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The Impact of Universal Secondary Education on Girl Child Enrolment and Retention in Secondary Schools in Okoro County, Nebbi District.

This is a report of a study carried out on the impact of Universal Secondary Education (USE) on girl child enrolment and retention in Okoro County in Nebbi district. USE which was thought to improve girl child enrolment and retention has not done much as fewer girls enrolled and were retained in USE schools in Okoro County. Parents preferred boys to girls when it came to secondary education; the girls were supposed to help out with domestic work which limited their schooling time and culturally, girls were considered good for marriage only and formal education was not seen as necessary by parents to prepare them for that. Yet one of the USE policy objectives is to eliminate gender, geographical, social and cultural disparities and inequalities. The study hence had as its major objective to evaluate the impact of USE on girl child enrolment and retention in USE schools in Okoro County in Nebbi district. The specific objectives of the study were to examine the impact of late entry in primary schools on girl child enrolment and retention, the extent to which girl child friendly facilities influence enrolment and retention of the girl child and the impact of sexual harassment on girl child enrolment and retention in USE schools in Okoro county.

The data were collected by administering questionnaires to teachers, SWTs/Matrons and female students. A focus group discussion was conducted with male students and interviews were conducted with parents and district education stakeholders to get alternative views. After data analysis the study discovered that although USE has improved girl child enrolment, the boys still enrolled in larger numbers than girls. Retention of the girl child is even worse as more than half the number enrolled in S.1 in 2007 dropped out before reaching S.4 in most of the schools studied. Late entry of the girl child in primary schools was the leading cause of poor enrolment and retention, sexual harassment came second and availability of girl child friendly facilities trailed. To improve girl child enrolment and retention in USE schools, the study recommended for an annual review of the USE policy positions in which the input and views of low level implementers (district education officials and teachers) should be sought.

Key Words: Universal Secondary Education, Girl Child Enrolment, Retention, Secondary Schools, Nebbi District.