

# Child Poverty: Poor Counterpart Funding as a Challenge to Completion Rate of Basic Education in Enugu State

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**Abstract:** It is an indisputable fact that the development of any nation is anchored on the level of accessibility to quality education by its citizens. Over the past decade, international communities have placed much energy on contributing at least a 20 percent improvement in child school enrolment without sufficient attention on retention and completion rates. Thus, 28.6% of the total populations of children (3-14) are dropouts. Primary school completion rates decreased from 88% in 2003 to 71% in 2008 slightly increased to 73.30% in 2010 and currently declined to 75% in 2020 in Enugu state. The dropout rates increases as age goes up, thus, the completion rate declined to 68% in junior secondary school mainly in rural areas of Enugu state. Based on this backdrop, the study explores the main factors influencing dropout in basic education. The design of the study is a descriptive research design. A composite sample of 500 respondents comprises the dropouts, their parents and head teachers are drawn from the 6 education zones in the state through Purposive sampling technique. The data collected were analyzed through both quantitative and qualitative means. The study found that 62.5% of households in Enugu state are absolutely poor; this gives rise to child poverty and deprivation of their education right and others. Withdrawal of children from school to street hawking and farming are seen as the option for economic survival. It was also found that the insufficient basic facilities in the schools, overloaded class rooms and distance to school lead to dropout in schools. Promoting completion rate of basic education requires that Enugu state government should raise its counterpart fund to enable it access 2% consolidated revenue fund, commit 14% to 20% of annual budgetary allocation to education sector as recommended by UNESCO and adequate financial aid grants should be offered to students who have been admitted to schools for basic education programmes and whose families demonstrate financial need.

**Keywords:** Child Poverty, Poor Counterpart Funding, Completion Rate of Basic Education

## I. INTRODUCTION

Poverty increase in Nigeria is a pestilent phenomena, although, children are the most vulnerable segment of the population as they are incapacitated to address their problems and are prone to deprivation of fundamental rights. According to United Nations Children's Fund (2016) 59 percent of primary school aged children suffer severe deprivation

ranging from nutrition, housing, education, medical service, sanitation; and water and information. Explicitly, about 65% percent of children are deprived at least one of the seven aspects of deprivation. Under-nutrition is a serious public health problem among children with enormous consequences on the affected individuals, their families and the nation.

Nigerian children under the Universal Basic Education Act 2004 have rights to at least one nutritious school meal a day; nevertheless, children malnutrition is unbearable burden that manifested magnitude and expansion of poverty among children in Enugu state. According to Ngwu, Iyiani and Ezeah (2014) poverty leaves children in Enugu state vulnerable to malnutrition and disease. Generally, with over 11 million stunted children, Nigeria is facing a crisis of malnutrition and ranks second behind India among all countries with the highest number of stunted children (Federal ministry of Health, 2016). Notwithstanding that, the United Nations declaration of the right of child 1959 states that every child is entitled to enjoy special protection as well as opportunities and facilities. The deplorable condition of children in our society totally disclose that they are far from exercising these rights as they are living in extreme poverty amidst plenty. Nigeria is rich, yet children in the country lack access to the basic necessity of living. Every second, a child in developing countries is deprived of even the minimum opportunities in life. Submitting with the above, World Bank and United Nations Children's Fund (2016) stated thus:

*Children are worse off and the youngest children are the worst of all, because the deprivations they suffer affect the development of their bodies and their minds. More than 10 million Nigerian children are out of school; many of them die from preventable diseases like malaria and dysentery; most have no access to pipe water and basic sanitation just as many are stunted and underweight because of poor nutrition. Globally, almost 385 million children were living in extreme poverty.*

Enugu state launched free maternal and child health services as means to provide adequate health service for mothers and children, regrettably, 62 percent of poor

household never or little have the access to quality health service in the state. Currently, under-five infant mortality rate is 103 per 1000 children despite that FMCH was launched and enforced (Iyioke, 2012). This is due to inaccessibility of the programme. Children's education, which is regarded as a basic key that grants access to every other opportunities towards achieving both individual and national development has been dampened through negligence and misplacement of priority in Nigeria, particularly in Enugu state. Universal Declaration of Human Right 1948 article 26 stipulates that everyone has the right to education which shall be free, universal and compulsory at least in the elementary and fundamental stages (United Nations, 2010).

In addition, United Nations Education and Cultural Organization declaration of education for all in the year 2000 was partly targeted at giving children formal education to enable them fit and contribute meaningfully to national and global development. In the same perspective, National Policy on Education is targeted at providing free, universal basic education for every Nigeria child of school age. The present initiative Universal Basic Education was majorly triggered by the World Conference on Education for All which was held in Jomtien, Thailand on 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> March, 1990 and organized by the World Bank, United Nation Development Programme, United Nation ESCO and UNICEF. This was launched on 30 September, 1999 in Sokoto, with the goal of providing "free, universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child.

All the same, expression of interest does not approximate to reality. The contribution of both international and national policies on promotion of attendance, retention and completion of basic education had opened a new focus and question on the reality of instituting the programmes. Primary school enrolment has increased in recent years, but net attendance is only about 70 per cent, Nigeria still has 10.5 million out-of-school children - the world's highest number (Murtala, 2017). Worst of it all, less than one third will attend junior secondary school and even fewer will proceed to the senior secondary school. Currently, there were total of 416,832 out-of-school children in Enugu state. Energy has been narrowly focused on enrolment with insufficient attention to attendance, completion and attainment. Emphatically, Jagaba (2008) revealed that the completion rate at the elementary education was at 72.4% while rate of transition to junior secondary school was 66.5%. In this state of affair, one would seize to question the authenticity of the Centre for Public Impact Report (2017) in which Nigeria was ranked 103 out of 118 countries in UNESCO education for all (EFA) Development Index, which takes into account universal primary education, quality of education, and gender parity. Currently, nothing has been changed in completion rate, in 2020; some 77 percent of children in Nigeria completed the last grade of elementary school, with 78.2 percent of males and 77.1 percent of females while completion rate for upper secondary school in Nigeria in 2020 was 67 percent of males finished school, whereas this figure reached 53 percent among

female students (UNESCO, 2021). This was attributed to insufficient allocation to educational sector. Allocation to the Education sector in the 2021 budget shows an allocation of N771.5 billion (including the UBEC allocation) out of a total budget size of N13.58 trillion. This means that the sector got a 5.68 percent allocation (BUDGIT, 2021).

Obviously, infrastructural facilities in the schools are in dilapidated state. Affirmation to the above, the people of Umuopu in Enugu-Ezike has drawn the attention of state government on the poor infrastructural facilities in Community Primary school Aguego and Umuopu centre which affects effective teaching and learning. Many international bodies and eminent scholars have questioned funding of the universal basic education in Nigeria, particularly in Enugu state. It appears that 2% Consolidated Revenue Fund annually allocated to the sector by the federal government has remained unaccessed or it is too insignificant to promote literacy rate in Nigeria. All the same, Enugu state budgetary allocation to Education sector for over two decades has been below international minimum threshold, hence the government education responsibilities of providing essential school facilities are push back to parent of the school children. Universal basic education in Nigeria was free for all citizens since 1970's, however, it was not completely free as parents still have some cost to bear in children's education such as school uniform, textbooks, transportation and opportunity cost of household chores as well as income generating activities. With high level of household poverty, it appears that many families could not send their children to school while some have been withdrawn from school due to financial inadequacy; thus child poverty abounds.

Sequel to the above, this research was set out to unravel the influence of poor counterpart funding, budgetary allocation and socio-economic background of Children on completion rates of basic education in Enugu state with the aim of identifying the workable strategies towards promoting completion rate of basic education in the state.

### *Theoretical conceptualization*

#### *Child Poverty in our contemporary society*

Child poverty is the deprivation of child social services which is essential for both personal and national development. According to UNICEF (2011), children living in poverty are those who experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed for survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their right of achieving their potential or participating as full and equal members of the society. United Nations (2007) states that children living in poverty are deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, access to basic health-care services, shelter, education, participation and protection. About 600 million children worldwide are growing up in absolute poverty and over ten million children under-five years of age die every year (UNICEF, 2009). Poverty wastes talents and opportunities and limits life chances. Poverty affects every

aspect of children's lives. It limits their opportunities for education, puts them at risk for health problems and increases the likelihood of low contribution to national development. Emphasizing on the impacts of child poverty on national development, National Centre for children in poverty (2018) stated thus:

*Poverty in childhood is particularly devastating, often impacting on children's physical, cognitive and social development. It can undermine their physical and mental health, setting children on a lifelong trajectory of low education levels and reduced productivity and sustaining intergenerational cycles of poverty. While the largest costs of child poverty are borne directly by children themselves, society also pays a high price. Child poverty damages children's life chances and harms us all.*

What happens in early childhood affects physical, cognitive and social development and sets children on a lifelong trajectory encompassing educational attainment, economic participation and physical and mental health (Pickett, 2013). Children contributions to the society in the adulthood are determined by the treatment they received in their childhood. In Nigeria, the incidences of child poverty are not far fetch. Certainly, a study by the nutrition division, family health department of Federal Ministry of Health (2016) revealed that with over 11 million children are stunted due to malnutrition which affected their physical and mental development. Similarly, Nigeria accounted for 10.5 million out of school children, which is the highest in the world

Housing is another aspect of child poverty that affect majority of Nigeria child. 3 out of 4 Nigerian children live in slum and thatched houses. Worst of it all, in Nigeria, the number of children living on the streets is considerable. Street youth can often be found taking refuge beneath bridges, in marketplaces, in buildings under construction, etc. Children who grow up on the streets in Nigeria encounter a number of problems: human trafficking, sexual harassment, abduction, disease, vehicular accidents, etc. Furthermore, because they live on the streets without parental guidance, they tend to be uneducated.

All the same, Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey (2011) unfolds that 23.22% of children in Nigeria are in extreme child poverty while 70.31% of children in the country are in overall child poverty. The study further showed that there was pronounced child deprivation in education, health, nutrition, child protection, water and sanitation. Both child poverty and child deprivation were more pronounced in the rural sector than in the urban sector and in Northern Nigeria than in Southern Nigeria. The issue of child poverty is serious challenge that needs to be addressed as affect the development of Nigeria.

#### *Basic Education in Nigeria*

The introduction of "basic education" is not entirely new in the history of education in Nigeria. Prior to 1976, Nigeria operated an educational policy inherited from Britain at

independence. The inability of this policy to satisfy the national aspirations of the country rendered it unpopular. A National Seminar was organised by the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in 1973. This gave rise to the National Policy on Education in 1977. National Policy on Education is targeted at providing free, UBE for every Nigerian child of school age. The Universal Primary Education of 1976 was the first to be organized by the Federal government to cover the entire country. The implementation process of the UPE scheme became hampered by the surprising and hasty reduction in the funding of the programme by the federal government which affected the provision of facilities such as classrooms, furniture, instructional materials and teachers needed to make the programme work as expected (Nwangu, 1976).

Universal Basic Education was firstly launched on 30 September, 1999 in Sokoto, with the goal of providing "free, universal and compulsory basic education for every Nigerian child. The main beneficiaries of the programme are:

- Children aged 3-5 years, for Early Children Care and Development Education (ECCDE);
- Children aged 6-11 years for primary school education;
- Children aged 12-14 years for junior secondary school education.

The five objectives of the UBE programme, as outlined in the implementation guidelines of the Federal Ministry of Education (Federal Ministry of Education, 2000:5), are as follows:

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- The provision of free universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age;
- Reducing drastically the incidence of drop out the formal school system through improved relevance, equality and efficiency;
- Catering for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education;
- Ensuring the acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, education, and ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

In order to ensure effective implementation and realisation of the objectives of the UBE, UBE Act of 2004 established the Universal Basic Education Commission, with prescribed functions, membership terms and structure. Universal Basic Education Boards (UBEBS) were also established at the State and Local Government levels. The Commission set for itself some short-and medium-term objectives with appropriate performance indicators.

Furthermore, in a way to facilitate successful actualization of the stated objectives, government outlined implementation guidelines. The guidelines include: Public enlightenment and social mobilization, for full community involvement; data collection and analysis; planning, monitoring, evaluation; teachers’ recruitment, training, retaining, and motivation; infrastructure facilities enriched curricula; textbooks and instructional materials; improved funding and management of the entire process.

*Funding of Universal Basic Education in Nigeria: Issues and Problem*

Financing of education since Nigeria independent has been a major challenge to the federal government of Nigeria. Education sector is constantly plagued by under-funding. However, there is huge gap in the funding of education at the different levels of the government. Funding for public education comes from the budgets of the relevant tier of government. Basic universal education suffers most because primary education is neither fully controlled by the federal government, nor by the state or the local government (Olawale, 2015). Basic education is the statutory responsibility of state and local governments, although, UBE Act 2004 provides that the federal government should participate in the funding of basic education with two percent of its consolidated revenue fund (CRF) annually. Specifically, The Universal Basic Education Act provides for the allocating of 2% of the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) for effective implementation basic education in Nigeria which is to be accessed by the states in Nigeria. The 2% CRF is disbursed to the states in the following proportions:

1. 50% as matching grant (i.e. fund contributed by both Federal and state government, on equal basis).
2. The none-matching grants include;
  - ❖ 14% fund to address Educational Imbalance among and within states.
  - ❖ 0.5% incentive to states for good performance
  - ❖ 2% funds for the education of the physically and mentally challenged children
  - ❖ 2% funds for monitoring of UBE programmes.
  - ❖ 10% for teachers development
  - ❖ 15% for instructional materials
  - ❖ 5% funds for the implementation of the home crown school feeding and Health programme (HGSF & HP)

The State governments’ access to this consolidated revenue fund depends on its ability to contribute at least 50% of the total cost of the project (Yamma and Danjuma, 2018). In order to access this consolidated fund, state governments are to provide their counterpart fund as a condition for accessing the funds. Unexpected, this condition meant to ensure sustainability and commitment to the basic education has constituted a bottleneck toward promotion of rate which is the hallmark of Basic education in Nigeria. The bulk of the 2% federal government consolidated revenue fund has

remained inaccessible by many states. According to Nurudeen (2017), even as the number of out-of-school children continues to rise in the country, not less than 33 state governments and the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, have failed to take advantage of the Universal Basic Education Commission, UBE Intervention Fund domiciled with the Central Bank of Nigeria, CBN. A whopping sum of N59,744,722,935.10 lies in the vault of the CBN.

This is due to states’ inability to produce their counterpart funding which would have enabled them access the fund. The sum represents accumulated funds not accessed by the state governments between 2011 and 2016. In 2016, only two states, Borno and Rivers states received their shares of the intervention funds while only 18 out of the 36 states of the federation and the FCT accessed the UBEC matching grant in 2015. According to Adamu (2018) state governments are not fulfilling their own part of the funding, leaving the whole burden on the Federal Government. Explicitly, many state government pay lip service to education of children in our society. Lack of political will by governors to access these funds has resulted to primary school pupils’ huddle under trees to attend classes, while in majority of the states, they take lessons in utterly decrepit and squalid enclosures, devoid of basic classroom furnishing (Eno-Abasi, 2015). This state of affairs make the goal of basic education as learning cannot take place at uncondusive atmosphere. In addition, education still is not even given it rightful position in state budgetary allocation in all the 36 states in the country, as well education sector is reversing to its former position before the Nigerian independent.

II. METHODOLOGY

The design of the study was a descriptive research design. The population of the study consists of 500 individuals. Sample of 100 respondents were selected for the study through multistage sampling techniques.

Table 1.1 Population and 20% Sample size

Educational zones	Population	20% Sample size
Agbani	50	10
Agwu	76	15
Enugu	32	6
Nsukka	120	24
Obollo-Afor	96	19
Udi	80	16
Head teachers	12	3
Parent of out-school children	34	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100 respondents</b>

Source, field work, 2018

Firstly, stratified sampling technique was used in stratifying the population into 3 six educational zones, namely

Agbani, Awgu, Enugu, Nsukka, Obollo-Afor and Udi. One post primary school and one primary school were randomly selected from each of the six educational zones in Enugu State. 454 out of school children were recorded in these schools, 91 out of school children were purposely selected, 3 out of 12 head teachers were also selected and 7 out of 34 parents of dropout children were included in the sample.

The data for the study was collected through primary and secondary sources. A uniform set of an already pre-tested self-administered questionnaire was employed to obtain data from these out of school children, while head teachers and parent of out of school children were interviewed. The data collected were analysed through both quantitative and qualitative means.

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

*Inaccessibility of Consolidated Revenue Fund in and its Implications on Basic Education Completion Rates*

Nigeria like any other countries in the developing nation had experienced a plethora of policies and programme towards enhancing literacy rate, and then entrench sustainable development. These policies and programmes includes: Universal Primary Education, Child Right Act Strategies for Accelerating of Girls Education in Nigeria and Universal Basic Education. Enugu state problem is not on initiating the programme but actualizing the stated objectives. Inadequate financial commitment to the programme has threatened the translation of policy intent into material form. In line to the above, Ezugwu (2018) states that Funding constitutes a serious challenge to educational development in the country and this has been the case even in the peak of crude oil earnings. Precisely, Enugu state is weak-kneed in committing financial resource towards the implementation of universal basic education in the state.

Federal Government decided to intervene in the provision of basic education with 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund. Federal Government provides financial support grant to States for the Sustainability of the UBE programme through 2% from consolidated revenue fund. Enugu state is among the states in Nigeria that failed to access 2% consolidated revenue fund to the detriment of the profound and quality education that would have given to the children. Eno-Abasi (2016) revealed that Benue, Enugu and Ebonyi states are the worst performing states in claiming their money for key projects in the sector as they have only accessed 3.9 per cent, 4 per cent and 4.5 per cent of their allocations between 2009 and 2014 in that order. Furthermore, Universal Basic Education Commission Report (2016) indicates that Enugu state was also among 15 states that failed to access their matching grants in 2015. They are: Abia, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Enugu, Kogi, Niger, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo, and Plateau. In the same pattern, the position of Enugu state in relation to access to CRF in 2016 is not different from the former; the official data indicated that only three states accessed their grants.

They are Borno and Rivers (N1.04billion each), while Nasarawa only accessed N607.85 million out of its statutory N1.04 billion.

Regrettably, Steenberg, Ifeatu, Nwachukwu and Nyager, (2016) disclosed that Enugu state was among the three states that received relatively low fund from Consolidated Revenue Fund from 2010 to 2017. It moves in this order; Enugu (47%), Kwara (60%) and Jigawa (63%). The highest resource availability comes from Lagos (81%), Kaduna (81%) and Kano, which has full disbursement. States are under no obligation to give matching funding if they decide education infrastructure through the UBE-IF is not a priority (Jones, 2014). According to Idoko (2020) total of un-accessed Universal Basic Education matching grant to state governments is 73 billion. Enugu state alone has over 4.3 billion having been unable to access from to 2019. Enugu state failed to give maximum consideration to implementation of universal basic education; consequently, its matching fund grants remained dormant.

Currently, there are plethora of dilapidated facilities and structure which lead to decline in the completion rates of basic education in the state. Chairman of Enugu State Universal Basic Education Commission (ENSUBEB), Chief Ikeje Asogwa, stated that most schools in the state are without fences, lamented that lack of funds had hindered development of school facilities in the state, though government had tried to improve facilities at some public primary and secondary schools, a good number of schools still lack requisite learning facilities (guardians (2021). Apart from few schools located in the urban centres that have walls and gates, majority of the schools, especially in the rural areas are not fenced. While some cannot boast of electricity supplies in them, many don't have at all. There are some have their electrical fittings removed by hoodlums.

Table1.3. States of Infrastructure Facilities in the Schools

s / n	item statement	N		STD	Decision
1	Many schools do not have Library blocks	100	3.07	.954	Agree
2	School assembly halls are not available	100	2.90	.974	Agree
3	Schools have congested Classrooms	100	3.16	.789	Agree
4	Office blocks in schools are dilapidated	100	2.63	1.144	Agree
5	Tables are seen as non essential materials	100	2.53	1.122	Agree
6	Chairs available in schools are not enough	100	2.83	1.082	Agree
7	The old wooden Chalkboards are still in use in schools	100	3.13	.943	Agree
8	Few Recreational facilities are provided in schools	100	2.96	.947	Agree
	Valid N (listwise)	100			

Source: fieldwork, 2018

The implications of poor funding to UBE in Enugu state were portrayed in inadequate and dilapidated structures and facilities in school which resulted to the dropout of children mostly in junior secondary school. The 85 % of the head teacher agreed that classrooms and office accommodation are inadequate in the schools, facilities and equipment are lacking, and most of the school buildings are old and dilapidated. They equally hold the view that the sizes of the classrooms are not enough for the large number of pupils, the classrooms do not have enough seats neither are they conducive for teaching and learning. Subsequently, completion rate decline.

Despite the fact that education is a veritable tool for moving the vulnerable group out of poverty, it is usually being neglected in budgetary allocation both in the state and federal level. The allocation to the education sector is generally low, although, it is infinitesimal in respect of basic education in Enugu state. Budgetary allocation to social service sectors helps to promote human capital development. Government allocates public resources according to a set of priorities which it establishes and initiates and implements programmes. Misappropriation to any sector implies misplacement of priority and it inhibits the achievement of the sector’s goal. The share of the budget allocated to priority sectors in 2018 is lower than in 2017. Proportional priority sectors spending as a share of the entire budget has dropped (UNICEF, 2018). UN economic model designed for sustainable development as far back as 1945, prescribes that developing countries must put 26 percent of its budgetary allocation or five percent of GDP into education to get the much needed national and economic development. At a time when the world is shifting and education is getting all the more dynamic, nations are spending even more, but Enugu state is spending less.

In Enugu state the allocation to education has not made any different. Education has being receiving less than 5% of the state annual budget since 3 years. Priority was given to works and infrastructure while education was played down in allocation. The breakdown of the 2018 state’

allocations to different sectors pronounce that government’s policies and budgetary allocation are not directed at addressing the issues in the state. The UNESCO’s Incheon Declaration adopted in 2015 recommends that government should commit 15% to 20% of the nation’s budget to education if we hope to reverse the trend of decline in completion rate of basic education (UNICEF, 2016).

Table: 1.4. Enugu Government Budget Allocation

Year	2016	2017	2018
Annual budget	85,179,449,000.	N105,719,471,000	N103,563,500,000.
Education	of N4.089billion	5.951 billion	N6.238 billion
Works and infrastructure	N20.442 billion	23.583 billion	N10.4 billion
Health	N3 billion	2.547 billion	N3.7 billion
Agriculture	N1.317 billion	464.5 million	N707 million
Rural development	N1.534 billion	2.168billion	N2 billion
Housing	N737.5million	2.449 billion	N1.18 billion
Water	N661million	1.350 billion	N782 million

Source: Advocate News Nigeria, 2015 and Enugu state government, 2018

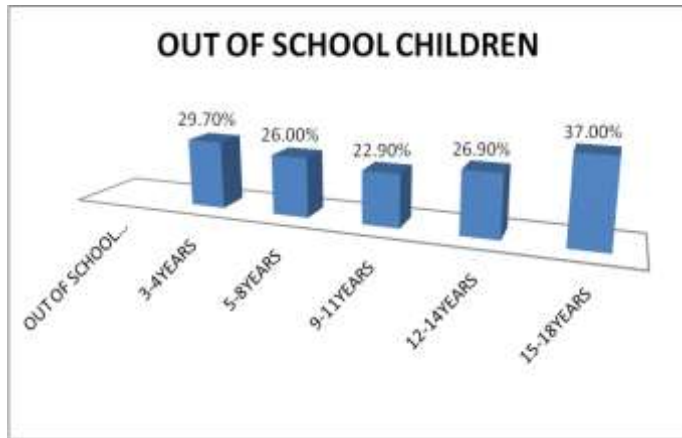
Enugu state government displayed maximum commitment to works and infrastructure by allocating 20.442 billion and 23.583 billion in 2016 and 2017 respectively while little or no attention was given to education which can transform the individual capabilities and catapult them into participating fully in the state affairs. In the same pattern, in 2018 Enugu state budget, ministry of Works leads sectoral allocations with N10.4 billion. Infrastructural development was given preference to human capital development in the state. Poor budgetary allocation to education sector affected the completion rate of basic education in Enugu state. As the state could not meet its financial responsibility in education sector and instructional materials are in short supply, the interests of the pupils are thwarted and academic performance of students falls. This gave rise to the decline in the completion rate of basic education in Enugu state.

Table: 1.2. Out-Of –School Children and Population by Age and Sex

Age (Years)	Projected population			Number of OOS Children			Percent of OOS Children		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
3-4	147,031	141,611	288,642	41,650	44,115	85,765	28.3	31.2	29.7
5-8	178,355	168,010	346,365	46,862	43,108	89,970	26.3	25.7	26.0
9-11	121,415	114,373	235,788	28,791	25,167	53,958	23.7	22.0	22.9
12-14	148,057	144,533	292,590	40,616	38,145	78,761	27.4	26.4	26.9
15-18	142,468	150,292	292,760	52,686	55,692	108,378	37.0	37.1	37.0
Total	737,326	718,819	1456,145	210,605	206,227	416,832	28.6	28.7	28.6

Source: Enugu State Out-of-School children Survey Report, 2014

Figure: 1. Out of school children in Enugu state



Source: Enugu State Out-of-School children Survey Report, 2014

Table 1.2 above shows the population of children aged 3-18 in the State. There were a total of 737,326 boys and 718,819 girls aged 3-18 years in the State. Unfortunately, there were 210,605 and 206,227 out-of-school boys and girls aged 3-18 years Age (Years) respectively in the State. Furthermore, 29.7% of the children aged 3-4 years were out of school, 26.0% of the children aged 5-8 years were OOS, 22.9% of the children aged 9-11 years were OOS, 26.9% of the children aged 12-14 years were OOS and 37.0% of the children aged 15-18 years were OOS. Overall, 416,832 children aged 3-18 years were OOS which constitutes 28.6% of the total number of children 3-18 years of age.

Summarily, the overall 416,832 children aged 3-18 years were out-of-school which constitutes 28.6% of the total projected population of children 3-18 years of age in the State (Enugu State Ministry of Education, 2014).

*Socio-economic background of Children and high Dropout of children in Enugu State*

The issue of poverty poses a serious threat to the well conceived development plans and programmes in our

Table: 1.6. 2010 Poverty rates for Absolute, Relative, Dollar/day and Food Poverty measures (%)

	Food Poverty		Absolute Poverty		Relative poverty		Dollar per day	
	Poor	Non poor	Poor	Non poor	Poor	Non poor	Poor	Non poor
Enugu	52.7	47.3	62.5	37.5	72.1	27.9	63.4%	36.6

Source: National Bureau of Statistic, 2010

Specifically, children from low income background in Enugu state are being withdrawn from schooling especially in junior secondary school. 62.5% of children in Enugu state are living in poverty. Basic education is meant to be free but in reality it is not free. Apart from tuition fees, other fees are charged; and costs are being borne by parents. Parents bear the direct costs of children schooling such as school uniform, text and exercise books, parent – teacher association fee and opportunity cost of sending their children to the school. In the midst of growing and widening level of poverty, some parents

contemporary society. It remains one of the greatest challenges that hindered access of basic education in Enugu state. Over the past decade, international communities have placed much energy on contributing at least a 20 percent improvement in net child school enrolment without sufficient attention on attendance, retention, completion and attainment rates. Thus, 28.6% of the total populations of children (3-14) are dropout. Primary school completion rates decreased from 88% in 2003 to 71% in 2008 slightly increased to 73.30% in 2010 and currently declined to 72% in 2017 in Enugu state. The dropout rate increases as age goes up, thus, the completion rate declined to 68% in junior secondary school mainly in rural areas (Ginikachi & Nath, 2016). Poverty is the most contributing factor to low completion rate of basic education in the state as parent bears both direct and indirect cost in our poverty ridden society. Dachi and Garrett (2003) unveiled that the direct and indirect cost of schooling affect the enrolment and completion rate especially in the poor household in Nigeria.

Poverty has made child schooling to be a luxury affair in Enugu state as many parents give preference to feeding, clothing and housing as the most priorities to be addressed than education of their children. In otherwords, spending their meagre resource in children education affects the fulfilling of other needs. According to the National bureau of statistics (2016) 62.5% of the total populations of Enugu state are living in absolute poverty. According to a UN declaration that resulted from the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995, absolute poverty is a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education, and information. It depends not only on income, but also on access to services (World Bank, 2015). This implies that 2,032,595 of total population (3, 267837) of Enugu state do not have enough resources to secure basic life necessities for their children.

in the states could not provide the necessary school needs of the children such as text books, uniform; and fees for extra lessons for the children. Even though the tuition fees had been abolished, 89 percent of the parents of the dropout students are reported to have withdrawn their children out of school due to their low economic status to meet the requirements.

In addition, they reported that their inability to pay parents-teachers-association fees culminated to the withdrawn of children from the school. Secondly, about 77 percent of the

dropout children revealed that they were out of the school due to their need to contribute to the economic survival of the household. The allocation of the children to productive activities has become a common surviving strategy for poor families. Rising poverty in Enugu state had made many parents to pull their children from formal schooling and allocate them to farm work, street hawking of banana, groundnut and sachet water. Generally, about six million working children in Nigeria, equally split between boys and girls, do not attend school at all, while one million children are forced to drop out due to poverty or because of parents' demand to contribute to the family income (UNICEF, 2006). Child work is of importance to the household economy and the local, informal economy. Families see their children earning as an important input in family survival. Any attempt to reduce child's work can negatively influence the economic survival in the short run.

Due to their inability to bear the cost of school for all children, girl child from poor large household size are being denied the access to basic education. Parents preferred to use their meagre resource in training their male children. While girls were being given to early marriage, the aim of basic education in the school in Enugu state has been defeated. 65% of the parents of the dropout children accepted that they withdraw their girls from the formal education because of their insufficient financial resources to bear the costs of schooling of both gender. Giving them to early marriage becomes the best option and also a way to become rich. Thus, the aim of basic education in Enugu state has not been attained.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The alarming rate of decline in the completion rate of basic education in Enugu state and Nigeria as a whole show how difficult it will be to reach the global goal to end poverty by 2030. Education of children is the foundation of sustainable development for any country that wants to have an edge over other in progressive development, although there has been a progress in enrolment rate, nevertheless, achievement can only be measured on the level of attendance, retention and completion rate. Despite the United Nations enjoin member countries to allocate 26% of their budgetary allocation to education sector, Enugu state allocation to education sector was below 5%, as well facilities in schools are dilapidated. Secondly, as direct and indirect costs of children schooling are left to the parents to bear. Thus, children dropout increase and completion rates declined.

#### V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Basic education in Nigeria generally gave us the hope of promoting literacy, which could in turn leads to sustainable development; a critical examination of the low completion rate shows a drawback to the expected target. It was based on this scenario that the study made the following recommendations:

The Enugu state government should include raise counterpart fund in its annual budget and federal allocation account committee fund to enable it draw its matching grants from consolidated revenue fund. Increase in budgetary allocation will help government to provide school infrastructure and adequately pay the teachers. Any country which wants to escape from the vicious cycle of poverty should maximize attention to education both in adequate allocation of resources and implementation. This will ensure sustainability of the programme and realization of the intended target.

Cost of children schooling goes beyond tuition fees, it includes cost of textbooks and school uniform, transportation and parent-teachers-association fees which parents bears alone. Promoting the completion rate of basic education requires that financial aid grants will be offered to students who have been admitted to schools for basic education programmes and whose families demonstrate financial need. Financial grants and scholarships are key financial aid resources which can reduce the cases of parents withdrawing their children from the school because of their inability to pay. The study has shown that the full cost of an independent education is beyond the means of some outstanding students and families. To this end, the financial aid program can help to make education accessible to qualified students who could not otherwise afford the cost of attending.

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