

**MODIBBO ADAMA UNIVERSITY, YOLA,
ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA**

**WE WILL HAVE OUR SAY: EDUCATION AND WORK FOR YOUNG
WOMEN IN NORTHERN NIGERIA**

DAUDA MOSES AND SAFIYA ADAMU

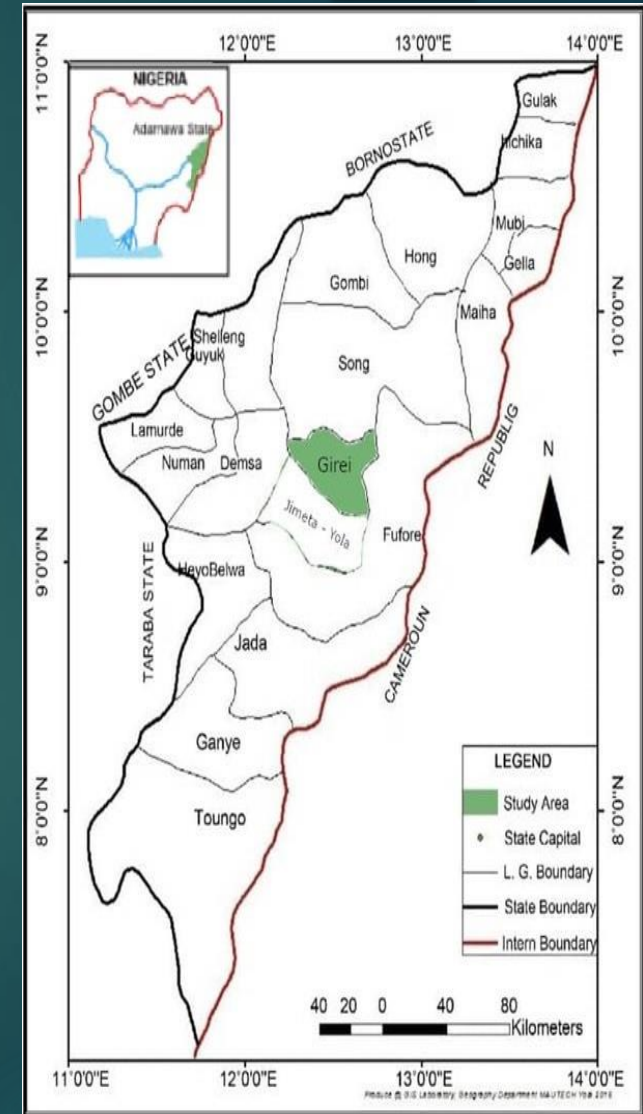
WE-SAY: Youth, Gender and Education: Changing landscapes of work in rural Sub-saharan Africa

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The Context - Girei, Adamawa State, Northern Nigeria

- Adamawa is in the north of Nigeria, on its eastern border with Cameroon
- Ethnically diverse - major ethnic groups are Hausa-Fulanis, Batas, Bachamas, Higgi, Margi, Kilba, Gude and Mbula.
- High unemployment (15-20%)
- Most women (and men) are subsistence farmers; many also involved in trading / petty trading
- Access to schooling is difficult, especially for girls
- Schools are ill-equipped, underfunded and understaffed
- This research was conducted in a predominantly Muslim community in Girei, Girei Local Government Area.



The Research

- The research involved a series of workshops using participatory visual methods and life history interviews
- The workshops used a mix of English and local languages, mainly Hausa and Fulfulde, and were led by researchers from Modibbo Adama University, Yola, including two female youth researchers
- The co-researcher participants (CRPs) were 14 Muslim young women in Girei, and 14 Christian women in Numan
- All were 18 yrs or over, the majority were married and had children.
- This presentation draws on the LHIs of the CRPs in Girei
- Six Girei CRPs had completed secondary education, although ALL had breaks in their education, because of marriage and child bearing.



Key Messages

- 1. Young women shoulder a large burden of reproductive and other work
- 2. They are routinely required to work in the home and for the household, in school, and in paid work
- 3. Combining education with reproductive and other work is a major challenge – and is punctuated with multiple forms of gender violence



Young women's work *in* the home

- **All CRPs did domestic chores, typically sweeping, cleaning, washing dishes, laundry, childcare for younger siblings, cooking when older, often before going to school.**
- **This domestic work *intensifies* with marriage:**
 - *...I do this work every day for over 25 years now, there has been no day I skipped the work. .. now that I have children, it seems like the work is increasing though my children assist me with some of the chores before they leave for school. G1 Amara, p.9*



Young woman's work *outside* the home, *for* the household

➤ Young women's unpaid work in support of the household can also routinely include farm work/fetching water

- .. in the morning when I wake up from bed, I will take the cows out for grazing. After I return, I will fetch water from a nearby borehole to fill all the empty drums in the house [...] we also take corn for processing at the grinding engine for consumption in the home. And anytime my mother doesn't want us to take it to the grinding machine, she will supervise while we pound the corn in the mortar. G8 Amoh, p.5

Work in School

- **Most CRPs did unpaid work at school - sweeping the compound, picking up litter, weeding and farming**
 - *We cleaned and picked loitered papers in the school environment and every Thursday; we sweep the school premises G11 Maisha, p.2*
- **Unpaid work in school included farm work done *for grades***
 - *Some teachers especially the agricultural science teachers will insist that we work on their farmland, and plant vegetables for them. When it produces, they teachers will ask us to harvest it for them still and they will leave with everything. **They use it to grade us**, if the portion of land that you planted produced well, you will be given good grade. and if your portion did not do well, you will not be given good grade. G12 Rabi, p.4*

Young women and paid work

- Half the CRPs had paid jobs from their early life e.g. hawking, plaiting hair, knitting
 - *We also had to hawk so we can get money to buy toiletries and clothes. G3 Amina2, p.3*
- Although often in the informal economy, almost all Girei CRPs now had some form of paid work – ranging from teaching, online business, tailoring, rearing of animals, doing chores in others' homes



Young women facing gender violence – in the home

➤ Young women faced expectations of marriage from puberty

- *Before I finished Junior Secondary School 1, my father brought out his wish to get me married... he insisted that I should be married off, saying that none of my elder sisters stayed up to my age then in his house. G3 Amina, p.9*

➤ Patriarchal norms reverberated through family relations

- *[my mother] now told me that I should please marry the husband that my father gave to me and if I am in my husband's house I should please keep to my conjugal vows and obligations. I should not treat my husband with contempt.. G2 Aisha Mohammed, pp.17-18*

Patriarchal authority – stop schooling.. marry

➤ Some fathers made their daughters stop schooling and marry

- *He doesn't care (...) our age. He will marry us to his friends and their children. I was the only daughter who attempted rejecting his proposal. He complained that I refused to stay at my husband's house. He said I was doing that because I attended school and that it was the problem with the school. He said those who didn't go to school among us were obedient to him but not me. G6 Ramatu p.7*

➤ Of the 10 Girei CRPs who were married, 7 had married at their father's insistence, 9 had left school because of marriage or pregnancy

Young women facing gender violence - in school

➤ Young women arriving late at school (often because of domestic work) are disciplined

- *Any time I arrive the school late, I was punished: they will beat me, cause me to do frog jump etc. The school authority kept saying they don't care with my marriage because according to them "their school was not meant for married people".. G3 Amina, p.10*

➤ Young women are also subject to sexual harassment

- *... the other teachers kept assuming I was single so they kept making advances on me. G1 Amara, p.6*

Young women facing gender violence in paid work

- **When younger, many CRPs were involved in hawking, although this was recognized as problematic**
 - *Hawking corrupts children, it exposes them to wild life style. G8 AMohammed p.3.*
- **Some young women engaging in paid work face censorship by their community**
 - *I do online business and meet with customers from time to time but our community are divided over this. Some felt you are too exposed; some feel you are wayward. G3 Maisha, p.12*

Young women combine marriage, childbearing and schooling

- **Marriage and childbearing had halted schooling for 9 out of 10 of those who were married - BUT six of these had returned to schooling**
 - *I was married off to one of my relatives before I finished JSS 2. My husband was kind enough to allow me to continue with the school. I gave birth to my first child when I was about to finish JSS 3. I was 16 years then. After giving birth, I stopped going to school **for long**. G3 Amina, p.9 [now working as teacher]*
- **After marriage, Amara re-enrolled in school with the support of her husband and father, had children while at school, later also became teacher**
 - *.... in Senior Secondary School 3 (SSS3) I put to bed [entered labour], the same period I was writing examination, so it was tough for me because the next day after birth, I had examination. G1 Amara, p.6*

Patriarchy untroubled?

➤ Re-entry to school was still only possible with the support of the husband and wider family. This support was not always there.

- *It was after I married that I started school, that was when my husband's parent insist that I should be removed from the school, and whenever my husband go to his parents' house, they will quarrel him. If our children go, they will be hostile to them, that was the routine and he became tired and had to remove me from the school.*

G8 AMohammed, pp.5-6

Conclusion

Young women in Girei face **overwhelming burdens** of unpaid work - in the home, in support of the home, in school - along with paid work

Young women face multiple forms of **gender violence** – in the home, in school, and in their paid work

These multiple forms of gender violence make young women's access to education **extremely difficult**

Early marriage /childbearing halts schooling for many, but some **persist** and **complete their education** – but only possible with **male support**