Chapter 16

Girls’ Education and its Economic Contribution to Less Developed Countries: Niger Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines girls’ education in Niger, one of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) located in West Africa with one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. Hence, primary education is compulsory. The education system is open equally to boys and girls; however, the facts are that, the girls have fewer opportunities for primary school to six grades. Gender traditional roles and economic factors are a great set back to the girls’ education in the country. This chapter tries to investigate the complex relationships around the objectives and visions of parents and Government toward girls’ education.

INTRODUCTION

Republic of Niger has a population of 16,899,327 persons and largely young, 49,99% people are between 0-14 (years). (According to 2013 estimate by CIA July 2013). Niger’s population is characterized poor, illiterate and under nourished people and most of them live in rural areas. Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world with minimal government services and insufficient funds to develop its resource base. Hence a major challenge to the Government is how to ensure that both genders access equal education, because the lack of education opportunities can be a cause and effect of poverty. And gender gap is more to be pronounced in the country, as well as literate women to men is much lower in rural than urban, these inequities can be directly threatened the sustainable of the country’s development.

Although significant progresses have been made in the country, it is not sufficient because the administrative system has not worked in a decentralized way as yet in order to address the
gross inequities that marginalize part of society in rural areas.

This study aims at exploring the complexes and chaos affecting girls’ education in rural and urban areas and how these complexes hamper girls’ education and their employment. The study will also seek to explain how these challenges have an impact on the country’s development. This study mainly focuses on girls’ education in rural areas because majority of Nigerien people live in the rural areas and the girls in the rural areas are particularly disadvantaged compared to girls in the urban setting.

BACKGROUND

Education is defined as one of the key strategies to improve an individual’s wellbeing and society leading to economic development. In Niger, access to education improves slowly, girls’ education is linking within women traditional roles and other discriminations that continue to hamper girls’ education.

In these last decades there have been a number of encouraging trends in girls’ education by Government and Non-government Organizations as well as Civil society organizations. And there are many studies in this field conducted by Government and Non-Government Organizations such as, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), WORLD BANK, Human Rights Watch and others.

They fund the Government’s program and different researches toward education as well as community wellbeing and development and support the Government to offer equal education, leaning to girls’ education which is sometimes disregarded in the traditional society. There are also academic discipline researches such as Sociology, Economy and Education which explore female education and employment, and explain how investment in education especially of the girls can reduce poverty and provide enormous economic benefits.

There are several works which focused attention on girls and women rights as well as the social inequalities that emerged in the least developed countries, and continue to affect the development of these countries to the present day.

As such, Government of Niger every year reports about its “Full Poverty Reduction Strategy”, “analysis of child and women’s situation” that kind of research aims to explore how poverty handicaps girls’ education and women’s wellbeing in the country and the challenges to the development of the country.

There are United Nations’ reports about developing countries; there are those which deal mainly with the female’s situation in terms of different gender gaps and economy, female wellbeing and development.

There are other kinds of research on academics and independent researches which sometimes funded by Non-Government Organizations, with much emphasis like female education and roles in Developing Countries (King, 1993; Herz, 2004; Greene, 2013; Anker, 1982).

There are new papers from Non-Government Organization’ Websites and other Websites worldwide, that follow, comment and publish information about the young girls’ situation and women rights within the least developed countries, and give a brief overview of the importance of recognizing girls’ education and the importance of women rights in the society.

This study “girls’ education and its economic contribution to the Less Developed Countries – Niger case study-” describes girls’ education, their continuing economic contribution to family economic activities which hamper their education, and explains how much the community’s approach