed-sex government primary school in Kano state with an enrolment of approximately 800 students.

The school was described as working closely with the community. For example, the principal described how they work with the community Mothers' Association, who conduct house-to-house visits to encourage families to send girls to school and follow up with any girls who are identified as at-risk.

Guidance and counselling were set up by the principal in order to support the girls and the school encourages the girls to open up to the counsellors (Interview – female principal, school 249, Kano state). This attitude extended to an open-door policy for teachers to discuss their own issues and challenges with the principal, who mentioned that she had mentored a female teacher in the school who had recently been promoted.

However, the teacher interviewed at School 249 described one ultimately unsuccessful experience of reaching out to advocate with a parent for the education of one of their students in the face of considerable challenges:

"

There is this girl that one day we were in class, her mother came to pick up. I told them to wait for school to close. After I was told she was going to hawk. After closing, I went to the house and talked to the mother. I told her it is not fair to be calling her back when she is in school. I even advised the mother that she can be going after closing, the mother said okay. After a little investigation, we found that the mother adopted her to hawk and when she couldn't do it, she sent her back to the village.

Interview – female teacher, school 249, Kano state

4.2.6. Girl-focused activities

There was little evidence of ongoing government, donor-supported or large-scale NGO girls' clubs currently running in schools. Clubs run or supported by NGOs were mentioned by several schools in Kano (in particular a now-ceased project called Fitila,[10] which provided training in inclusive education to teachers and supported girls' clubs based on a life skills curriculum), but no equivalent programme was mentioned by teachers or principals in Lagos.

Respondents mentioned several different activities that schools were running themselves which provided ways for girls to gain life and vocational skills. The teacher and principal for School 294, a primary school in Kano, described how they have continued to apply the skills teachers learnt when they ran girls' clubs as part of the Fitila project and have set up their own girls' club in which female teachers work with girls to teach a combination of life skills and more vocational skills. Also in Kano, an urban primary school (School 20), runs a separate programme for girls who are engaged in hawking, which aims to build their business and trade skills.

4.2.7. Challenges at the school level

Teachers and principals both gave a generally positive picture of a range of actions that were being taken at the school level to support girls which were responsive to the needs of girls and were seen to increase girls' engagement with school, as well as their confidence and aspirations.

In interviews, teachers and principals spoke about the barriers to girls' education that had been identified and discussed in section 4.1 and the actions they took to respond to these challenges. Despite action taken to follow up with and counsel girls, and the provision of some vocational training and flexibility where girls need to work, there were cases where girls had not stayed in school. One principal in Kano described what had happened to a girl at their school:

❝

Recently [we] had a case of a girl who ran home without the school's consent. When we eventually traced her, she said she'd rather stay and support her mother sell[ing] locally made coconut sweets for a living than leave her and be at school because they need money to sustain themselves more than education.

Interview – female teacher, School 91, Kano state

Two respondents in Lagos state described how they tried to help girls to focus on their studies when they also needed to work to earn money:

❝

The biggest challenge has to do with the students more interested in learning and engaging in trade than focusing on their studies because of the little money they make…The steps we take to overcome this challenge [are] balancing the two for the students and supporting them to do both in a way that one does not affect the other. During terminal exams, we tell the students to take a break from their trade and fully focus on their exams so that they pass and can return to their trading afterwards.

Interview – female principal, School 494, Lagos state

❝

Some of these children have to hawk early in the morning before they come to school to get transport money because of the distance of 2-3km to the school. We want to punish them for coming late but we couldn't if they tell us how early they woke up to trek to school. We buy them water and tell them to go to class.

Interview – male teacher, School 405, Lagos state

[10]Fitila was a project run under the FCDO Girls Education Challenge by Impact(ed) in Kano between 2014 and 2020. The project worked in approximately 600 schools, with a special emphasis on girls' access to education and life opportunities.

While teachers and principals generally reported in bright spot interviews, that discussions amongst teachers and with principals around strategies and girls' education take place, it also came across that teachers felt they were acting alone. As one teacher in Kano stated: *'I do it alone to support the girls'* (Interview – female teacher, School 249, Kano state). In other interviews, teachers mentioned that they did not know what strategies or techniques other teachers in the school used and that school meetings had not been focused on girls.

In interviews, support for girls was most often described in terms of actions that impact on individual girls' confidence and self-esteem and individual relationships with teachers, rather than in terms of the development of joined-up whole-school policies which worked for girls' education. Throughout, there was little mention of school management committees or working with other community organisations on issues around girls' education, which added to the sense that these issues have often been tackled in isolation.

Respondents from several schools also mentioned schemes in which teachers make financial contributions to support the purchase of instructional materials for students or materials or repairs needed by the school.

4.3. Actions at policy level or community level

Teachers and principals were asked in the survey if they were aware of any local government or other organisations that have any specific priorities or initiatives for girls' education. Of the 94 respondents for the principal survey, very few knew of girl-focused activities or interventions around their community. Within these responses, the most frequently mentioned initiatives (in both primary, combined and secondary schools) were gender sensitisation training and financial support or incentives. This is illustrated in Chart 11, which shows responses for principals in primary, secondary, combined schools across both Lagos and Kano states.

Overall, responses to the survey did not show large differences between the two states. Gender sensitisation was the most frequently given response, but even this was only mentioned by 12% of principals.

Chart 11 Principals were not aware of many initiatives to support girls' education
Respondents replying "yes" to: Does your school, local government or other organisations have any specific initiatives for girls' education? (N=94)

◆ Secondary school principals ◆ Primary or combined school principals
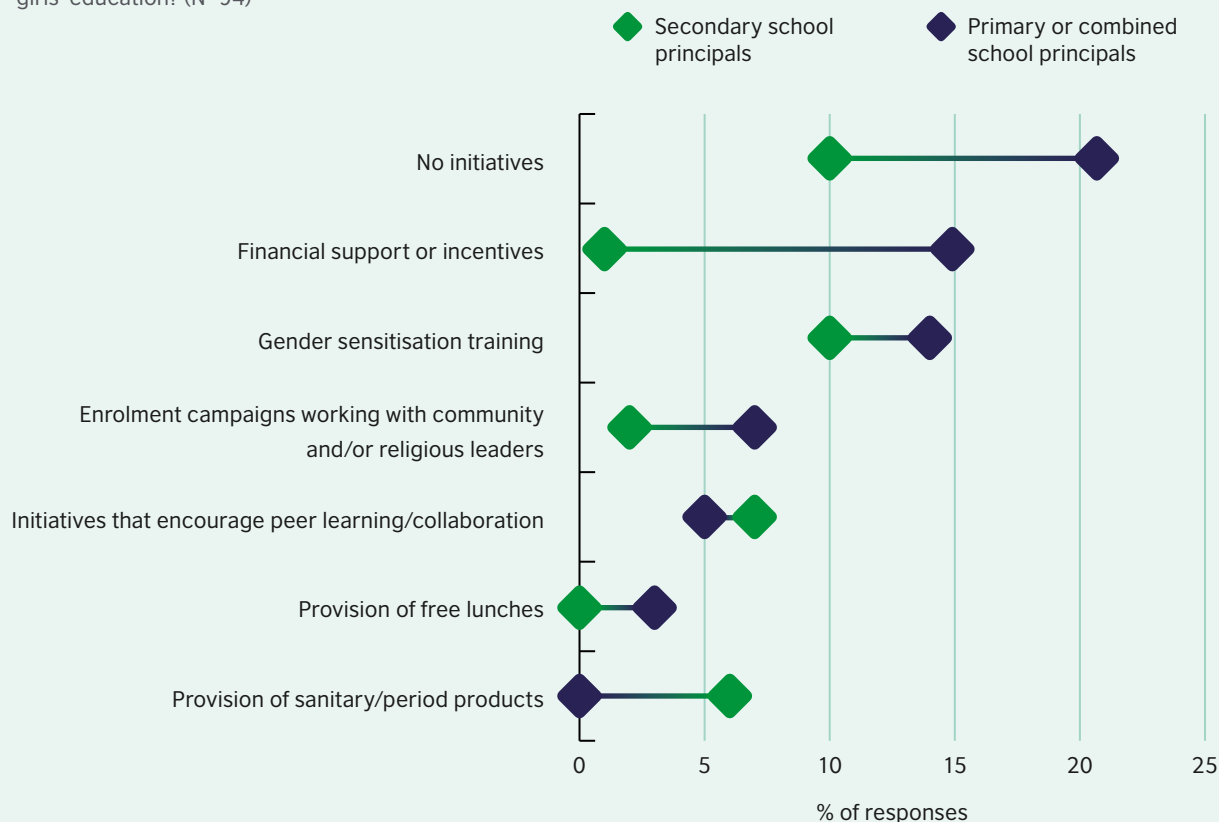
% of responses

Principals at primary and combined schools in Kano were most likely to mention financial support for girls to stay in school at the primary level – 35% of respondents. Amongst respondents in Lagos, 19% of respondents were aware of financial support or incentives. In both states, close to a third of respondents indicated that they were not aware of any initiatives at primary level.

Amongst teachers, gender sensitisation training and provision of sanitary or period products were mentioned most often by teachers in secondary schools, while financial support or incentives were most frequently mentioned by teachers in primary or combined schools (see Chart 12).

There were some differences between the states here: 60% of respondents at secondary school level in Kano responded that they were not aware of any initiatives to support girls' education, compared to 20% in Lagos. At primary level, awareness appeared to be more even across the states, with the exception of financial support or incentives – for which 82% of those who were aware of a programme were located in Kano.

Teachers mentioned a wider range of initiatives in open-response answers than principals. Both teachers and principals mentioned skills acquisition training for girls, but teachers also mentioned donations from the school alumni and programmes which had provided free instructional materials or uniforms. Some respondents in primary schools also mentioned girls' clubs. Only one respondent mentioned any actions by the government or education sector, as they described a programme that was *"delivered by an NGO in collaboration with the government to mobilise and teach drop-out girls."*

In interviews, teachers and principals both mentioned NGO programmes that had assisted girls, although most of the programmes they described seemed to have been halted. In Kano, respondents mentioned schemes at their schools in which teachers would group together to raise money and provide support for poor students and purchase equipment for the school. The principal in School 249 (also in Kano) also mentioned the role of the Mothers' Association in their community, where they advocate for girls' education and encourage parents to continue to send their children to school (see Bright Spot: School 249).

Chart 12 Only a minority of teachers were aware of specific girls' education initiatives in their area
Respondents replying "yes" to: Does your school, local government or other organisation have any specific priorities or initiatives for girls' education? (N=282)
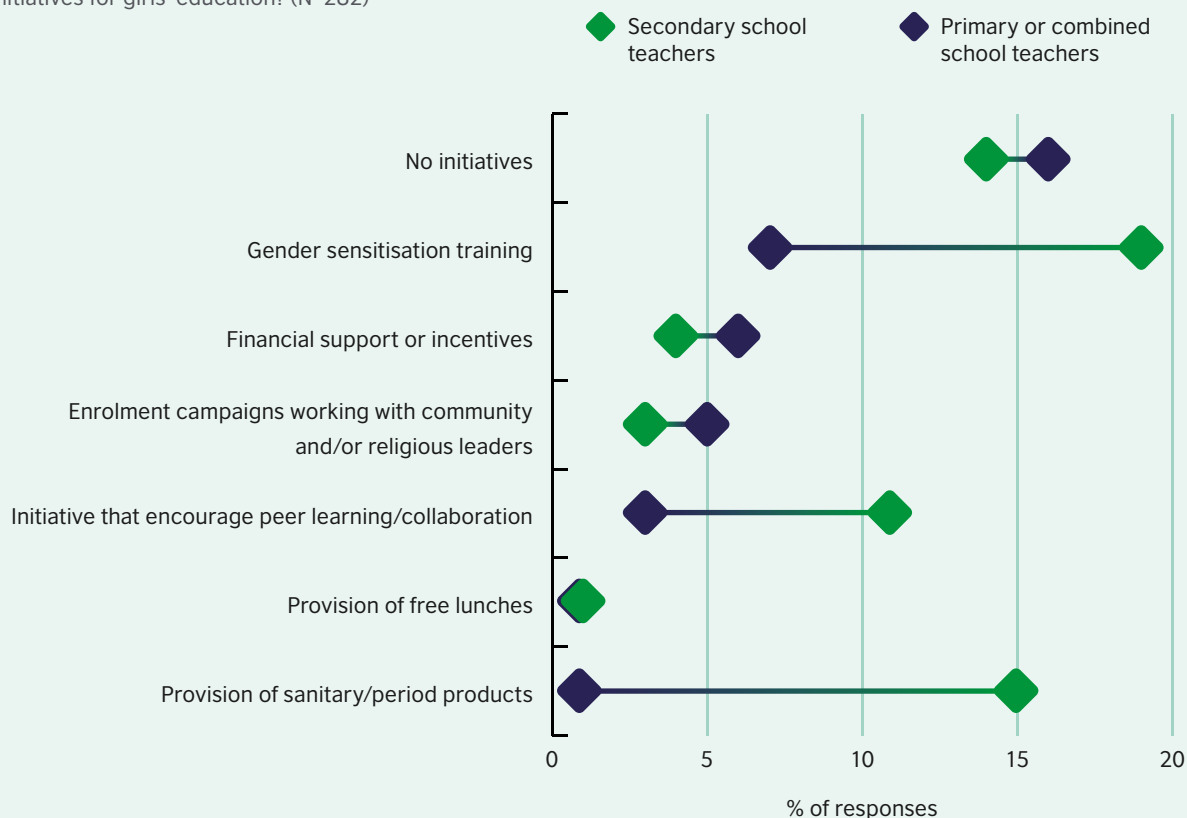
Some respondents talked about government support that schools had received for the maintenance of school buildings. In Kano, one teacher stated that *"politicians have provided us with solar panels, furniture and boreholes"* (Interview – male teacher, school 91, Kano state). Throughout the survey and interview data, there were no mentions of education officials engaging with schools or policy encouraging girls' education or gender equity – indeed, the only mention of government policy were respondents in schools in Lagos who mentioned a national ban on corporal punishment.

Chapter 5
Conclusion

In their responses to the surveys and interviews conducted in this research, teachers and principals have demonstrated a wide variety of ways that they perceive themselves to be working to further and improve girls' education and provide a more equitable learning experience within schools. Teachers generally demonstrated that they have a positive attitude to their potential as change agents through the understanding that the role of a teacher includes discussion, relationship building, and (to a degree) shaping the gendered attitudes and behaviours of students.

In the classroom, teachers revealed that they understood the value of inclusive and child-centred teaching approaches to improve the learning of all students and did feel that these techniques were beneficial for girls. Teachers felt that through giving girls the opportunity to ask questions and lead groups, amongst other activities, girls' confidence increased, and they were more attentive and engaged in learning. None of the teachers interviewed in bright spot interviews reported that they had received specific training in gender or girls' education – yet they could see and understand the value of inclusive education techniques for girls and that treating girls equally was important. Teachers spoke about engaging with boys on gender equity and made sure that boys did not feel that they missed out when opportunities were given to girls.

Teachers also recognised the challenges and barriers that girls face. In many schools, their responses suggest that there have been steps towards the development of strong relationships between staff and students that enable girls to open up and seek support when faced with challenges. In some cases, teachers and principals described the development of more formal mentoring relationships with students and in others were able to describe where they would refer a girl for help and support.

At the school level, principals also demonstrated largely positive attitudes towards their role in supporting girls' education and gender equity in their schools. Principals also understood girls' education as part of broader strategies for inclusion. In each bright spot school, a different emphasis or way of working was evident: for example, in School 684, where the principal was engaged in tackling gender-based violence, and School 249. where the principal had developed a mentoring and guidance and counselling programme. However, these efforts seemed to take place without the support of education system officials or continuing dedicated programming for girls. It was particularly noticeable that there did not seem to be current programming which supports girls' clubs in either state – which could limit girls' opportunities to further enhance their life skills and confidence.

Awareness of policy and programmes that provide support for girls' education was low in both states, although there was awareness of financial support available to girls at the primary level, and some secondary teachers were aware of the provision of sanitary products. In the survey, some teachers and principals said that they were aware of gender training, but none of the bright spot interviewees described participating in this kind of training. There was little awareness of any government initiatives. If there has been a wider conversation and/or policy implementation focused on girls' education occurring in either state, then the teachers and principals who participated in this study were largely unaware of it.

The research focused on the identification of positive practice and corresponding bright spots, but there was still evidence of attitudes and practices that discriminate against girls among some of the respondents within both the survey and interview responses. For example, many principals indicated that they were against the inclusion of pregnant and married girls in their schools. In interviews, there was some evidence of discriminatory attitudes whereby teachers and principals seemed to describe girls as generally less engaged with school and learning. The research was able to identify pockets of promising practice in individual schools that are making great efforts to support the girls under their care. However, system-level mechanisms or civil society interventions to develop, strengthen and spread good practices seemed to be missing.

5.1. Takeaways for future programming

The findings from this research pilot suggest areas for further consideration in the design of future programmes in education and gender equity in Nigeria to best support girls and girls' education

- The research showed that negative attitudes towards the education of married or pregnant girls persisted even where other reported views towards girls' education were positive, alongside a range of other barriers to education experienced by girls. The research particularly illustrated differences in views around early marriage and pregnancy between Lagos and Kano. Detailed understanding of contextual barriers, challenges and needs of girls in their context should inform programme design. Work with school staff should also include acknowledgement of existing frameworks and policy for re-entry and girls' rights to ensure that existing frameworks are known, understood and implemented.

- The research illustrates how girls' education encompasses actions in the classroom, factors in the school environment, and wider pressures and challenges. Programming which can link the girl, the school and the community in a holistic understanding of girls' needs offers greater potential for change and for ensuring that girls are able to stay in school and learn. This can also ensure that teachers and other school staff have the skills they need to deal with the particular challenges facing girls in their context.

- The bright spot schools identified in this research illustrate how much can be achieved by principals and teachers in the absence of other programming. Good and promising practices and leadership identified in these schools could form the basis for future networks or communities of schools working together to tackle the challenges to girls' education and learning in their communities.

- In the research, it often seemed that principals and teachers felt somewhat alone in their work for girls' education and gender equity. Supporting the development of school frameworks and policies alongside space for discussion of issues in girls' education, could facilitate the development of more consistent actions and activities and enable more teachers to engage with these issues.

- Disability was mentioned as a barrier to education for girls by a small number of survey respondents. The research did not consider the impact or interaction of disability on girls' education, but future programming and research should seek to understand the experiences of girls living with disability in particular programme contexts, how this impacts their likelihood of attending school and how it impacts their experiences within school.

References

Federal Ministry of Education (2019). Education for Change a Ministerial Strategic Plan. Abuja: Ministry of Education. [Available online: <https://planipolis.iiep. unesco.org/en/2019/education-change-ministerial-strategic-plan-2018-2022-6719 - accessed June 2020].

Marcus, R., Gupta-Archer, N., Darcy, M., Page, E. (2017). GAGE rigorous review. Girls' clubs, life skills programmes and girls' wellbeing outcomes. London: ODI.

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Lagos Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF (2017a). Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016-17, survey findings report. Abuja: National Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF.

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), Lagos Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF (2017b). Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016-17, survey findings report. Kano: National Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF.

Plan UK (2013). Girls' learning: Investigating the classroom practices that promote girls' learning. London: Plan UK. [Available online: <https://plan-international.org/publications/girls-learning-investigating-classroom-practices-promote-girls-learning - accessed June 2020].

Psaki, S., Haberland, N., Kozak, M. and Woyczynski, L. (2021). Girls' education roadmap: 2021 report. EGER Reports. New York: Population Council. [Available online: <https://egeresource.org/documents/4/Girls_Education_Roadmap_2021_Report.pdf - accessed June 2020].

Snilstveit, B., Stevenson, J., Phillips, D., Vojtkova, M., Gallagher, E., Schmidt, T., Jobse, H., Geelen, M., Pastorello, M., Eyers, J. (2015). Interventions for improving learning outcomes and access to education in low- and middle- income countries: a systematic review. London: 3ie. [Available online: <https://www.3ieimpact.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/SR24-education-review_2.pdf- accessed June 2020].

Sperling, G. and Winthrop, R. with Kwauk, C. (2016). What works in girls' education. Evidence for the world's best investment. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Unterhalter, E., North, A., Arnot, M., Lloyd, C., Moletsane, L., Murphy-Graham, E., Parkes, J., Saito, M. (2014). Interventions to enhance girls' education and gender equality. Education Rigorous Review. London: Department for International Development.

World Bank (2020). Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment: Project Information Document. Washington, DC: World Bank. [Available online: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/601211588235942033/pdf/Project-Information-Document-Adolescent-Girls-Initiative-for-Learning-and-Empowerment-P170664.pdf].

Annexes

Annex 1: additional survey data

Table I: Reported years of experience of teachers and principals

Years' Experience	Teacher (n=237)	Principal (n=74)
2-5	13 (5.49%)	19 (25.68%)
6-10	51 (21.52%)	15 (20.27%)
11-15	75 (31.65%)	3 (4.05%)
16-20	45 (18.99%)	12 (16.22%)
26-30	36 (15.19%)	11 (14.86%)
31-40	17 (7.17%)	14 (28.92%)

Table II: Reported location of school

School location	Teacher (n=281)	Principal (n=90)
Urban	165 (59%)	35 (39%)
Semi-urban	54 (19%)	20 (22%)
Semi-rural	15 (5%)	4 (4%)
Rural	47 (17%)	31 (34%)

Annex 2: survey data disaggregated by state

The majority of primary schools in both the teacher and principals samples were located in Kano state, while the majority of secondary and combined schools were in Lagos state.

Table III: Type of school by state

School level	Principal		School level	Teacher	
	Lagos (n=49)	Kano (n=35)		Lagos (n=171)	Kano (n=79)
Primary (n=50)	46.00%	54.00%	Primary (n=103)	38.83%	61.17%
Secondary (n=31)	74.19%	25.81%	Secondary (n=142)	89.44%	10.56%
Combined (n=3)	100.00%	0.00%	Combined (n=5)	80.00%	20.00%

Participating urban schools were predominately located in Lagos state (for both the teacher and principal samples). A slight majority of rural schools participating in the study were located in Kano state.

Table IV: Location of school by state

School location	Principal		School location	Teacher	
	Lagos (n=49)	Kano (n=35)		Lagos (n=172)	Kano (n=79)
Urban (n=33)	76%	24%	Urban (n=150)	75%	25%
Semi-urban (n=18)	44%	56%	Semi-urban (n=47)	68%	32%
Semi-rural (n=4)	50%	50%	Semi-rural (n=13)	62%	38%
Rural (n=29)	48%	52%	Rural (n=41)	46%	54%

Mixed sex schools were the most common overall, but were more prevalent in Lagos state.

Table V: Type of school by state

School type (gender)	Principals		School type (gender)	Teachers	
	Lagos (n=51)	Kano (n=37)		Lagos (n=182)	Kano (n=97)
Mixed (n=78)	60.26%	39.74%	Mixed (n=223)	69.51%	30.49%
All boys (n=4)	50.00%	50.00%	All boys (n=29)	37.93%	62.07%
All girls (n=6)	33.33%	66.67%	All girls(n=27)	59.26%	40.74%

Amongst respondents to the survey there were a higher proportion of private schools in Lagos state for both teachers and principals.

Table VI: Type of school by state

Government or private	Principals		Government or private	Teachers	
	Lagos (n=49)	Kano (n=35)		Lagos (n=171)	Kano (n=79)
Government (n=77)	55.84%	44.16%	Government (n=223)	65.47%	34.53%
Private (n=7)	85.71%	14.29%	Private (n=27)	92.59%	7.41%

Female principals and teachers were in the majority in Lagos, but formed only a small minority of respondents in Kano.

Table VII: Gender of respondents by state

School region	Principals		
	Male (n=48)	Female (n=36)	Total
Lagos (n=49)	34.69%	65.31%	100.00%
Kano (n=35)	88.57%	11.43%	100.00%

Table VIII: Gender of respondents by state

School region	Teachers		
	Male	Female (n=36)	Total
Lagos (n=168)	43.45%	56.55%	100.00%
Kano (n=75)	80.00%	20.00%	100.00%

Principals who participated in Kano were younger than in Lagos, but teachers in Kano had a more diverse age spread.

Table IX: Age of respondents by state

Age	Principals		
	Lagos (n=47)	Kano (n=35)	Total
21-29 (n=0)	0	0	0
30-39 (n=4)	25.00%	75.00%	100.00%
40-49 (n=21)	23.81%	76.19%	100.00%
50-59 (n=51)	70.59%	29.41%	100.00%
60-69 (n=6)	83.33%	16.67%	100.00%

Table X: Age of respondents by state

Age	Teachers		
	Lagos (n=158)	Kano (n=70)	Total
21-29 (n=2)	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
30-39 (n=61)	60.66%	39.34%	100.00%
40-49 (n=92)	63.04%	36.96%	100.00%
50-59 (n=69)	82.61%	17.39%	100.00%
60-69 (n=4)	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%

Teachers from Lagos had either newer and more experienced teachers, while respondents from Kano tended to sit in between.

Table XI: Respondents' years of experience by state

Years as a Principal	Principals		
	Lagos (n=41)	Kano (n=27)	Total
2-5 (n=18)	77.78%	22.22%	100.00%
6-10 (n=13)	46.15%	53.85%	100.00%
11-15 (n=3)	0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
16-20 (n=12)	33.33%	66.67%	100.00%
26-30 (n=9)	77.78%	22.22%	100.00%
31-40 (n=13)	76.92%	23.08%	100.00%

Table XII: Respondents' years of experience by state

Years as a Principal	Principals		
	Lagos	Kano	Total
2-5 (n=8)	75.00%	25.00%	100.00%
6-10 (n=46)	65.22%	34.78%	100.00%
11-15 (n=70)	68.57%	31.43%	100.00%
16-20 (n=43)	37.21%	62.79%	100.00%
26-30 (n=30)	93.33%	6.67%	100.00%
31-40 (n=16)	93.75%	6.25%	100.00%