



Educated and Healthy, yet Poor

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Key insights:

- The geo-political context of the country is characterised by regional disparities in education and health outcomes.
- These disparities contribute to inequality and poverty, with higher rates observed in rural and northern areas.
- Bridging the divide in access to quality education and healthcare can increase the economic well-being of poor households and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 1, 3, and 4 for the entire country.

What are the issues?



Source: Oxfam International, 2017

Nigeria has experienced significant economic growth over the past two decades, averaging 6% per annum in gross domestic product (GDP). The government has also made investments in education and health, resulting in improved national-level enrolment rates for school-aged children and lower under-5 and maternal mortality rates. However, poverty reduction in the country remains a challenge, with the poverty rate increasing from 35% in 2010 to 41% in recent time, 2019. Of particular concern are the regional disparities in the low standard of living between rural and urban settlements across the country.

Pointedly, the northern region experiencing significantly lower standards as compared to the south. For a fact, this is evidenced in education and health outcomes which is the focus of this presentation.

Why the issue is important?

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) seeks to end all forms of poverty, ensuring equal access to quality healthcare, inclusive and equitable quality education amongst other goals. Hence, it is imperative to minimize the disparities between communities through ensuring comparable access to education and health to achieve social and economic development in Nigeria. Indeed, this could aid the actualization of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Specifically, the SDG1, SDG3 and SDG4 which emphasises ending poverty; ensuring healthy lives and promoting wellbeing for all at all ages; and ensuring inclusive, equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities.

Policy options: Summary of evidence and policy options

Observed income inequalities in rural-urban sectors and northern-southern geopolitical zones are mainly driven by differences in education and health endowments of the households. However, erasing these disparities associated with household's education and health endowments, increases the wellbeing of the households. Hence, poor households are likely to experience an expansion in their well-being if policies that eliminate inequality in access to schooling and quality health care for the poor households are put in place.

Even though the Nigerian government has put several efforts in improving the structures for quality education and health, there still remains stark disparities in education and health outcomes across regions and zones in the country. For instance in 2018, school enrolment was on average 94.1% in urban and southern areas, but was 71% in rural and northern part of the country. This differential outcome tends to justify the regional welfare gaps experienced by households in Nigeria.

Policy recommendation

To address these regional disparities in education and health in Nigeria, it is recommended that policies be put in place to eliminate differences in access to quality education and healthcare. Although the government has made efforts to improve education and health structures, significant regional disparities still exist. For instance, school enrolment and under-5 mortality rates are significantly higher in urban and southern areas compared to rural and northern areas. While under-5 mortality rates were 138 deaths per 1000 live births in rural areas, it's only 78 deaths per 1000 live births in urban areas. Policies that ensure equal regional access to quality education and healthcare can improve economic well-being for poor households and contribute to achieving the SDGs 1, 3 and 4 for Nigeria.

In conclusion, urgent action is needed to address the regional disparities in education and health.

Source of citation

Oxfam International, (2017). Inequality in Nigeria: Exploring Drivers. Available at [https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/ine quality-nigeria-exploring-drivers](https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/ine-quality-nigeria-exploring-drivers)



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