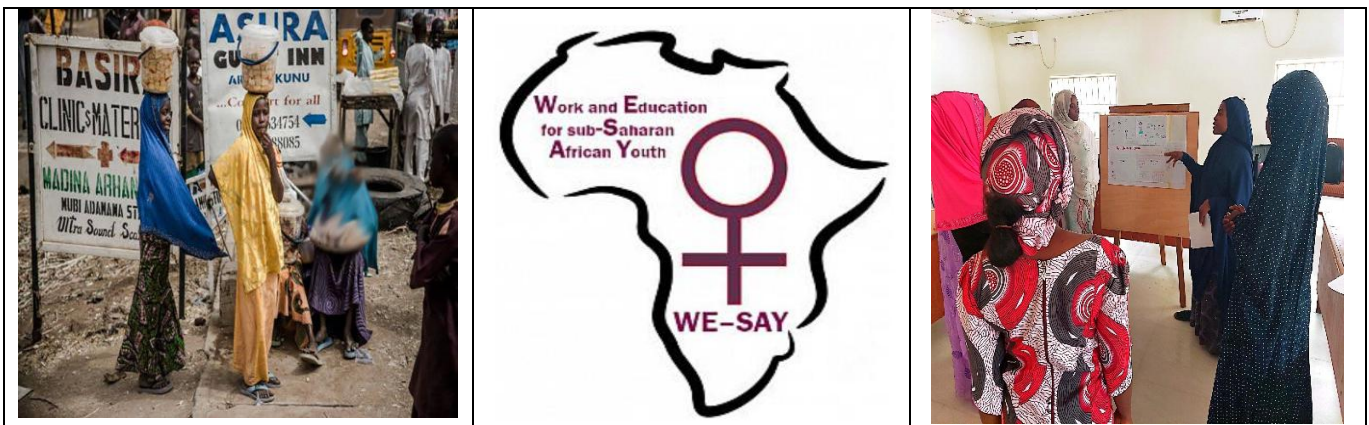


Youth, Gender and Education: Changing Landscapes of Work in Rural Sub-Saharan Africa (WE-SAY)

Follow Up Study - Nigeria

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Introduction

This research project explored the intersections of work and education in the livelihoods and imagined futures of rural female youth in different contexts of Nigeria and South Africa, the two largest economies of Sub-Saharan Africa. It had an explicit focus on young rural women's agendas for change with respect to work and education. The project was led by Professor Barbara Crossouard, Centre for International Education, University of Sussex, UK, in collaboration with Professor Máiréad Dunne (CIE) and in Nigeria by Professor Dauda Moses (Modibbo Adama University, Yola). It was funded by the British Academy within its Youth Futures programme, as part of the UK's Global Research Challenges Fund. The project commenced in March 2020 and after suspension of fieldwork because of Covid-19, concluded in May 2023.

The project was known by the acronym WE-SAY (Work and Education for Sub Saharan African Youth). It addressed the following questions:

- How do female youth in rural contexts of Sub Saharan Africa understand 'work' and what significance does this have within their lives and imagined futures?
- How have female youth navigated the demands of work and education?
- What are female youths' agendas for social change with respect to work and how their work is valued?

The research in Nigeria was conducted in two rural contexts of Adamawa State. This is a context in which there is high poverty and deep gender inequalities, both in education and in work. In a largely rural economy, women are mostly engaged in agriculture and petty trading. Around half the population is Muslim, alongside 40% who are Christian, and others following traditional religions. The main ethnic groups are Hausa-Fulanis, alongside Bachamas and Batas. The region has been affected by high levels of insecurity, kidnapping and banditry, with a state of emergency in place since 2013 (see Dunne et al, 2013; 2017). Overall, this is a context of high levels of poverty and precarity, where young women typically have no voice, do not complete schooling, and where early marriage is prevalent (for fuller discussion, see Crossouard et al, 2025)

The fieldwork in Nigeria was led by Professor Dauda Moses, Modibbo Adama University, Yola and was supported by Safiya Adamu as project youth researcher. The project drew on participatory visual methods (PVM) and life history interviews. An extended series of PVM workshops supported two groups of female youth in interrogating the difficulties young women face in combining education and work and in developing their collective agendas for social change. Fourteen women were involved from each context. One group was from

Girei and was Muslim; the other group was from Numan and was Christian. After series of PVM workshops, the young women collectively presented their agendas for change at different community events. The first of these happened in their separate communities and were attended by local leaders. The second was conducted jointly by both groups of women and included local leaders from both communities and an additional state level figure (Permanent Secretary for Women's Affairs, Yola). The community leaders included those working in education, the police, youth leaders, and religious leaders (both Muslim and Christian). For key insights from the research see Crossouard et al (2025) and Dunne et al (2026)

Internal funding from the University of Sussex supported follow-up research to explore the impact of the project for those involved as co-researcher participants (CRPs) in the Northern Nigerian context, as well as on their wider communities. This follow-up study was conducted in 2025, two years after the end of the project. Eight CRPs from each context participated in separate focus group discussions (FGDs). Eight individual semi-structured interviews were conducted, involving three education leaders, one from a primary school in Numan and a secondary head teacher in Numan and Girei, a religious leader and a youth leader from each community, and the policy figure based in Yola (Permanent Secretary for Women's Affairs). Two CRPs also accompanied Professor Moses when conducting these interviews. All of those interviewed had participated in the earlier community events. With participants' permission, interviews and FGDs were recorded and selectively transcribed.

Questions in the FGDs explored CRPs' perspectives on the research and how it had affected their lives with respect to education, family life and work. Interviews with the community leaders explored their views of the research, any changes in the community arising from it, as well as perspectives on what still needed to change. The interviews also took up commentary these leaders had made in the earlier community events on actions they would take forward after hearing about the research. The analysis of these interviews is presented below. Excerpts from the FGDs in Girei and Numan are attributed by G and N respectively. We begin by addressing participants' perspectives on the WE-SAY research.

1. Perspectives on WE-SAY research

Both the CRPs and the community leaders in both communities were very positive about the research. CRPs noted how the research had given them a sense of voice and a realisation that their views counted, with some invoking discourses of empowerment:

Young women's voices matter and they now feel heard by community leaders, family, and institutions. [...] The research gave confidence, exposure, and empowerment to young women. (G1, Amara, p.8)

The important message is that young women have say, and they need to be listened to. (G12, Rabi, p.13)

I didn't know that young women can voice out their pain until we had this research. We young women voice out and had our voice heard. This has been one of our achievements from this research and I am very happy. The research has really helped us. (N4, Caroline, p.9)

I learnt from the research that young women have a say; we have a say. Before this research, I felt our voice would not be heard but after this research I know that my voice is important and can be heard. (N11, Gunoshi, p.9)

All recognised that participation in the research had been important for them. Some noted how the research had given them a new sense of themselves and changed how they could relate to wider society:

I gained more courage and boldness to speak in public (N4, Caroline, p.7)

The research has impacted me personally such that I can now talk publicly without being shy or scared. I was able to achieve this because you encouraged and motivated us. We met with so many people, men of honour, people in positions that we would not have had the opportunity to meet and speak before them. This research gave me the platform to express myself. (N11, Gunoshi, p.1)

Others spoke of gaining new knowledge, e.g. about girl's education or how young women can combine work with education. As reported further below, others noted how it had changed their relationships in their family and in the community, reflecting a changed, more equal gender positioning:

the issue of men dominance pointed out in our action brief have reduced very well and I am very happy about it. (N3, Humpiya, p.11)

There is a reduction in gender discrimination, young men and young women are treated equally. (G10, Hassana, p.9)

both young men and young women have equal opportunities and are treated equally without discrimination. (G12, Rabi, p.10)

Several CRPs spoke of continuing to work as advocates for young women in their communities. While very positive, there was also acknowledgement that more still needed to be done, which we return to below.

Community leaders also commented positively on the research, noting how it had reflected local life accurately, and how they had learned from it:

I was happy because it is one of the best youth research projects that I have attended so far, the exhibitions, the drawings depict the reality we are facing. (Youth Leader Girei, p.6)

The research is very educative; I gained a lot of knowledge from the research. (Chief Imam Girei, p.1)

The research was superb, my overall impression is there a lot of awareness that has been created most especially regarding young women's work and education, rights.. [..] I felt so delighted to have participated in that research, I felt it was an avenue to give our young women a sense of belonging in the community. The outcome of the research will definitely place the young women where they are supposed to be. (Youth Leader Numan, p.9)

First of all, I want to thank you for the research, I feel very happy about the research. There have been a lot of changes since we had the youth summit. The research is impactful and action brief is very rich. (Senior HT Numan, p.22)

The Permanent Secretary for Women's Affairs recognised the relevance of the research for her, and how it had reflected well the 'patriarchal society' in which they lived:

Basically, if you look at it on that day I was very impressed. I am very impressed as it is something that affects women and adolescent girls. [..] they presented so many cases [showing how] the patriarchal society that we find ourselves in doesn't even consider that everything is either on the girl, or on the woman - even the teacher or the school sometimes doesn't look at that. So because they presented it, I picked interest in it so I was like this research will really make sense if only we can work with them to see that we really look into it, to see how we can find solution to that. (Permanent Secretary Women's Affairs, p.2)

The research also invited participants to discuss what had changed in the community as a result of the research, which we now address, starting with life in the home.

2. Perspectives on change in life in the home

The research had highlighted the high levels of domestic work that young women did from an early age and how this was routinely seen as women's work, something that had to be done before they could go to school. Most of the CRPs in both Girei and Numan reported that this had changed since the research, with more men taking up some of the domestic chores, as well as contributing more to other family commitments, including education:

As a result of this research, both young women and men all do house chores, I don't say a particular house chore is for the man while the other is for young women. We all do the same house chores. (G1, Amara, p.4)

There have been great changes in my home because my husband assists in doing house chores now. If I am away from the home for a long period, he cooks before I

return home and also fetches water to fill the drums when the water. (G7, Habiba, p.6)

.. what I observe is that the men have changed and are now assisting us with work at home. For instance, before this research, all the house chores were left for the women alone to handle. Even to wash his clothes, the man waits and expects his wife to do it. The man expects the woman to wash his clothes, the children's clothes, her own clothes, cook for the family, wash the dishes and provide for the family. But after the research, some of the men now assist with some of the house chores, they even contribute now in the payment of the children school fees. These were possible as a result of the awareness we created during and after the research. So, the research really helped. (N3, Humpiya , p.6)

here in Numan, house chores were perceived to be primarily women's role in the home, men were not supportive but after the research, there are changes in most households, young men are now contributing to domestic chores. (N1, Gunoshi, p.11)

For Pretty (N9), the change was a new division of labour that she welcomed, where she let now stayed at home to take care of cooking, with men now doing farm work:

now there is division of labour. For instance, previously I go to farm but now I no longer go to farm, I stay back at home and do the cooking for them. It is the men that go to farm now. (N9, Pretty, p.11)

However, there were also comments that not all men contributed (see below on what still needs to change). This was echoed in the community leaders' views, which pointed to some changes, but suggested a more mixed picture. In the excerpts below, we see a 'traditional' division of labour remaining relatively untroubled:

On the aspect of the work young women do at home, you cannot separate a young woman from house chores, though there are changes, they are not burdened with work in the home like before. And they the young women have devised means of completing their task on time. (Youth Leader Girei, p.8)

[the research] shows that young women can combine work and education and house chores with business if I am not mistaken. There was an illustration of a young woman who was overwhelmed with house chores, yet it did not stop her from going to school and studying. So, you see it does not stop young women from fulfilling their responsibilities at home. If it does, we would have heard about it from the young women and even the men would have complained bitterly about it. (Chief Imam, Girei, p.8)

That one [domestic labour] should be so, because even me as enlightened as I am, I believe that women take care of the domestic activities in the home. Though as a man you can support with some of the house chores. (Youth Leader, Numan, p.12)

On the issue of young women coming late to school because of home chores is due to the laziness of the young women. We tell parents that young women need attention. In some houses, house chores are shared among young women and men. I am of the opinion that house chores should be shared among young men and young women. (Senior HT, Numan, p.24)

Importantly, while some changes are suggested, women are still charged with the responsibility for managing their domestic duties, and how they combine this with schooling. This is seen as rightful.

The research had also illuminated other important concerns with respect to home life, such as gender hierarchies that prevented women from going to school, women being beaten in the home for not fulfilling domestic duties, being forced into marriage, and then, once married, being required to fulfil 'conjugal duties'. While less recurrent than commentary on changes with respect to domestic duties, CRPs and the community figures also commented on these concerns, in largely positive ways. With respect firstly to attending school, CRPs (from Girei in particular) noted some change in the extent husbands and fathers were willing to accept this, support married women in going to or returning to school, and to accept that young women (either the CRP herself or her children) to travel away from the family to pursue tertiary education:

As a result of this research, I returned to school because my parents stopped me from going to school. I was in JSS3 when I got married, after getting married, my husband and his parents stopped me from going to school. When I joined this research, I was always briefing my husband what I learnt and the things we were doing, this made him to agree and permit me to continue with my studies. (G7, Habiba, p.4)

Young women are allowed to go to school freely without any restriction; also, young women are allowed to go to school while married. (G10, Hassana, p.10)

Before the research, my father will not accept I go far from home to study... He was impressed [by the research] and has permitted me to even go to another State to study. (G14, Zainab, p.5)

... there have been a change in our school courtesy of this research, young women now go to school without much persuasion on the parents to allow them to go to school, this is as a result of the awareness that was created and this has increased the number of girl child enrolment in our schools. (N3, Humpiya, p.6)

As noted earlier, a CRP from Numan shared that her husband also now contributed to paying school fees for their children, which had not happened in the past (see more below on changes with respect to schooling).

With respect to marriage, while early marriage was raised as an ongoing concern, some commentary noted less pressure for young women to marry:

In the aspect of early marriages, it has reduced too, now the choice is left for the young woman to make. (G14, Zainab, p.16)

At home, young women are no longer pressured to get married. (G4, Madina, p.10)

Accepting that women had a voice was also relevant for earlier expectations that women had an obligation to fulfil their 'conjugal duties':

.. when I return and I am tired, even when my husband wants to perform his conjugal duty, if I explain to him that I am tired, he understands and allows me to rest, unlike before when he will insist. (G4, Madina, p.10)

Commentary from community leaders similarly suggested some changes in how women were treated in the home. At the same time, some saw family life as something that could not be interfered with, as with this commentary on family restrictions on young women's mobility:

Sometimes these restrictions are measures carried out to regulate certain behaviours of young women in the family. So, you cannot actually predict or interfere in issues like this without knowing the reasons they are restricted from going out. When you know the reason why they are restricted, then you can advise but you cannot just interfere like that. (Religious leader Numan, p.19)

Another - with a significant role in education - invoked 'culture and tradition' as something that lay beyond change and simply had to be respected:

That thing cannot be changed. Whatever the society must abide by our culture and tradition. (Senior School HT Girei, p.16)

There was more encouraging engagement with change by the Permanent Secretary for Women's Affairs (PSWA) who noted that since the research, she had put pressure on the State Governor to sign the Child Rights Act:

.. after then we really had to push on this Child Right Act the way I have said; the governor signed it then what remained is the awareness. There is no way that you will begin to take action on somebody that did not know about it. That's what we do now when we go to field: awareness. (PSWA, p.2)

She acknowledged the support of the research in making these arguments, but went on to emphasise the size of Adamawa State and the need for ongoing, wider 'sensitisation' on these issues. Much more remained to be done.

Overall, while many comments on positive change with respect to young women's experiences in the home are to be welcomed, the commentary of the community leaders suggest a somewhat circumspect picture, where women are still seen primarily as having responsibility for domestic labour and wider arguments for change still had to be made.

3. Perspectives on change in schooling /education

We noted above that change in the family included depictions of a more equal division of domestic labour in the home as well as more support in families (particularly by men) for young women going to school. These were reported as leading to renewed engagement in schooling by some CRPs and more widely, to higher enrolment.

I concentrate more in my studies, thereby understanding what I am taught... before the research, I was not even going to school, it was as a result of this research that I developed an interest in going to school. (G7, Habiba, p.7)

... the rate of enrolment of young women to schools has increased and young women who come to school late are not punished for coming late like it was previously, coming late to school by young women has reduced too because the young men now assist with house chores since there is division of labour in the home. (N11 Gunoshi, p.11)

Increased enrolment was also noted in Girei by Hasana:

There have been tremendous changes in the enrolment of young women into school. (G10, Hasana, p.16)

The research had contributed to wider awareness about the importance of schooling and this was supporting some older women in returning:

with the awareness that we are creating as a result of this research, more households are now supporting the girl child education, even young women who are over forty years old are now going back to school to gain education. There is a young woman in my community who is about 43 years old who has gone back to school as a result of this awareness. She is in Junior Secondary School 3. (N5, Grovice, p.5)

CRPS also reported that young women's domestic situation was being given more consideration in schools, so that they were no longer punished in the same way, such as having to do frog jumps if arriving late:

On the aspect of discipline and how our children are punished, young men are punished differently from young women, they are not punished or disciplined the same way. So, after the research, the way they are disciplined has greatly changed,

young women are given consideration and are disciplined lightly .. young women are being considered even when they come late to school. (G1, Amara, p.6)

Young women were also reported as feeling safer at school, which was leading to better outcomes and reduced drop-out:

they [young women] don't fear rape, they feel safe in schools and can now focus on studies since school labours has reduced drastically. Teachers now treat young women with respect in schools and as a result, young women perform better and don't leave school any how like before. (N5, Grovice, p.11)

As reported before, some of the CRPs (particularly in Girei) were now working as teachers themselves, so CRP commentary included how they had changed their own teaching practices after the research:

In school we teach the young women how to take care of themselves. We talk about how young women were raped in our research previously, now we teach them how to take care of themselves in the aspect of dressing, putting on appropriate clothing because indecent dressing is one of the causes of rape. (N11, Gunoshi, p. 11)

A critique of the research raised in the community dialogues was its focus only on young women. The quote above suggests how responsibility for rape is still being seen as lying in the court of women, rather than addressing wider cultural norms and the extent that these tolerate male sexual violence.

Community leaders confirmed many of the CRPs' accounts about changes with respect to schooling. Enrolment was described as having increased significantly by HTs of Numan primary and secondary schools:

Over forty to fifty young women have returned to school. There is a school (Pare Girls Secondary) that over 70 young women that left school returned to school as a result of this research. (Primary HT Numan, p.2)

..we got a great outcome, especially on the aspect of young women returning to school. Before now, we use to have 50 to 60 students but now we have more than 200. When you go to school you will see them. We did a lot of sensitization and awareness campaign. This is possible through this research. (Secondary HT Numan, p.24)

Other commentary focused on changes with respect to disciplining of female students, increased security at school, pregnancy rates and treatment of married/pregnant women:

Immediately after the Youth summit I summon the school management and intimated them on the issues and problems concerning girls in the school. So we drew up a scale of preference to cater for such issues and we were able to trim down

the type of punishments to be meted on female students. We moved away from beating girls at random to sweeping, cleaning after lessons, or make them to stand during lessons for some classes. (Senior School HT Girei, p.16)

Early pregnancy has reduced to 0% because of the activities of the security committee in schools. We also now admit married women and we direct teachers to treat them differently from unmarried ones. She should be considered because of her pregnancy. (Senior School HT Girei, p.16)

... instead of asking a young woman who is pregnant in school to leave, she should be counselled and given the opportunity to continue with her education even after she has put to bed. (Religious Leader Numan, p.19)

This Christian leader also reported that pregnant women were now being allowed to sit examinations, which had not happened before. Change was also reported by the Chief Imam in Girei with respect to how education was valued:

... it [education] improves her knowledge, and this knowledge improves family value and life, and community life. So, as a result of this benefit of young woman's education, we have suggested to the Muslim Council not to stop preaching this message and if a young woman is married, she should continue with her education. Let her husband and parents assist her in her education pursuit. Also, when the young woman is educated, the upbringing of her children, will also be improved, and it is not compulsory that she must have a white-collar job after studying. Education improves the quality of life. (Chief Imam Girei, p.3)

At the same time, he also pointed to the persistence of wider community values and residual poverty levels and how these impacted on children's education in this context:

... some parents (fathers) are not supporting their children's education, they are not going to school, if you said you will assist in buying school uniforms and writing materials for a child to go to school, and in the morning the child don't have what to eat, the child will not go to the school. This is the kind of problem and challenge we face and makes it difficult for us. If we can get financial assistance to support these children, it will go a long way in helping these children. (Chief Imam Girei, p.3)

4. Perspectives on change in work

CRPs reported that young women now had greater access to work previously done by men (e.g. mechanic and construction), following the research; there was less gender discrimination:

women are given more opportunities and chance in different offices to work. For instance, in mechanic workshops, women were not admitted to work there, even in construction women were discriminated against, they were not given opportunities to work there but now after the sensitization and awareness created as a result of

this research, young women are now allowed to work in these places (N3, Humpiya, p.7)

Previously there used to be discrimination in workplaces between young men and young women... this have reduced drastically, young women knows that they have the right to work. (G7, Habiba, p.9)

Change in the division of labour in the home was reported to be making it easier for women to combine house chores with work outside the home. There were now more women in places of authority in the community.

women find it easy to combine work with house chores because their husband helps them. It makes it easy. Our communities now include women in place of authority, in leadership positions in politics, some of the young women are now community heads, in our local governments, we now have female vice chairmen, so our deputy governor is a woman also. Thank God for such improvement. More women are being recognized and given leadership roles in our communities. (N5, Grovice, p.5)

In Girei, another reported that increased security was making it more possible for women to work outside the home, and that contacts made at the research community dialogues had facilitated her getting a placement:

There is an improvement in the security in our community. Youths have been gainfully employed. During the community dialogue, the Youth Leader... got a placement for job for me with an NGO. (G10, Hassana p.10)

CRPs also appreciated the opportunity to meet influential leaders (police, barristers, NGOs, professors) as part of the research. They also reported that they were more organized and had more confidence in conducting businesses.

What has changed personally are good relationship with people, it helped me communicate with people, through the research I have so many ideas of life and business, currently I sells grains, my perception on how young women are treated has changed. (N11, Gunoshi, p.6)

A lot of young women are now doing business; this have improved compared to before the research. (G4, Madina, p.9)

With the aid of this research, I am more organized than I was before the research, I schedule my activities and complete my tasks promptly which have improved the overall outcome of my work such as my business. (G1, Amara, p.8)

The community leaders also reported that young women were finding their voices at places of work and, that parents now supported young women in pursuing work. There as some

recognition that women could do the same jobs as men, although the commentary below also suggests the question of sexual harassment remains a 'big issue'.

you see this work; there is no place where it is specified that a particular position is for a man or woman. It is just people perception. There is even an adage that says "what a man can do, a woman can do better." Long before now, were there young women in the army? The answer is no. but now we have female soldiers and officers. So, it is people's perception. So, we are supposed to educate and enlighten people that there is no any specific work that was made for woman or man. The only work that is made specifically for woman from God is child birth. A woman gives birth to children while a man doesn't. so, it's just an issue of creating more awareness about it. There is no work a woman cannot do. The issue of sexual harassment is a very big one, you will find out that a young woman is qualified for a position but the "oga" [boss] will want to sexually exploit her before she is given the job to do. No, that is not good. Is it not what is happening at the senate today? With my position in the church, I can go to various offices to advocate and enlighten people on the need to stop sexual harassment and exploitation at places of work. (Religious Leader Numan, p.20)

Through sensitisation, we have achieved a lot, we have contributed a lot to the society after this research. We gave the society a dress code for women not to arouse the male counterpart. Now the female child can go out to work and the community now understands. Sexual favours at work has not totally reduced but there is need for more awareness and sensitisation among members of the community. (Senior School HT Girei, p.17)

When asked about the issue of sexual favours, there were calls for stronger policies, and more sensitisation, in recognition that this was simply part of local culture. Comments on this from education leaders seemed rather optimistic about this having been addressed, in ways that leave the male perpetrators strangely invisible:

... this research has addressed the gender injustice because young women are now enlightened. (Senior School HT Numan, p.24)

Through sensitisation, we have achieved a lot, we have contributed a lot to the society after this research. We gave the society a dress code for women not to arouse the male counterpart. Now the female child can go out to work and the community now understands. Sexual favours at work has not totally reduced but there is need for more awareness and sensitisation among members of the community. (Senior School HT Girei, p.17)

The PSWA agreed that there was a need for more sensitisation, noting that it was a difficult issue to address, because of the difficulty of women feeling able to speak out about it. She called for an explicit policy to address this:

There should be a policy that spells out that anyone caught with sexual harassment should be sacked. (PSWA, p.7)

Other community figures felt more was needed in the area of work, and that young women still required enormous support especially to start up their businesses. They were also identified as needing more financial support from husbands for maintaining the home.

... in the aspect of work at home, there are lots of area need to be addressed, young women still need assistance, financial empowerment to start up a business to be able to contribute financially in the home. There is also need for more sensitization of the men to assist with home chores and feeding of the family in the home and not leave every burden to the woman. Some men will leave their family hungry while they go out to eat good food and drink. Someone who has not eaten will not work, which work will they do? Young women need assistance and support in these areas of living together in the family. (Chief Imam, Girei, p.3)

While there was concern to make husbands aware that young women could work outside the home, e.g. in an office, a key aspect of this argument was to provide reassurance that this would not affect fulfilment of their duties at home:

On the aspect of young women who work in the offices, there is a need to sensitize men that when a young woman works in the office, it does not stop her from doing her work at home, young women can combine both works effectively. (Chief Imam, Girei, p.3)

He also noted (see earlier excerpt) that if the reverse was the case, he would have heard men 'complain bitterly' about it. Here while change is accepted with respect to women's work, it is still assumed they will find ways to complete their domestic duties.

On the aspect of the work young women do at home, you cannot separate a young woman from house chores, though there are changes, they are not burdened with work in the home like before. And they the young women have devised means of completing their task on time. (Chief Imam Girei, p.8)

5. Perspectives on change in the community

CRPs noted a range of changes in the wider community, in which they were sometimes directly implicated. This included taking up community leadership teaching roles.

After the research, I as a co-researcher participant, my community leaders appointed me as leader of Muslim Council Women Youth and I was given the responsibility of a mediator of young women who cannot present their challenges before the community leaders. (G1, Amara, p.8)

She had also taken on more responsibilities as a teacher in the community:

Also, as a result of this research, I am much engaged with educating my community and teaching them how to read and write, before this research whenever the people in my community contact me to teach them how to read or write, I will complain that I am busy. But because of this research, I had to create time to attend to them. (G1, Amara, p.4)

In Numan, CRP commentary suggested that community leaders were giving more attention to the situation of young women, and including them more. They also suggested that rape cases were getting more attention:

... before the research, when a rape case is reported to the community heads, they blame the parents of the survivor thereby discouraging the parents or young woman from prosecuting the case further. But after the research rape cases are handled better and the survivors are given attention and the case is prosecuted further, thereby other survivors can now prosecute their case too. (N3, Humpiya, p.11)

Another pointed to increased activity by NGOs, in support of youth and young women's skills development:

There has been massive improvement in skill empowerment by NGOs in the community. The community got massive intervention in the areas of funding and housing. This has been as a result of this research that we had. The research has really impacted positively in our communities. My mother was empowered and my younger brother was empowered. Other people in the community were empowered too. (N4, Caroline, p.11)

For the community leaders in Girei, women's importance in the community was now more acknowledged:

... young women are very important in our community... I can recall one of the speakers saying that it is a young woman that helped him grow to his current status. (Chief Imam Girei, p.7)

6. What still needs to change

The interviews and FGDs also discussed what still needed to change. Responses to this temper some of the assertions reflected above, and suggest that change should be considered ongoing. We address this thematically, in the same sequence as before.

6.1 Family life

Although there were many reports of men contributing more to domestic chores, there was also commentary that this was not all men, and that more change was still needed. Some

CRPs felt that men could be more supportive with respect to young women's education and their work:

.. despite the man assists with house chores, I feel he needs to do more. (N4, Caroline, p.7)

The men need to continue taking responsibility and care of their wives and young women in the home, they need to do more. Young men need to allow young women to work even while married. (G10, Hassana p.9)

It was important to continue to educate parents, given their responsibility for the domestic division of labour in the home, as well as for young people's engagement with education.

At home parents need more enlightenment, they are the one to bring the change in home. House chores should be shared among all the children at home. There should be division of labour at home. (Senior School HT, Numan, p.26)

Community leader commentary on early marriage also pointed to this as an ongoing issue:

That early marriage still, we need it. We need additional enlightenment of the parents. (Senior School HT, Girei, p.15)

At times, community leaders' commentary on what needed to change was ambiguous.

For home chores, they [young women] should be encouraged and sensitized on the importance of learning or doing house chores. (Religious Leader, Numan, p.9)

Here it is difficult to understand where he sees young women's priorities ought to lie. The early commentary by other community leaders also suggested that CRPs' calls for domestic labour to be a more shared responsibility had not been fully grasped. The interviews suggest that four of those interviewed felt it was rightful for young women to have primary responsibility for this.

6.2 School

With respect to their education, CRPs expressed continued concerns about sexual harassment/violence in school, prompting calls for an end to 'sex for grades', more sensitisation of male teachers, sex education, more women teachers, and better security.

... teachers should stop sexual exploitation of young women in order to pass their courses; there should be a stop for sex for grades in schools. (G7 Habiba, p.9)

Male teachers should sensitize on sexual harassment (G7 Habiba, p.17)

we need more female teachers in our schools, we need teaching on sex education in our schools, we need more security in our schools so that the young women will not be scared of any harm such as rape. (N5 Grovice, p.5)

The need for additional security personnel was recognised by a head teacher:

We need more security personnel. They need to be motivated for them to be active, so active in the school. (Senior School HT, Girei, p.15)

It also seemed that married women were still not well treated in school, with one calling for an end to ‘bullying of young women in school especially the married ones’ (G14 Zainab, p.10).

More needed to be done to retain girls in school; two community leaders in Girei made arguments for girls-only schools:

My priority is that female education should be made separate from males’ education right from primary schools to the secondary schools. Females should be encouraged to study Sciences and become scientists so they can help females in solving their problems in life. We also need skill acquisition programs for girls and young women in the community. (Senior HT Girei, p 17)

My priority for change is institution of young women’s only school in my community. Another will be an institution that will focus only on training young women in the field of medicine so that they can attend to only women in the hospital. (Youth Leader Girei, p.9)

There were also calls for more change in attitudes to girls’ education on the part of teachers, as well as ‘traditional’ rulers and village heads.

the teachers need to do more in encouraging young women to study more and stay in school. (N3 Humpiya, p.7)

some of our traditional rulers and village heads that didn’t go to school and hold on to their traditional believes, still do not allow some of their girl child to go to school. They still believe that when a young woman goes to school she may deviate and indulge in prostitution. As a result, they prefer the young men to go to school rather than allowing the young women to go to school. Even in skills acquisition, they don’t support young women, they prefer to allow young men to go and learn skills. Our traditional rulers and villages heads need to be enlightened more on the need for young women to go to school and be educated. (N6 Mary, p.8)

The Permanent Secretary for Women’s Affairs also recognised the need for ongoing sensitisation in the community about the education (and work) of young women.

... we should continue creating the awareness and sensitization because it is a continuous process until the community understand that what they are doing is not good and allow the adolescent girls to go to schools and not giving them much work, and not beating them even in the school. Because sometimes they beat them just like

that because of their gender because they are women. You cannot beat a man like that. We need to continue the awareness until we see changes. (Permanent Secretary for Woman's Affairs, p.6)

Finally, there were calls from both CRPs and community leaders for increased material support for girls to attend school.

In schools, we want scholarships to be given to young women, it will encourage them to study hard and it will make our advocacy easier. (N5 Grovice, p.5)

Our students need more writing materials because it encourages them to study harder. (Senior School HT Numan, p.26)

For those that are already in school, one way to improve their lives is by supporting them with uniforms, books, pens, shoes and paying of the school fees of those that cannot afford it. (Religious Leader Numan, p.18)

The need for material improvements in school buildings was also highlighted, with one pointing out that *'the hostel also requires water and even solar and stable electricity and supply* (Senior School HT Girei, p.15.)

6.3 Work

CRPs highlighted that more still needed to be done to support women in gaining positions of authority.

We still need more women in place of authority; we still need them so we can be properly represented and work together with men to achieve our aim. (N5 Grovice, p.5)

Young women also need to be given equal opportunities to high offices and position. Most men think that young women do not deserve to also be in highly placed positions thereby frustrating and limiting the opportunities for the young women. (N11 Gunoshi, p.6)

Another felt this was the responsibility of young women themselves:

Some young women need to be encouraged to work hard in order to occupy certain positions in their place of work. Therefore, young women need to work harder to attain higher positions (N6 Mary, p.8)

Pretty also called for more 'financial empowerment' of young women, and this was echoed by community leader.

Young women need empowerment; financial empowerment and they need trainings in skill acquisition. (Senior School HT Numan, p.26)

The concerns voiced by CRPs about sexual harassment at work remained a live issue for one CRP and a school leader:

young women should be allowed to say their problems and challenges they face in their place of work, sexual harassment in workplaces need to stop. (G14 Zainab, p.9)

Sexual favours at work has not totally reduced but there is need for more awareness and sensitisation among members of the community. (Senior School HT Girei, p.17)

6.4 Community

From the perspective of several CRPs, provision of 'basic amenities' was an ongoing concern, and included a broad range of facilities:

.. we need the provision of basic amenities; we need boreholes, and more schools. We need the flooding that affects our communities to be controlled. (N9, Pretty, p.11)

Calls for more boreholes were linked to the concerns about sexual violence expressed above, which although reduced, was still a problem :

The issues of rape have reduced; previously, when young women are going to fetch water, they are raped on their way due to the lonely path and surrounding bushes because the boreholes are far from the residential houses. What I want to change is for new boreholes to be dug within the residential areas. (N4 Caroline, p.7)

The change [reduction in sexual violence] is not everywhere; there are some communities that don't attend to rape cases. There was this community where a six 6 years old girl was raped by a 40 year old man and nothing was done about it, here in Numan. (N4 Caroline, p.7)

We need to create more awareness and our community leaders need to do more [in response to rape of a young girl]. (N3 Humpiya, p.7)

For the same reasons, CRPs also called for restrictions on hawking and more awareness-raising.

Community leaders need to discourage street hawking, because young women are harassed and exploited sexually as a result of street hawking. (G14 Zainab, p.10)

Education of women also came into focus, whether in terms of change in the school curriculum to incorporate 'skills development' (G8 Madina) or through the development of 'skills acquisition centres':

More skills acquisition and empowerment centres where young women would learn and acquire skills should be built and equipped. (G14 Zainab, p.10)

For Amara (G1), skills and empowerment was also key, with NGOs seen as key to developing this:

Young women should be empowered by NGOs... Young women should be allowed to go out to do business ... if there are more empowerment centres that will empower young women with required skills. (G1 Amara, pp.7-8)

In addition, the community needed to provide more counselling support for young women:

.. there should be guidance and counselling centres for young women at state and local government level. (G1 Amara, p.8)

As noted earlier with respect to changes in woman's work, having more women in leadership positions was voiced as a concern of some CRPs:

we need more women in position of leadership in the community. (G10 Hassana, p.9)

Like the CRPs, more awareness-raising and 'sensitisation' was called for by community leaders. The Religious Leader from Numan noted that some communities beyond the church were difficult to reach out to:

[...], I didn't face any challenge in the church. It is only in the community that we faced challenges most especially from the people that are not educated. Some of the people in the village may even think that you want to make money from them and will resist any change that is coming. [...] it is not everybody that you call that will respond, especially those that are used to such kind of life and have accepted it as a way of life. Some of such people you have to be skillful and well trained, and devise a means of talking to them to convince them. Some may even demand for money or gifts from you before they can grant you audience. We encountered these challenges before we could have a breakthrough in some communities. (Religious Leader Numan, p.16)

At the level of the Permanent Secretary for Women's Affairs, there was open recognition that much more awareness-raising needed to be done across other communities; while the issues were common to all of the country, they had a distinctive character in the north:

We still have a lot of work to do. We still have to go to the community and identify some of the places that we have not visited, sensitize them and tell them the importance of education. When I interact with them you find out all the things identified by these young women in the youth summit you find out it is all round in the African context. Come to Nigeria, we the north it's different. So we need to identify some other communities we did not reach, go there. In addition go to the community you have visited, quantify the changes as it is a continuous process. (Permanent Secretary for Woman's Affairs, p.5)

7. Conclusions

The research was clearly important for the messages it had brought to the community. It had supported change at a personal level, allowing CRPs to find a voice in the home and in the community. It also supported some change in the gendered division of labour in the home; change in schooling either for themselves or for their children, change in their own professional practices in schooling; change in their work situation.

More widely, change was reported in how schooling was valued, with changed attitudes leading to increased enrolments. There was also some questioning of how young women were treated in school, reports of less use of corporal punishment, and more attention to the needs of married women. There were some changes with respect to women's work outside of the home, with more opportunities for women to do work previously reserved for men.

It is important all the same to be cautious about over-claiming – there was recognition in almost all of these areas by CRPS and the community leaders that ongoing work was needed. It was also important to bring the messages of the research to other communities/villages where 'traditional' beliefs were still firmly installed. The commentaries of the CPRs and of the community leaders also at times suggested that young women's position in their communities remained strongly gendered.

Overall, there is a clear need for more research into the conjunctures of education, work and family in this context. The community leaders themselves highlighted the need for a similar research project that included young men. The extent that any policy changes such as the adoption in Adamawa State of the Child Rights Act, might make a difference to the experiences of young people within these different communities would also be important to explore. So also is the question of what 'tradition' actually implies and what is being done when this is invoked to assert intransigence to change. Finally, research should examine the extent that gender itself remains coloured by the region's distinctive colonial past, particularly with respect to the education of girls.

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