



RESEARCH BRIEF

Gown and Town: Synergy for Enhanced Societal Impact A Community Engagement Project among Stakeholders in Adolescent Health and Well Being in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

BACKGROUND

Adolescence (the period from 10 to 19 years) is a time of immense opportunity. However, it is also a time when many people start engaging in unhealthy practices such as smoking, drinking alcohol and unsafe sexual practices¹. Studies we conducted in Oyo state, Nigeria, revealed that these unhealthy practices are more common among adolescents who are not enrolled in senior secondary school^{2,3}. In Oyo state, more than half (53%) of adolescents who should be in senior secondary school are not in school⁴; even though education is currently free from primary to senior secondary school⁵. These adolescents who are out of school are exposed to the likelihood of engaging in unhealthy practices. Our team conducted a community engagement project to sensitize stakeholders (adolescents, teachers and school owners) about the importance of senior secondary school enrollment and collaborate with these stakeholders to develop a list of:

- (i) common locally relevant enablers and barriers to secondary school retention, and
- (ii) feasible interventions to encourage adolescents to complete senior secondary education

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

- Teachers and secondary school students reviewed existing research data highlighting the role of the senior secondary school enrollment in protecting against unhealthy habits.
- Groups of teachers came together to draw maps of their immediate community. In addition, they identified and discussed about issues and resources within these communities that promote or hinder senior secondary school enrollment.
- In and out-of-school adolescents took photographs of things and activities within their communities that promote or hinder senior secondary school enrollment and discussed the photographs they took in groups.

1. UNICEF. (2012). Progress for Children. A report card on adolescents. Geneva, Switzerland: UNICEF

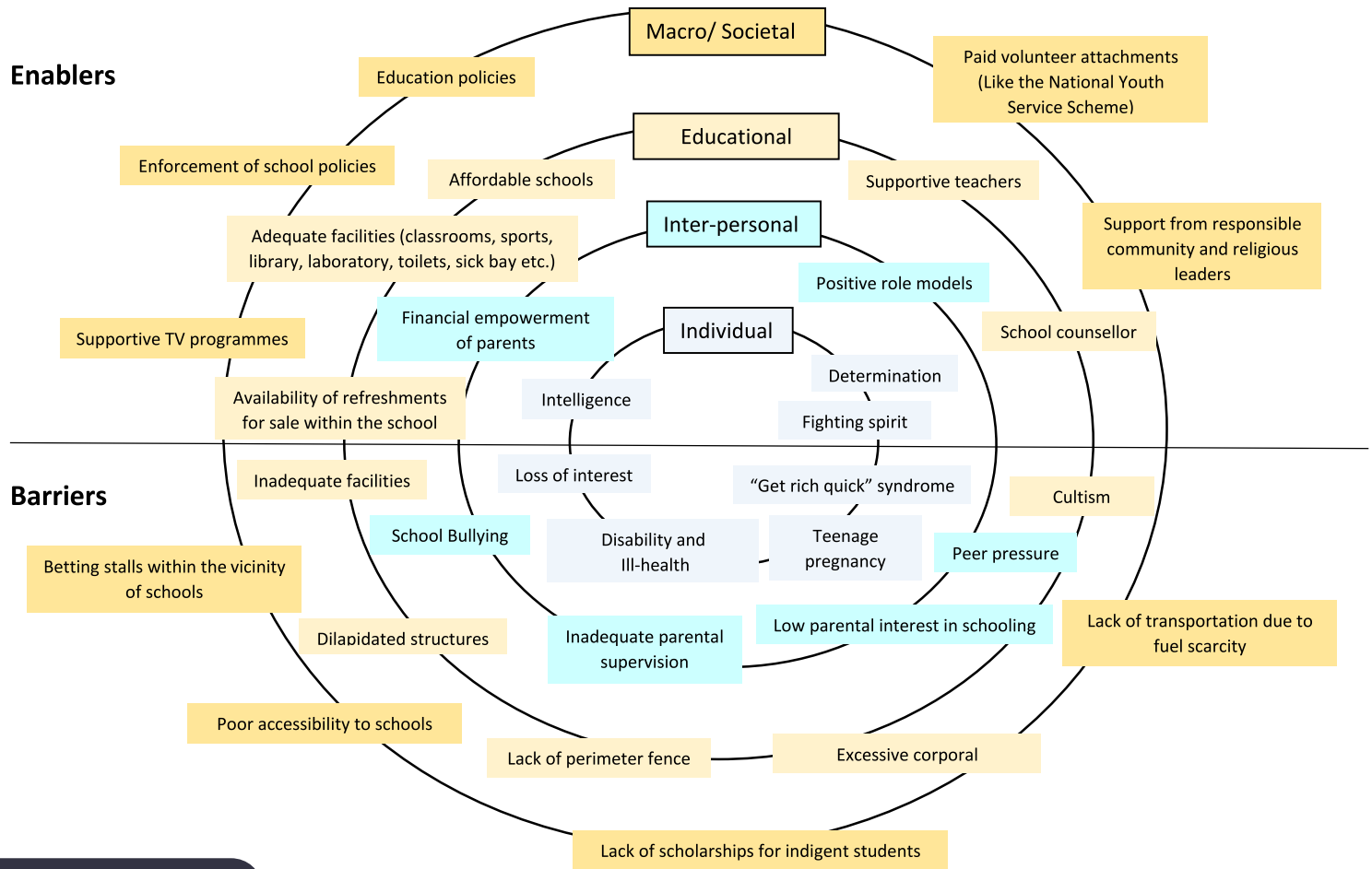
2. Olumide AO. (2017) Unpublished. Prevalence, Predictors and Costs of Health-Risk Behaviours among Adolescents in Oyo State, Nigeria. PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

3. Olumide, A. O., et al. 2014. Predictors of substance use among vulnerable adolescents in five cities: findings from the well-being of adolescents in vulnerable environments study. *Journal of Adol. Health* 55.6: S39-S47.

4. Federal Ministry of Education (2017). Nigeria Education Indicators 2016. . Viewed online at http://www.nemis.gov.ng/downloads_fold/Nigeria%20Education%20Indicators%202016.pdf on 10 February, 2020

5. Editor. Live Times. Why I declared free education in Oyo – Makinde. Nov 10, 2019 Live Times. Viewed online at <https://www.livetimesng.com/why-i-declared-free-education-in-oyo-%E2%80%95-makinde/> on 10 February, 2020

FIG. 1 Conceptual Framework of Barriers and enablers of senior secondary school retention (adapted from Bhagavatheeswaran et al, 2016)



FINDINGS

FIG. 2



Enabler – Education board can advocate and see to the implementation of the existing educational policies to favour school retention. **Gbolahan**

"The government should provide supervisors that will go around all schools and the students too should have the opportunity to relate with these people (supervisors) to tell them what they are facing as students" – Gbolahan (Photovoice discussion)

"Banks (financial houses) can provide money to equip schools and encourage more young people to stay in school." – Abayomi



Enabler – (Picture of a bank) Access to loans for parents to do business will increase school retention. **Matthew**

"What will make youths like us stay in school; during free periods in school, there should be counsellors providing counsel to students" - Gbolahan (Photovoice discussion)

FIG. 4



Enabler – Some adolescents are still in school because of the counselling given to them by the school. Counsellors are critical to school. **Feola.**

... ..some (adolescents) because of their backgroun and the kind of environron they are from, don't even know anything about school. There are still some areas even in this state where people still don't know that schools exist." - Feola (Photovoice discussion)

FIG. 6



Barrier – "The environment an adolescent lives in may affect whether he or she will enroll or stay in school." **Feola**



FIG. 5

Barrier – Adolescents with disabilities, especially with no one to take care of them, are not enrolled in school. **Otito**



FIG. 7

Barrier: "Allowing adolescents to gamble (play Bet Naija) instead of being at school may make them decide not to go to school again." **Idris**

"...Measures should be put in place in order to stop young men who should be in school from betting" - Matthew (Photovoice discussion)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Education in conjunction with other relevant departments and agencies must ensure implementation of the National Policy on Education and the Oyo state education policy in the following key areas:

- i. Empowering the education boards to carry out their supervisory role to ensure that teachers deliver quality education
- ii. Setting up a joint task force to monitor communities and ensure that all school-aged adolescents are in school during school hours
- iii. Empowering the joint task force to prosecute parents/ guardians of children found roaming the streets during school hours

School owners (government and private school proprietors) should provide an enabling environment for full policy implementation by:

- i. Employing adequate numbers of trained teaching and non-teaching staff to work in the schools
- ii. Conducting training and re-training of staff at all levels on the provisions of the policy as well as their duties in ensuring that students remain in school
- iii. Equipping schools to ensure a conducive environment for teaching and learning

Parents and guardians should:

- i. Ensure enrollment and retention of their children in school up until completion of senior secondary education
- ii. Support their children while they are in school as able by providing for their needs
- iii. Monitor their children and be involved in relevant activities within the school

Community members and other stakeholders should:

- i. Work with school authorities to encourage students to remain in school
- ii. Refrain from selling wares to school children during school hours
- iii. Support indigent student through provision of scholarships

Students should:

- i. Focus on their studies and understand that completing secondary education
 - a. Is important for their overall health and development
 - b. Reduces their chances of taking up risky behaviours that damage their current and future health
- ii. Refrain from setting up and joining groups that encourage truancy and initiation of health risk behaviours

Further reading: UNESCO International Bureau of Education. (2010). *World Data on Education. Principles and General Objectives of Education*. Retrieved April 25, 2020 from http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Nigeria.pdf

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