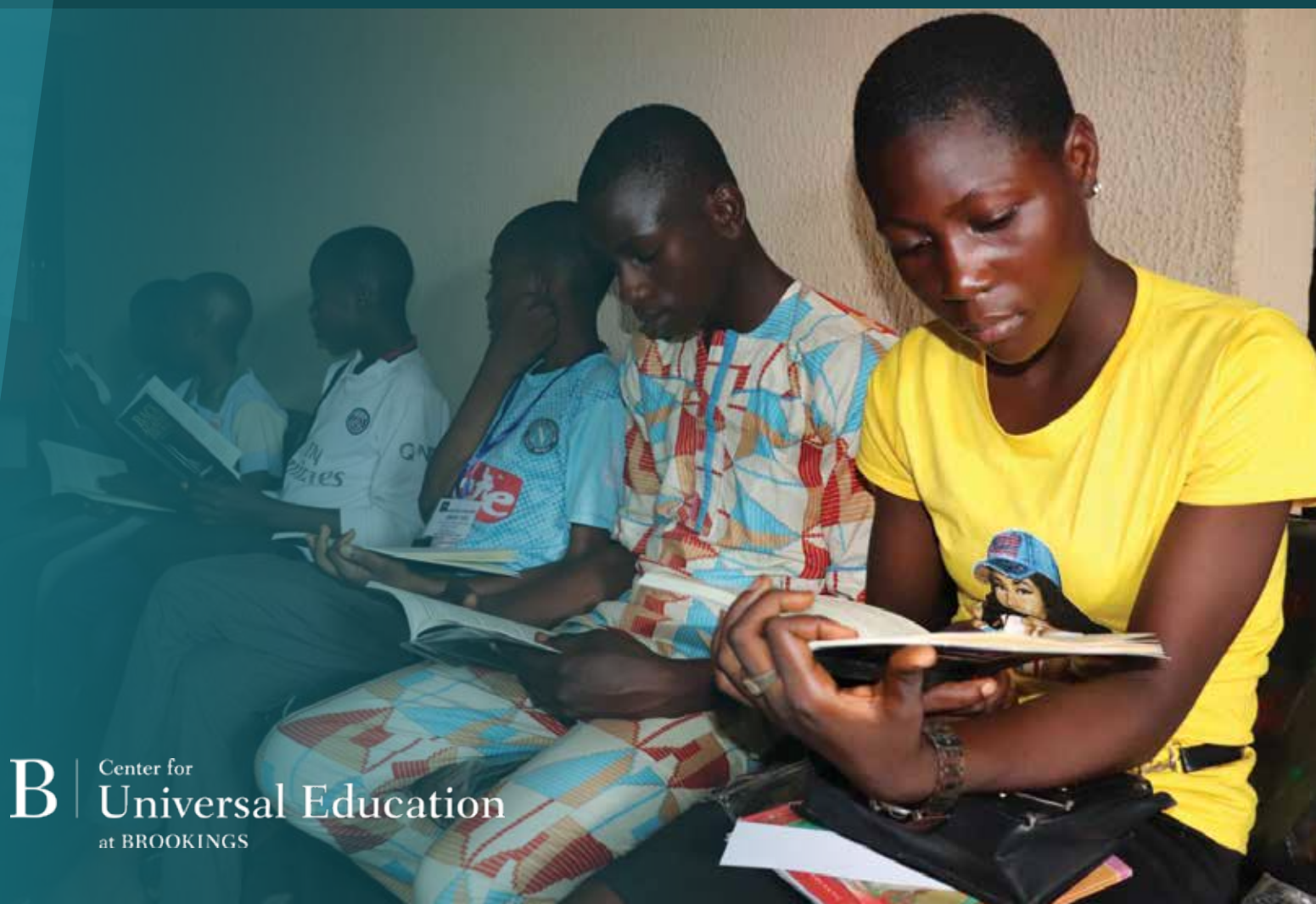


POLICY BRIEF

Gender-responsive education in emergency in Nigeria

SAFEGUARDING GIRLS' PRESENTS AND FUTURES

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Executive summary

This policy brief highlights ways that a gender-responsive perspective can be fully incorporated into planning, policy design, and implementation models for education in emergencies (EiE) in Nigeria, so that governments and education stakeholders can ensure that girls, like boys, can continue learning in times of crisis.

Girls' education is historically vulnerable to crises, which has led to concerns that the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic might reverse decades of advances in their schooling. The data discussed here were collected through qualitative research involving the Oyo State Ministry of Education, private-sector education partners of the government, broadcast stations, female and male upper secondary students, and members of community-based school governing boards and school management committees, as well as analysis of program content. I explore how the EiE intervention of Nigeria's Oyo State School on Air (SOA) addressed issues of access, quality, and relevance for girls in upper secondary school during the COVID-19 school closures. The perspective of EiE planners in Oyo State interacted with general as well as gendered constraints on girls' participation in SOA. Girls often lacked significant control of their time, had limited access to technology, encountered inhibitive instructional modes, and received content that reinforced gender biases. The absence of direct parental or community engagement beyond radio and television jingles about SOA further deterred the meaningful participation of girls in the program, especially in remote and rural areas.

Governments and education stakeholders need to establish permanent systems for EiE planning, policy, design, and implementation that place girls—and girls' voices—at the center; they must also shift their focus from delivery of programs to improving learning outcomes. Involving communities is also critical to promote parental support and ensure that the most vulnerable children have access to EiE interventions, particularly in remote and marginalized areas. Failure to incorporate a gender-responsive approach into EiE has a high cost not only for the girls themselves but also for policy-makers, communities, and development actors.

Gender-responsive policy and practice for education in emergencies (EiE) is critical to ensure that girls can continue to learn during times of crisis. Around the world, girls face barriers to a quality education simply because they are young and female (Plan International 2013). Such barriers are intensified in emergency situations, when the likelihood that girls will be out of school doubles (ECW 2020). By the time they qualify for secondary education, 90 percent of girls in conflict-affected countries are reported not to be in school (WEF 2018) due to the absence of caregivers and the assumption of adult responsibilities and roles; they also suffer from a higher prevalence of gender-based violence and early pregnancy, the loss of family livelihoods, and the breakdown of social protection networks for adolescent girls (Plan International 2020).

In Nigeria, where about 6.34 million of the country's 10.19 million out-of-school children are female (The Guardian Nigeria 2019), girls face distinctive barriers to formal learning at all levels. Violence; child, early, and forced marriages (CEFM); lack of schools, inadequate infrastructure, and unsafe environments; limited teacher training; and systemic gender biases impede girls' participation in formal schooling throughout Nigeria (Unterhalter and Heslop 2012). Social gender norms are also a persistent barrier to girls' access to formal learning and undermine the quality of their learning experiences.

In times of emergency, barriers to the education of girls in Nigeria are compounded. Schools are often one of the major institutional casualties of complex disasters (Udo-Udo and Ensign 2021), and emergencies such as armed conflict, natural disasters, or epidemics constantly disrupt girls' schooling. At the start of 2020, for example, 935 schools in Northeast Nigeria were closed as a result of conflict, and girls have continued to suffer from the ever-worsening insecurity and violence across the country, often including attacks on school children themselves.¹

The COVID-19 pandemic has similarly disrupted access to education and the quality of learning for girls (TEP-NESG 2020). COVID-19-related school closures have been accompanied by rising rates of teenage pregnancy, child labor, and early and

One way to ensure that girls' learning is not disrupted during emergencies is to prioritize their needs and integrate gender-responsive and transformative approaches into EiE planning

forced marriage (Plan International, 2020); they also threaten to reverse two decades of progress in school participation and improved learning outcomes for girls (UNESCO 2020). School disengagement tends to follow gendered patterns that disadvantage female learners (UNESCO 2020), leading to fears that many girls would not return to school when classrooms reopened. One way to ensure that girls' learning is not disrupted during emergencies is to prioritize their needs and integrate gender-responsive and transformative approaches into EiE planning (UNICEF 2021).

It is critical to understand how girls in Nigeria are affected by efforts to ensure their continued access to quality education during emergencies. This policy brief focuses on one such initiative, the School on Air (SOA) program implemented by the Oyo State² government during the COVID-related closure of schools from April to September in 2020. EiE strategies should ensure that affected young people can safely access quality programs that are relevant to their needs (Winthrop 2020), whilst also ensuring that children who face higher risks, such as unwanted pregnancies, violence, sexual assault, and substance abuse, receive physical and social protection (INEE 2010).³ With this "access-quality-relevance" framework in mind, this study seeks to understand the role SOA played for girls in upper secondary education and how such strategies can be strengthened by a gender-responsive approach. The questions that guided this research were:

1. How did the Oyo State SOA program enable or constrain opportunities for girls in upper secondary school to continue their learning during the closures?
2. How did the SOA program incorporate elements of gender responsiveness in its design and implementation?

Context for the SOA program

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented Nigeria’s already fragile education system (Obiakor and Adeniran 2020) with unique challenges. The abrupt closure of all learning institutions by the Federal Ministry of Education in March 2020 affected 36.4 million primary and secondary learners across the country, including those in camps for the internally displaced⁴ (UNESCO 2020). In response, Nigeria’s federal and state governments—with the cooperation of the private sector—hurriedly attempted to replace in-person learning with various forms of remote and distance education that typically combined the use of technological platforms, Internet-based tools, and traditional media in the hope of mitigating the risks associated with school disruption.

As in other parts of the world, in Nigeria radio- and television-based learning soon emerged as a common way to deliver remote education⁵ during the peak of the pandemic (UNESCO 2020a), even though evidence of its effectiveness was limited (TEP-NESG 2020). Moreover, few measures were taken to ensure the inclusion of populations at risk of being excluded by such programs (Amorighoye 2020; Azubuike et al. 2021), such as marginalized girls, children in remote areas, and learners with disabilities.⁶

The federal government’s stated aim was to help children maintain study skills and routines through a variety of learn-at-home programs (LHP) in order to minimize learning erosion and more easily reintroduce schooling when the crisis abated (TEP-NESG 2020). It is not clear, however, whether federal efforts during this health-related crisis focused on providing relevant, quality education or the extent to which the risks facing girls nationally were addressed.

THE OYO STATE RESPONSE

Following Federal Government approval of the closure of all learning institutions in the country and advice to states on how to respond to the crisis (World Bank 2020),⁷ the Oyo State government in Southwest Nigeria launched its own program, “School on Air”, to serve as the official LHP during the school closures.⁸ Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Oyo State was reported to have an estimated 418,900 out-of-school children, the highest number in the Southwest and the seventh highest in Nigeria (Daily Post 2019),⁹ making its response to the crisis particularly important as it sought to reduce those numbers¹⁰ and prevent further decline.

Through the SOA program, from April to December 2020,¹¹ the Oyo State Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS), transmitted TV and radio broadcasts for secondary school students. SOA leveraged

content that had previously been produced by the private Oyo State-based Educational Advancement Centre (EAC) as part of an unrelated on-air educational scheme launched in 2018 to enhance the quality of lesson delivery in remote areas where there are fewer teachers.¹² In the wake of the pandemic-related disruption, the partnership between the Ministry and the EAC allowed the previous EAC format to be rebroadcast as part of the state emergency education response. Students across the 33 Local Government Areas (LGAs) were expected to watch or listen to lessons on TV or radio. Though designed for students in secondary school generally, SOA gave special attention to students in their final year (SS3), to help them prepare for the national high school examinations (Oyo News 2020). Figure 1 shows the timetable for SOA transmissions for students in secondary school.

FIGURE 1. Oyo State School on Air weekly broadcast schedule

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
BIOLOGY NBS 12:30-1:30 pm Oyo Ogun FM 10:30-11:00am Oyo State FM 9:35-9:45am Aljazeera FM 9:35-10:00am	COMMERCE NBS 9:00-9:30am Oyo Ogun FM 10:30-11:00am Oyo State FM 9:35-9:45am Aljazeera FM 9:30-10:00am	MATHEMATICS NBS 9:00-9:30am Oyo Ogun FM 10:30-11:00am Oyo State FM 9:35-9:45am Aljazeera FM 9:30-10:00am	CHEMISTRY NBS 9:00-9:30am Oyo Ogun FM 10:30-11:00am Oyo State FM 9:35-9:45am Aljazeera FM 9:30-10:00am	PHYSICS NBS 9:00-9:30am Oyo Ogun FM 10:30-11:00am Oyo State FM 9:35-9:45am Aljazeera FM 9:30-10:00am
ECONOMICS NBS 1:30-2:00 pm Oyo Ogun FM 2:30-3:00pm Oyo State FM 1:35-2:00pm Aljazeera FM 4:00-4:30pm	AGRIC. SCI NBS 4:00-4:30 pm Oyo Ogun FM 2:30-3:00pm Oyo State FM 1:35-2:00pm Aljazeera FM 2:30-3:00pm	ENG. LANG NBS 1:30-2:00 pm Oyo Ogun FM 2:30-3:00pm Oyo State FM 1:35-2:00pm Aljazeera FM 4:00-4:30pm	GOVERNMENT NBS 2:00-3:00 pm Oyo Ogun FM 2:30-3:00pm Oyo State FM 1:35-2:00pm Aljazeera FM 2:30-3:00pm	LIT-IN-ENG. NBS 4:30-5:00 pm Oyo Ogun FM 2:30-3:00pm Oyo State FM 1:35-2:00pm Aljazeera FM 2:30-3:00pm

Source: Lagos State University information website (accessed on September 29, 2021). <https://www.lasu-info.com/2020/04/oyo-state-school-on-air-broadcast-timetable.html>.

Note: It is not clear from the timetable whether the lessons were for all secondary students or just those in SS3, or if the different times were for different grades or the same class repeated on different stations.

Through TV announcements and radio jingles, the government urged parents and guardians to ensure that children actively participated in the broadcast lessons. The program did not include any follow-up on student learning or a mechanism to monitor student participation. However, government press releases indicated that the program was reaching 60 to 70 percent of the student population (Oyo News 2020).

While a combination of radio and television might be perceived as a cost-effective way to address the enormous challenge of children's schooling during emergencies, there are numerous barriers to its effectiveness, especially for girls (UNESCO 2020). Prevailing gender norms, for example, can cause disparities in student participation in remote learning (Guan et al. 2020). There is, therefore, a need to understand how this EiE intervention addressed issues of access, quality, and relevance for girls at the upper-secondary level in Oyo State during the COVID-19 school closures in order to improve planning for future EiE initiatives or policy.¹³

A BRIEF NOTE ON METHODS

This policy brief relies on data collected between July and September of 2021 through a variety of methods, from individual and focus group interviews to content analysis of SOA broadcasts (see Appendix A for details). Stakeholders sampled included an official in the Oyo State Ministry of Education, representatives of private-sector education partners of the government and broadcast stations, female and male students in upper-secondary schools, and members of community-based school governing boards and school management committees, including principals. The study included eight individual interviews and six focus groups (averaging 12 students each), conducted with both genders of students in school and community settings; 80 SOA lessons were analyzed using a narratological content analysis framework to understand the gender relevance of the program (see Appendix B).

Findings

The fact that the Oyo State government stepped in quickly to provide an EiE alternative should not be undervalued. Unlike in some states, which did not implement any LHP,¹⁴ the Oyo Ministry of Education's response to the challenge of schooling disruption through distance education made it possible for this report to focus on ways to improve future EiE responses.

1. INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE WAS IDENTIFIED AS THE PRINCIPAL BARRIER TO ACCESS FOR BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS, ALTHOUGH ITS EFFECTS WERE COMPOUNDED BY GENDER.

Due to the general intervention focus of the state government, it is not surprising that the principal access barriers to SOA were felt to be infrastructural and geographic, affecting both girls and boys. Oyo State SOA planners pointed to constant power outages, inadequate television distribution, and lack of radio coverage in some remote areas as the primary impediments to student access to the program.

While these access challenges were by no means specific to girls, this research also found unique gendered constraints on girls' participation in the SOA program:

a. Girls lacked control of their time and essential resources.

- Many girls who participated in this study reported a lack of significant control over their time and other resources, such as study space that was conducive to learning, which were essential to their participation in SOA. Several girls in the focus groups, for instance, reported that their chores at home increased during school closures, especially providing care for younger siblings. One girl said, *"Whenever I complained that the work is too much, my mother would say to me . . . is this how you will be behaving when you go to your husband's house, or will I be the one to follow you there?"*

- Some of the girls in remote areas also disclosed that work on family farms¹⁵ during school closures prevented them from following SOA lesson schedules. This is similar to findings in a national study in Kenya (PPSU Kenya and Population Council 2021), where 10 percent of adolescent respondents reported that working to earn income affected their learning during the pandemic, although in that study boys were more likely to be subject to this pressure (13 percent) than girls (9 percent).
- A considerable number of girls in this study also reported that their parents had enrolled them in informal skills acquisition programs, mainly hair dressing and tailoring. For the few boys¹⁶ enrolled in skills acquisition, it was mainly computer skills training.

Whether they were at home doing chores, at work on a farm, or undergoing vocational skills training, girls were less likely to have the time to engage in SOA lessons.

b. Girls' access to technology was limited by gendered constraints.

With constant power outages making television viewing negligible at best, the prevailing lack of personal mobile devices (cell phones) also prevented many girls from accessing radio SOA broadcasts by phone. In focus groups, girls explained that the lack of personal mobile devices seemed to affect them more than boys because it stemmed more from parental fear and distrust than cost: parents believed that using cell phones would expose them to relationships with boyfriends,

illicit sexual encounters, and even pregnancies. As one girl said, “A major problem is that our parents do not trust us, and they feel the risk is more on our side because we are girls.”

c. Girls in remote areas encountered language access barriers.

The COVID-19 SOA program was broadcast only in English, which is of concern because lack of proficiency in English¹⁷ remains an obstacle to the successful education of many Nigerian students (Ezeokoli and Ugwu 2019).¹⁸ Field experiences for this study suggest that girls were disproportionately impacted by the problem of language. During focus groups at remote schools, whereas boys interacted with the researcher in English, though with limitations, girls were unable to respond to questions in English, thus requiring the researcher to introduce Yoruba language translation. The problem of low formal language literacy illustrates how even when girls are in school, they may not be acquiring learning outcomes that would help them thrive as they mature (Evans and Yuan 2019). While the degree of language disparity between girl and boy students in remote schools is still not clear, findings from this study suggest that in remote areas language may have represented a greater access barrier for girls than for boys. More exploration of this topic is needed.

2. THE ONE-WAY MODE OF DELIVERY LIMITED STUDENT INTERACTION AND INHIBITED THE QUALITY OF LEARNING.

a. No direct follow-up with teachers

Students pointed to the absence of channels for teacher-learner interaction as a severe limitation. Many agreed with a girl who complained that “Sometimes I would have a question, but there was no way to ask the teacher.” Although students stated that there were usually exercises to be completed at the end of SOA lessons, there was no way to know whether they had answered the questions correctly unless they could visit the SOA website to do the quizzes online. However, most study participants had neither the phones nor the necessary cellular data to do this.

b. No ability to interact with broadcasts

Although both male and female focus group participants felt that the quality of teachers in the program was high, the majority complained that the teachers often spoke too fast and it was impossible to pause a recording if the learner had to deal with an interruption or watch or listen a second time, which made the pace of the lessons unsuitable for learning. As one girl said, “Whenever they were teaching economics there were things I didn’t understand, so I had to go and call

my older sister to come and help me, but by the time she came [the teacher] would be through.” Similarly, several boys complained that the 30-minute lessons were too short, leaving them with a sense of incomplete understanding.

c. Lack of visuals

The majority of focus group participants complained that the quality of the SOA radio lessons was eroded by the lack of visual aids, an issue which invoked even greater frustration when it became clear that radio-disseminated lessons were an exact audio replication of the TV broadcasts rather than having been adapted for radio. Relaying this frustration, one student commented, “One time the teacher was talking about characteristics of soil and rocks in agriculture and said, ‘You can see this type of soil is loose...’ and I wondered but how can I see something on the radio?”

d. Instructional modes did not meet the needs of girls

Gender has been found to play a unique role in how we learn (Howe 1997), with girls described as assimilative and reflective (Olagbaju 2014), preferring good and clear explanation to task-based exercises (Hannan 2009), and relational, with a tendency to seek assistance (Howe 1997). Yet SOA lessons were not delivered using a range of instructional modes that may have better met girls’ needs. One girl in the focus group stated that instead of futile attempts to grasp the on-air lessons, she simply took notes to discuss later with a private lesson tutor,¹⁹ who would then offer clearer explanations.

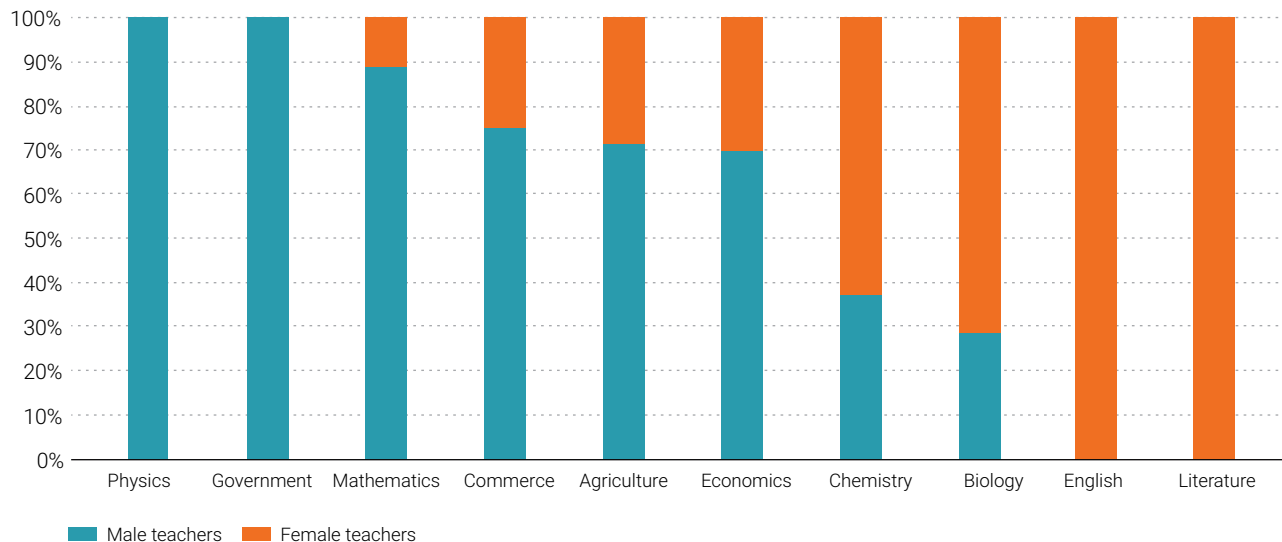
3. THE RELEVANCE OF THE PROGRAM WAS LIMITED BY CONTENT DESIGNED TO COMPLEMENT, NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR, IN-PERSON SCHOOLING.

Since the educational content of SOA was developed before the pandemic for a context devoid of schooling disruptions and the social and economic crisis of a global pandemic, it is not surprising that its lessons did not address the multifaceted instructional needs and challenges of learners in the unexpected role of SOA as a school *substitute*. SOA focused strictly on delivering formal academic subjects, without addressing the multiple holistic needs of adolescents in a health-related crisis, such as how to handle disinformation or take care of their health and psychosocial needs.

a. Reinforcing gender biases and attitudes

SOA may have been a channel for reinforcing societal gender biases, for both girls and boys.²⁰ To further understand how it represented both women and girls and men and boys, this study included a gender content analysis of program lessons, which found that:

FIGURE 2. Distribution of teachers of SOA subjects by gender



Source: Data from a sample of 80 SOA classes (see Appendix A).

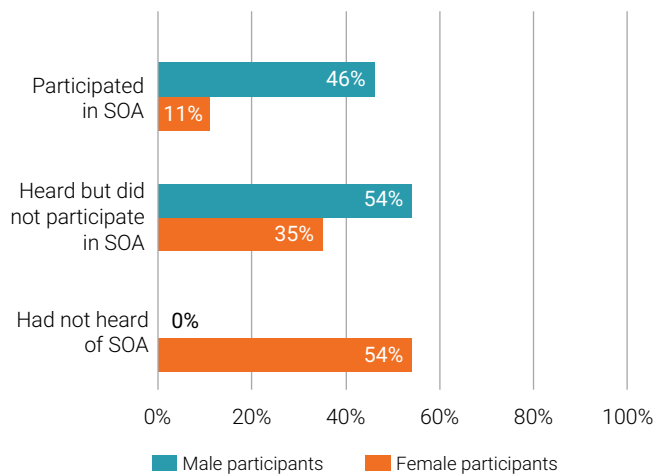
- While both male and female teachers were represented in SOA lessons, throughout a broad sample, male teachers dominated lessons in subjects like mathematics, physics, government, and economics (see Figure 2), and only female teachers delivered subjects like English language and literature. In effect, the subjects and lessons reinforced the notion that numerical, leadership-, or production-based subjects were masculine (Francis 2000).
- In lessons on government, generic roles such as President and Governor were consistently described using male pronouns; for example, *“Whenever a President is going to appoint his ministers, he is expected to send the names of his nominees to the legislative arm of government for approval. . . . The governor of a state is expected to follow the same steps in appointing his commissioners.”*

4. LACK OF OUTREACH AND FOLLOW-UP WITH STUDENTS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES LIMITED BOTH PARTICIPATION AND PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS.

a. Inadequate outreach

Very few girls in the focus groups had participated in SOA during the pandemic, and more than half had not even heard about it (Figure 3).²¹ In the remote schools visited, none of the girls had heard of the program. This may be attributable to what an official in the Oyo Ministry of Education described as “low public awareness in the beginning.”²² Yet all of the

FIGURE 3: Engagement of girls and boys in SOA



Source: Data from 55 female and 15 male participants in focus groups (Appendix A).

boys interviewed knew of the program and 46 percent had engaged in SOA lessons.

Asked what influenced their decision to return to school after the protracted closures, girls, both those who had participated in SOA and those who had not, said it was simply a natural course of action, as the alternative was unthinkable. A few shared career aspirations and explained how completing schooling was necessary to meet their goals. This suggests that secondary school girls in Oyo State value education

. . . secondary school girls in Oyo State value education and, barring external hindrances, are intrinsically motivated to complete their schooling.

and, barring external hindrances, are intrinsically motivated to complete their schooling. Outreach and follow-up by education officials or through community partners (see below) would thus have allowed many more girls to engage with the SOA program.

It is important to mention that several community-led initiatives emerged to solve problems of student access to broadcast education, especially in remote and rural areas where electricity outages were more severe. In some communities, adult male volunteers and school governing boards either directly contributed or helped to mobilize the donation of generators, projectors, and screens to set up centralized SOA viewing locations to broaden access for students who lacked television, radio sets, or a stable power supply at home. However, given that reports show more visible adult male influence in these community-led efforts, it is unclear whether these initiatives translated into norm-changing family or home attitudes, such as reduction of household chores or giving girls permission to attend the pseudo-school spaces. Still, the organic emergence of such local initiatives is an indication of community interest that the Oyo State government could have more intentionally leveraged to support student participation in SOA.

b. Lack of follow-up

Unfortunately, there was no direct follow-up with students or even a means of checking which students were taking the classes or doing any form of subject-related practice at home after watching or listening to the lessons. Asked how many students participated in SOA broadcasts, TV and radio station managers were unable to provide any numbers or even close estimates. Nevertheless, they expressed confidence that, due to the wide and penetrative coverage of their stations' network and to the broadcast schedules, SOA reached students in all areas of the state.

It is also worth mentioning that some girls reported attending private lessons and independent in-person tutorials during the school closures. This contrasts with the view expressed by an Oyo Ministry of Education official that such options were suspended across the state due to widespread fear of the pandemic; and underscores that the Ministry considered SOA to be the sole learning structure available for public school students during the closures. From the official's comments, it became clear that the Oyo Ministry of Education attributed to SOA the performance of SS3 students in the national exam results released in November 2020—considered better than the previous year.²³ Since there is no way to know the extent to which private lessons and independent tutorials operated during the pandemic, it is not clear how much of the exam performance of girls in SS3 can be attributed to SOA. The lack of monitoring for both the program and other learning options makes it difficult to understand clearly the effectiveness of this version of SOA.

5. GENDER-BLIND DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION COMPOUNDED PROGRAM LIMITATIONS.

Oyo State EiE planners did not consider potential gender-related barriers associated with design and implementation of the SOA COVID-19 response. It was not that there were conscious decisions to exclude or marginalize girls from the planning process; instead, unexamined assumptions²⁴ underlay much of the top-down planning by actors from Ministry of Education officials to TV and radio station managers to the private partner that produced the lesson content. One Education Ministry official involved in SOA planning commented, *"The reason we are not always that sensitive about gender here is that . . . education is our legacy in the Southwest. So, whether you give birth to a male child or a female child, you will be very sure you must send him or her to school at least up to university. So, we don't put a gender clause into most of our policies because that is the way it plays out naturally. . . ."*

The lack of monitoring for both the program and other learning options makes it difficult to understand clearly the effectiveness of this version of SOA.

This mindset demonstrates a common pitfall of government planners in the state in not systematically examining relationships and inequalities between women and men, girls and boys in the state, so that they miss differences in trends, patterns, and levels of participation of girls and boys in schooling, and the causes of such differences when educational programs are planned; the result is that the most marginalized school populations are not considered during crises (Leach 2003). Could some of the challenges already discussed have been avoided if the approach to design and delivery had been gender-responsive? Two examples demonstrate how listening to girls could have made the program more effective.

1. Absence of direct parental engagement

Unlike many education-technology tools that were remodelled during the pandemic (Adegboye and Henshaw 2020), SOA did not facilitate the direct participation of parents or guardians in student remote learning. During the focus groups, a considerable number of girls reported not having access to help when seeking to engage with SOA broadcasts; the inability of their parents to actively participate in or monitor their home-based learning limited girls' understanding of content or even access to SOA schedules. Given the support-based learning style of girls²⁵ (Howe 1997; Olagbaju 2014), this might understandably have posed a greater challenge for them.



Female and male participants during a group interactive session at MAYEIN Youth Centre, Ojoo, Ibadan, Oyo State.

2. Constant home chores counteracted the benefits of having classroom distractions eliminated.

Girls had mixed responses to whether SOA enhanced their concentration by eliminating common classroom distractions. Some girls expressed relief that it had eliminated noise-making from “back benchers”²⁶ or the constant psychological pressure to answer questions correctly or risk stigma. Others, however, felt that these benefits paled against the serious distractions they faced at home during the pandemic, such as higher parental demands and care-giving responsibilities for younger siblings. As one girl stated, *“If [the government] wants us to learn at home then they have to first talk to our parents to allow us to concentrate; otherwise [our parents] will just be disturbing us every time.”*

Recommendations

While it is critical to continue educating girls during emergencies, it is equally critical to ensure that girls get the most from that education. The results of this study support both recommendations for EiE stakeholders and specific proposals for the Oyo State government.

SYSTEMIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Develop permanent systems for EiE:** National and state education ministries should set up integrated systems that can mitigate and manage future EiE situations. This is not a call for normalizing crises; rather it highlights the need to move from a reactive to a proactive stance. A distinction needs to be drawn between adjusting to a specific crisis or emergency, for which ad hoc expert-led teams may be created, and recognizing that crises and setbacks of all varieties will arise, for which permanent systems and planning are needed. The latter might be formed by designating departments in national and state Ministries of Education to deal with EiE and creating a mechanism for coordination between different levels of government.
- 2. Integrate gender-responsiveness into all EiE approaches:** After establishing permanent EiE systems, government Ministries of Education should proactively integrate gender-responsiveness guidelines into their operational plans. Though Nigeria has an Education in Emergency Working Group (EiE WGN) to coordinate equitable deployment of education resources for populations affected by humanitarian crises,²⁷ its strategic focus needs to shift from just children affected by emergencies in the North East²⁸ to those across the entire country. Also, its mechanisms for entrenching guidelines across Ministries of Education, the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), and education stakeholders at all federal and state levels should be reinforced.
- 3. Collect and publish holistic information on EiE:** Ministries of Education should build data systems based on carefully framed indicators and ensure rigorous

collection and timely publication of data in order to monitor progress and identify any additional efforts required. For instance, it was impossible to track data for this study reflecting actual pre-COVID and immediate post-COVID student records across secondary schools in Oyo State,²⁹ though that would have illustrated any gendered patterns of dropouts influenced by the pandemic.

- 4. Provide financial support for EiE preparedness, response, and recovery:** In order to safeguard education access and learning outcomes for girls during crises, the private sector, bilateral education donors, and multilateral partners like the World Bank and regional development banks should support Nigerian governments by funding gender-responsive EiE policies and working with national actors on their sector plans and targets. The private sector and private foundations should also increase their support for EiE interventions, especially gender-transformative projects.

POLICY DESIGN

- 5. Consult directly with girls:** Policymakers and stakeholders in educational outcomes, including parents, communities, and private or philanthropic entities, must ensure the participation

Policymakers and stakeholders in educational outcomes, including parents, communities, and private or philanthropic entities, must ensure the participation of girls and young women in the decision-making areas tied to education

of girls and young women in the decision-making areas tied to education, to make sure their opinions are heard, their needs are met, and their rights are respected. Low-cost information interventions, such as short message service- or interactive voice response-based technology could be effective options for getting feedback from girls (Evans 2019), given that Nigerian governments often grapple with funding strategies for inclusive EiE preparedness and response.

6. Shift the focus of planners from program delivery to learning outcomes: Such a shift will make EiE programs more responsive to the needs, challenges, and differentiated patterns of participation in education by the most vulnerable and marginalized school children. That would ensure that they too are able to access and learn through EiE programs.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

7. Collaborate with parents, communities, and grassroots networks: EiE planners in Ministries of Education should engage broadly within communities to promote parental support and ensure that the most vulnerable children have access to EiE interventions. Communities in Oyo State were instrumental in

creating structures for supplemental access to SOA; governments should build on local initiative wherever it exists and actively promote it where it has been slow to emerge.

8. Enhance interactive elements and follow-up features for learners: Ministries of Education need to work in collaboration with partners to ensure that interactive elements for learners and follow-up features are incorporated into distance education programs, both during and beyond emergencies. Finding a cost-effective and sustainable solution is still a serious challenge (UNESCO 2020) that calls for experimentation. All too often, examples of country initiatives to incorporate interactive components into radio- and TV-based distance learning solutions combine use of apps or videos and online quizzes,³⁰ which means that many forms of online-based education are prohibitively expensive for many learners in Nigeria (TEP-NESG 2020).

SOA holds great promise for reaching out-of-school children in and beyond crises. Table 1 details steps the Oyo State government can take to begin to ensure that girls continue to learn during crises.

TABLE 1. Action proposals for the Oyo State government

	ACTION	MINISTRY, DEPARTMENT, OR AGENCY (MDA)	TIMELINE
1	Conduct a state-level assessment of trends, patterns, and levels of participation by male and female students in SOA during the COVID-19 school closures and incorporate the findings into EiE planning.	Department of Research and Statistics, Oyo Ministry of Education	Urgent
2	Strengthen data collection (e.g., by increasing staff, procuring useful equipment, sponsoring continuous training, and frequently reviewing mandates) in order to effectively monitor indicators tied to school enrollment and retention and learning outcomes in Oyo state.	Departments of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), Research and Statistics in the Oyo Ministry of Education and Oyo State Universal Basic Education Board (Oyo-SUBEB)	Urgent
3	Set up an open database of community and grassroots organizations, groups, and networks covering the entire state, both rural and urban areas, to more effectively engage parents and during crises enhance outreach to the most marginalized school children, especially girls.	EMIS Department	Urgent
4	Adopt a digitization-in-education policy with the goal of full effective and gender-responsive digitization of formal educational content in the state curriculum so that, whether or not there is an emergency, students can learn beyond the classroom.	Oyo State Executive Council, Department of E-learning	Urgent
5	Work with the creators and producers of SOA content to revise and improve content, such as by providing multilingual content, and to incorporate changes.	Department of E-learning, Oyo-SUBEB and the Educational Advancement Centre (EAC)	2022–23
6	Train a cohort of teachers in the Oyo State Service in pedagogy for multi-faceted and gender-responsive modes of instruction, both in-person and remote.	Department of E-learning, Oyo-SUBEB, the Oyo State Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM), and the Educational Advancement Centre (EAC)	2022–23
7	Set up a permanent department in the Ministry of Education to deal with EiE mandates and thereafter provide specifically in the annual state budget for EiE preparedness, response, and recovery.	Oyo State Executive Council, Oyo Ministry of Education, Oyo State House of Assembly	From 2022

CONCLUSION

This report highlights the significant difficulties that girls in Oyo State had in participating in the School on Air program during the COVID-19 pandemic, among them lack of significant control of their time, limited access to technology, inhibitive instructional modes, and cultural gender bias. We have proposed actionable recommendations to mitigate these challenges for secondary school girls in Oyo State, and indeed for girls across Nigeria who struggle to learn effectively from radio- and TV-based remote education. Safeguarding girls' education in times of crisis means

moving from simple reaction to a proactive stance that intentionally places girls—and their voices—at the center. Achieving the country's vision of a nation that is peaceful, prosperous, and climate-secure requires the cohesive efforts of all citizens, which can only be achieved through education for all. To continue leaving girls behind in education, or poorly safeguarding their learning in times of crisis, is simply contrary to the enlightened goal of sustainable development.

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APPENDIX A

Research methodology

TABLE A.1: Research evidence and methods

RESEARCH QUESTION	EVIDENCE	METHODS	SOURCES AND PARTICIPANTS	SETTING	TIMING
How did the Oyo State School on Air (SOA) program enable or deter opportunities for girls in upper secondary to continue their learning during the period?	State-level policies and actions measures to support SOA	Document analysis	Laws, ministerial agreements, guidelines, TV and radio programs, government statements and press releases	State documents, official websites, news coverage, clips of media coverage and interactions with SOA policymakers actors and other direct stakeholders	July 2021
	Interviews with members of community-based school management boards	Individual interviews and focus group discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Former chairman of the school governing board in Oyo State, who was also the Vice President of the National Parents Teachers Association of Nigeria, Akinyele LG chapter PTA chairman of Methodist Grammar school, Ibadan. Vice Principal, Christ High School, Oleyo Station managers at BCOS and Oluyole FM, Oyo State 	Community locations	August 2021
	Opinions of female and male upper secondary students	Focus group discussions	55 female and 15 male upper secondary school students in 4 schools (as approved by from the state Ministry of Education) and 2 community-based youth centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abadina Grammar School, Ibadan North LGA Aseyin High School, Iseyin LGA Christ High School, Oleyo, Oluyole LGA St. Louis Grammar School, Ibadan North LGA MAYEIN Youth Centre, Akinyele LGA Youth Care Development Initiative Centre, Basorun, Ibadan Northeast LGA 	July 2021
How did the Oyo State SOA program incorporate gender responsiveness into its design and implementation	Sample copies of lessons broadcast	Content analysis	Analysis of 80 sample SOA transmissions obtained from TV and radio stations	Offices of media station partners	July–August 2021
	Perceptions of Education Ministry officials, private sector collaborators, and TV station managers	Individual interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deputy director of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS), Oyo State Ministry of Education Director of Educational Advancement Centre (EAC) Station managers at BCOS and Oluyole FM, Oyo State 	Internal office of the Oyo Ministry of Education and Office of the Director of the Educational Advancement Centre (EAC)	July - August 2021

APPENDIX B

Analysis of gender-responsive content, Oyo State School on Air lessons

This gender responsive content analysis was based on *narratological analysis*³¹ (see Table B.1). Narratological analysis recognizes that any text written, visualized, or broadcast (spoken) contains a gendered perspective that mirrors the reality of subject and object, i.e., what is written or spoken about or visualized (Kabira and Masinjila 1997). For example, if in a text, girls are consistently shown as helping parents in the home but boys in the same roles are not visible, learners are likely to take this as representative of how things are, or should be.

In analyzing SOA transmissions, this type of analysis had both quantitative and qualitative aspects; it quantified the portrayal of women, men, through the gender distribution of teachers across subjects, in addition to presenting a gender map of the text and possible implications to the learner through qualitative analysis.

The analysis was applied to the content of 80 sample episodes across the 10 SOA subjects transmitted (Table B.2).

TABLE B.1. Qualitative findings, gender-responsive content analysis on Oyo SOA broadcast samples

	NARRATOLOGICAL ANALYSIS	RELATED QUESTIONS	QUALITATIVE FINDINGS
1	<p>Action (activities and actors are identified and quantified by gender. Activities are also categorized as productive; reproductive, and community activities.)</p> <p>Programs recognize the distribution of workload by gender, the status (or lack thereof) assigned to the gender of those performing certain kinds of activities, and the implications of the picture that emerges for the socialization of students, teachers, and other consumers of such content)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who carries out active roles in the content? • What kind of activities are they involved in? • How often do they act in these roles? • Who initiates what sorts of action? • Is there a hierarchy of activities? • If so, who is at the top of the hierarchy, and why? • What are the implications of being positioned higher and lower in the hierarchy? • What are the locus and significance of activities for the characters? 	<p>Male gender pronouns were constantly used for generic roles like president and governor. A typical illustrative sentence was that "Whenever a President is going to appoint his ministers, he is expected to send the names of his nominees to the legislative arm of government for approval . . . The governor of a state is expected to follow the same steps in appointing his commissioners."</p>
2	<p>Focus and visualisation</p> <p>Programs consider the gender implications of what different players see when more than one person is describing the same object. They also consider the implications of whether or not the one providing the description is the one who sees. Usually the perspective of the one who sees influences or may even be adopted by those who do not see.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who sees/focalizes i.e., whose viewpoint do we have/is the narrator a man or woman? • Who is seen? • When do they see? • When are they seen? • What are the factors that improve one's ability to see or to be seen? • What impact does a monopoly of seeing have on social relations? • How did the lessons take into account the thoughts, feelings, behavior, and decision-making in general of women and girls? 	<p>While both men and women teachers were represented in SOA secondary school lessons spanning SS1 to SS3, throughout a wide sample men dominated classes in subjects like mathematics, physics, government, and economics; and only women taught subjects like English language and literature.</p> <p>Subjects focalized through/narrated from male teachers' lens held few or no examples derived from context or culture, but those from women teachers contained many such examples and analogies which made it more likely they would appeal to girls.</p>

continued

TABLE B.1., *continued*

	NARRATOLOGICAL ANALYSIS	RELATED QUESTIONS	QUALITATIVE FINDINGS
3	<p>Power Programs are mindful of power relations and aware that social gender relations are kept in place by prevailing power structures that come out clearly in formal learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is depicted as having power? • What is the source of the power? • Who receives power? • What is the nature of the power? • How is power exercised? • How is power maintained and perpetuated? • How is power distributed? • What relational strengths do the lessons convey about males and females? • Do the lessons project healthy, mutual, and empowering relationships with and among females or between male and females? • Do lessons portray girls' talents, strengths and assets? • Do they give girls healthy power and control? • How do lessons illustrate weave a relational perspective? 	<p>Lessons involving difficult and vague scientific names, hard formulas, and complex definitions were predominantly recorded by male teachers, which reinforced the notion that complex subjects are exclusively the purview of males.</p> <p>Teachers' voices are the only sounds in all the SOA lessons, thus portraying them as sole repositories of knowledge.</p> <p>Generic roles like president and governor were constantly designated by male pronouns, which implied that only men have this kind of power.</p>
4	<p>Use of Language The language used in speaking and writing is one of the most subtle ways of expressing gender biases.</p> <p>Since everyone is socialized within a language tradition, most of the forms of speech and writing learn have acquire a firm place in the traditional heritage to the extent that they appear natural.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What images of boys, girls, men, and women are created using the language? • Is there use of strength-based language for boys or girls or any contrast? • Do SOA lessons value diversity? • Are cultural language barriers evident in SOA lessons? • In what ways do the lessons reference or adapt cultural knowledge of the communities to which female students belong? 	<p>Male teachers tended to use difficult formulas and complex economic terms and definitions in their lessons, thus reinforcing the idea that hard numerical and income productivity-based subjects are an exclusively male domain.</p> <p>The COVID-19 SOA program was broadcast only in the English language, which is of concern because use of the mother tongue in education and minimal proficiency in English is common among students in remote and rural schools</p>
5	<p>Teacher behavior Teachers are often role models for their students and usually students consider them to be are right and wise. The behaviour of the teacher therefore helps reinforce the hidden curriculum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To whom does the teacher ask questions (in terms of gender)? • What situations does the teacher knowingly or unknowingly use to call attention to the gender of students? 	<p>Teachers deliver lessons at a fast pace and do not engage with questions on-air or pause to give students time to reflect.</p>

Table B.2. Teacher representation in SOA transmissions by gender

SUBJECT	NO. OF ELESSONS	MALE TEACHERS	FEMALE TEACHERS
Math	9	8	1
Physics	10	10	0
Agricultural Science	7	5	2
Economics	10	7	3
Commerce	8	6	2
Literature	7	0	7
English	7	0	7
Government	7	7	0
Biology	7	2	5
Chemistry	8	3	5
Total	80	48	32

Notes

1. The Guardian online. October 17, 2021 edition. <https://guardian.ng/news/implement-safe-school-declaration-to-protect-us-coalition-begs-buhari/>.
2. Located in the South-West geopolitical zone, Oyo State is the 5th most populous of the 36 States of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; in 2016 its population was estimated at 7,840,864.
3. INEE Minimum Standards. See <https://inee.org/minimum-standards>.
4. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) estimates that in December 2020 2.7 million people were living in displacement camps in Nigeria, due primarily to conflict and violence but also to flooding disasters. More than 56 percent of the total internally displaced population are children, of whom more than half are no more than 5-years old.
5. UNESCO (2020) estimated that 70 percent of countries in Africa deployed either TV-or radio-based distance education programs or some combination of both. TV-based programs were also actively deployed in countries across Europe and North America.
6. According to UNESCO (2020), distance learning interventions are difficult to carry out in remote and underprivileged areas that have little or no access to electricity, Internet, TV, or radio; previous crises have also proved that girls are disproportionately affected by school closures.
7. The Federal Ministry of Education and the Universal Basic Education Commission established a team for a joint education response to the COVID-19 pandemic which introduced a Learn at Home program that offered online resources, options for equity in teaching and learning channels to be adopted by states; and systems for tracking and monitoring resources made available for the purpose.
8. For primary students, the Oyo State Universal Basic Education Board launched an interactive radio instruction initiative, OyoSUBEB Learning-on-air, which aired lessons in the English language and mathematics twice a day Monday through Saturday.
9. A survey by the National Population Commission (NPC) to evaluate the performance of states in the Better Education Service Delivery for All project found a drop in out-of-school children in Oyo State to 272,847 representing 12% of school-age children (NAN 2020).
10. Inaugural address by His Excellency Seyi Makinde, executive governor of Oyo State, at his swearing in ceremony at the Obafemi Awolowo Stadium, Ibadan, on May 29, 2019. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/ssouth-west/332545-for-the-record-full-text-of-oyo-state-governors-inaugural-speech.html>.
11. SOA continued to broadcast even after the reopening of Oyo State schools on September 21, 2020.
12. See "Oyo revolutionizes education through launch of 'school on air'" in Megalcon Magazine (April 23, 2018) at <https://megaiconmagazine.com/8625-2/>.
13. Gender responsiveness in education is premised on the notion of the gendered nature of the societies in which schools or education programs operate, which in turn must be understood before the goal of education for all can be realized. This principle applies whether or not there is an emergency as different trends, patterns, and levels of participation in education are observed by all school children during crises. For girls and boys to access education during crises, interventions must address the causes of differences in the context of specific crises.
14. A survey by the NESG found that seven states reported not offering any learning alternative amidst COVID-19: Bauchi, Bayelsa, Benue, Cross-river, Gombe, Plateau, and FCT.
15. It is common for children in Oyo State to engage in vegetable production and other agricultural activities because their parents demand they contribute to family income (Oyeyinka et al. 2013).

16. Enrollment in skills acquisition programs among female and male focus group participants stood at 3:1.
17. The National Policy on Education (2013) specifies English as the primary language of instruction in Nigerian schools.
18. Perhaps due to the bi/multilingual method of education stated in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013) or simply due to the strong beliefs that parents, teachers and students in Oyo State are said to hold about the pedagogical and sociocultural relevance of the use of the mother tongue in education (Ezeokoli and Ugwu 2019), mother tongue instruction is common in Oyo public schools, especially those that are remote and rural.
19. Private tutoring in different school subjects is a common phenomenon among school children in Oyo State.
20. According to the Forum for African Women Educators (FAWE), any written, visualized, or broadcast (spoken) text contains a gendered perspective that mirrors the reality of what is written, spoken about, or visualized. Therefore, beyond gaining technical skills, children also learn generally how the world is constructed from a school text—including written, visualized, or broadcast spoken text. To illustrate further, because the world painted in school texts, narratives, and the classroom is inhabited by women, men, boys and girls, school presents a gendered picture of the world.
21. During the pandemic, participants of the study would have been in SS2 and SS1 classes.
22. When one-on-one interviews were conducted, it had been more than a year after the program started and more than nine months since schools had reopened.
23. Though no specific records could be obtained for Oyo State, press releases of national performance statistics in the 2020 WAEC May/June results show a 65 percent pass rate, up from the 64 percent pass rate in English Language and Mathematics seen in 2019.
24. The relationships and inequalities between women and men, boys and girls in the state were thus not actively examined systematically to unpack the differences in real trends, patterns, and participation of male and female students in schooling and the causes of such differences, particularly during the crisis (Leach 2003).
25. It was shown in a study by Howe (1997) that girls were three times as likely as boys to ask for help from the supervising adult. In the absence of an adult, girls directed their pleas for assistance to boys.
26. A term often applied connotatively in school settings to refer to students who are not serious about learning and conveying the idea that back aisles or sections of a classroom are areas of inattentiveness.
27. EiE WGN Strategy 2018: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/30092018_nga_education_sector_strategy.pdf.
28. Minutes of the EiE WGN Meeting, Thursday 6 July 2017, Save the Children Offices, Maiduguri - Borno State. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/borneo_state_education_in_emergencies_working_group_meeting_minutes_-_6_july_2017.pdf.
29. Records provided by the Oyo Ministry of Education were merely records of enrollment in six secondary schools for 2020 and 2021, disaggregated by sex.
30. For example, in Lithuania, the national broadcast station put together interactive homework challenges that encouraged school children to actively participate and enabled evaluation by allowing them to record themselves and send their videos for teachers to evaluate.
31. Narratological analysis is an approach to analysis of gender-responsive content developed by the Forum for African Women Educationalists.



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