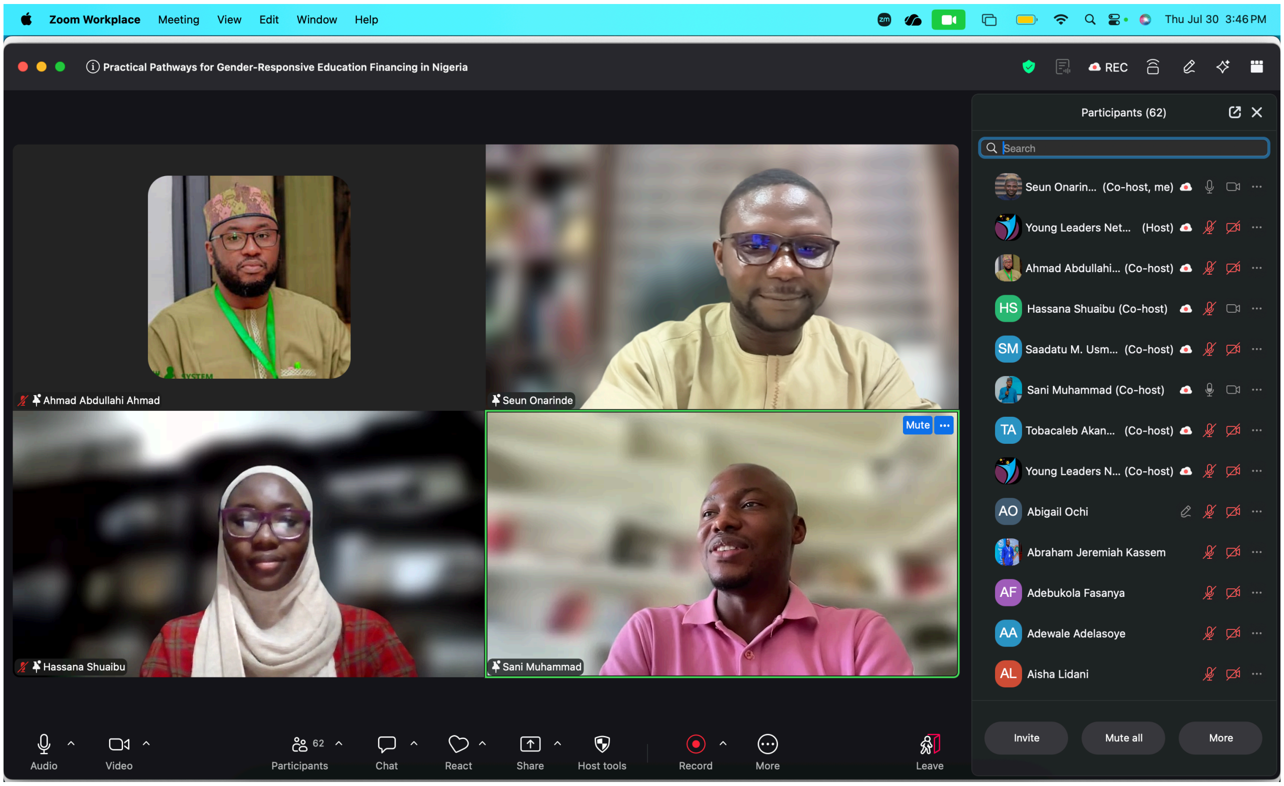
WEBINAR REPORT
PRACTICAL PATHWAYS FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE EDUCATION FINANCING IN NIGERIA



Validated Policy Insights, Recommendations and Priority Action Framework

Date /Time	Thursday, 30 July 2026 / 2:00 p.m. WAT
Platform	Zoom
Convener	Young Leaders Network
Support	Malala Fund
Keynote Speaker	Stanley Achonu, Senior Director, Nigeria, Malala Fund
Moderator	Seun Justin Onarinde, Executive Director, Young Leaders Network
Panelists	Dr Kalu Aja; Ahmad Abdullahi Ahmad; Dr Hassana Shuaibu; Sani Muhammad; Toba Caleb Akanmu
Webinar Recording	https://youtu.be/TlSAVaG98gI

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Young Leaders Network convened the expert webinar on Practical Pathways for Gender-Responsive Education Financing in Nigeria to examine how governments can move from policy commitments to predictable financing, effective implementation and measurable results for girls. The webinar which was held on Thursday, 30th August, 2026 examined a practical question: what must change for commitments to girls' education to become financed, delivered and measurable? Its answer was direct. The weakness is not policy ambition alone; it is the break between policy and the public-finance system that should carry policy into schools. A commitment has little operational value if it is not costed, assigned to an institution, placed in a traceable budget line, released on time, procured to an appropriate standard and followed through to the latter.

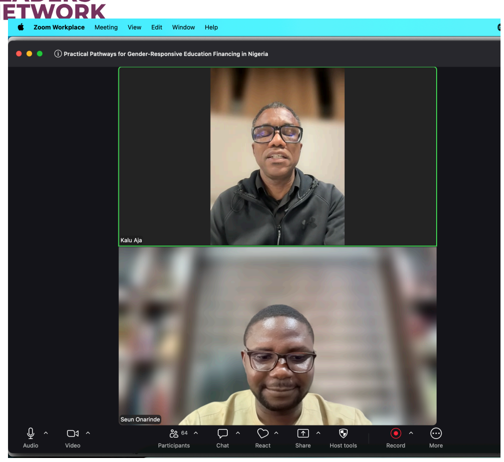
This changes how education financing should be judged. The size of the education budget is important, but it is not sufficient. A stronger test asks which barriers are being financed, who benefits, whether approved funds are released and cash-backed, whether services reach the intended schools and girls, and whether access, retention, re-entry, safety, learning, transition or completion improves.

Six conclusions that should guide action

1. **Cost the commitment.** Every policy promise should resolve into an intervention, unit cost, responsible institution, budget code, release schedule and result.
2. **Finance barriers, not labels.** A generic line for "girls' education" is too weak. Financing should address the specific causes of exclusion: distance, sanitation, household costs, pregnancy, marriage, insecurity, disability, teacher shortages and related barriers.
3. **Build gender responsiveness into the whole budget cycle.** Needs assessment, sector planning, budget preparation, legislative approval, releases, procurement, expenditure and performance review must carry the same priorities.
4. **Track money beyond appropriation.** Allocation is only the beginning. Accountability must establish whether funds were released, used as intended, delivered to the right locations and produced a result.
5. **Use local evidence and girls' voices.** Budget choices should change when the evidence changes. Sex-, disability- and location-disaggregated data should be read alongside direct experience from schoolgirls, out-of-school girls, married and parenting adolescents and girls with disabilities.
6. **Institutionalize the reform.** Education, Budget and Planning, Finance, SUBEB, Women Affairs, Health and other relevant institutions must share defined responsibilities under senior political and administrative leadership.

1. CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

Nigeria has adopted policies, programmes and legal commitments intended to expand girls' access to quality education. Yet implementation remains uneven because policy intent often reaches the budget cycle late, without adequate costing, identifiable provisions, predictable releases, procurement detail or a clear line of accountability to schools and learners. The webinar was convened to focus on that implementation gap rather than restate the case for girls' education.



For Young Leaders Network, the discussion also had a specific purpose. It followed the adoption of the Bauchi State Gender in Education Policy and the Guidelines for School Re-entry for Married and Pregnant Adolescent Girls, hence was designed to generate practical options for a state Gender-Responsive Education Financing Framework. The policy already creates a financing obligation: a minimum of 2 per cent of the annual education budget for gender-mainstreaming initiatives, rising to 5 per cent by 2030. The central task is therefore to define what those resources should finance, how they should enter government systems and how results will be tracked.

The questions placed before the webinar

- ✓ Why do strong education policies fail during implementation, and where in the budget cycle does failure occur?
- ✓ Which barriers affecting girls are recognised in policy but still inadequately financed?
- ✓ What realistic financing options can expand or protect fiscal space without shifting government responsibility to donors or the private sector?
- ✓ What institutional arrangements are required to connect policy, planning, budgeting, procurement, releases and performance review?
- ✓ What lessons from Kano, Oyo and other state experiences are useful for Bauchi, and what should not simply be copied?
- ✓ How should girls, communities and civil society participate in priority-setting and accountability

2. WHAT THE WEBINAR ESTABLISHED

Lessons about where financing fails and what better financing requires

1. The implementation gap is a public-finance gap

Stanley Achonu's keynote and the panel converged on a basic point: policy adoption is not an implementation outcome. Where girls still face unsafe travel, inadequate sanitation, exclusion after pregnancy or marriage, household costs, insecurity, disability-related barriers or too few female teachers, the unresolved question is often what government has chosen to finance and how consistently.

Ahmad Abdullahi Ahmad located many failures between policy and annual implementation: weak costing, delayed releases, vague budget lines, fragmented responsibility, limited technical capacity and priorities that arrive after ceilings and sector submissions are set. Gender-responsive financing must therefore be built into routine planning and budgeting instruments, not attached later.

2. Scarcity is real, but prioritisation remains a policy choice

Dr Kalu Aja challenged the tendency to treat every financing problem as a simple absence of money. Fiscal constraints are real, but budgets also reveal political choices. Visible capital projects may attract faster recognition than teacher deployment, counselling, menstrual health, learning support or retention. Expenditure should therefore be judged against the barrier it removes and the result it is expected to produce.

3. Gender-responsive financing is not a separate budget

The Kano experience, presented by Sani Muhammad, treated gender-responsive budgeting as a way of improving the equity, targeting and accountability of the existing education budget. The process involved Education, Finance, Budget and Planning, Women Affairs, Health and related agencies from the outset and linked the work to existing policies rather than creating a parallel project structure.

This distinction matters for sustainability. A stand-alone donor-funded “gender budget” can disappear when the project ends. A stronger reform changes how ordinary government systems identify needs, cost responses, prepare submissions, request releases, procure services and report performance. It also requires continuing technical support across budget cycles.

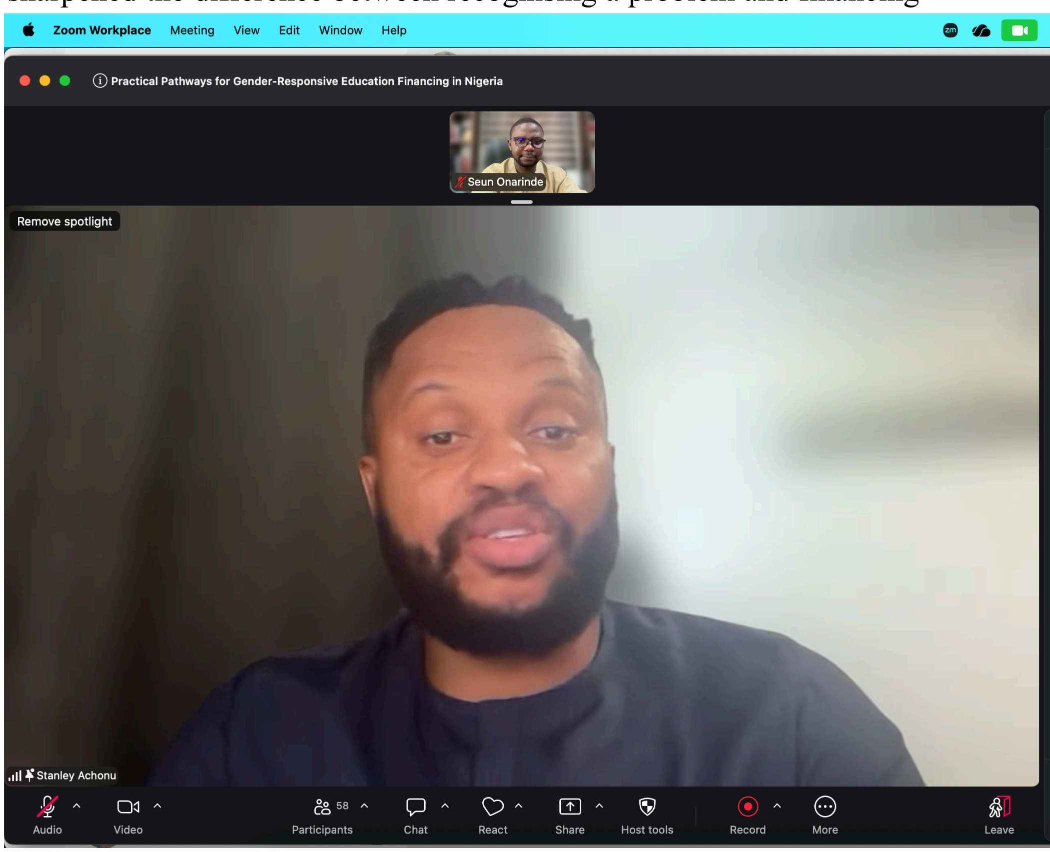
Financing options discussed

Protected public financing	Legally or administratively backed earmarks/first-line charges for defined priorities, with disclosure and oversight.
Education equity fund/Incentive Financing	A dedicated vehicle for vulnerable learners only where governance, auditing, beneficiary rules and outcome reporting are explicit.
State seed / co-financing	Government commitment used to crowd in philanthropic, development or private finance aligned with public systems without displacing public responsibility.
Targeted household support	Cash, transport, meals, materials or examination support tied to transparent eligibility and verification.

4. Finance the real barrier, not the convenient programme label

Dr Hassana Shuaibu’s contribution sharpened the difference between recognising a problem and financing a response. Re-entry, WASH and menstrual health, rural female-teacher deployment, school safety, gender-based violence response and household transport costs are often acknowledged in policy language but remain vague or underfunded in annual budgets.

Married adolescent girls who want to complete formal secondary education cannot automatically be served by referral to adult literacy simply because an alternative programme exists. Good financing starts with the actual barrier and then selects the intervention.



5. Needs assessment should determine the budget, not last year's template

Toba Caleb Akanmu's Oyo experience emphasised that there is no universal list of budget lines that makes a state gender-responsive. The right mix depends on current evidence: enrolment and attendance patterns, transition and completion, school infrastructure, teacher distribution, WASH, disability, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, insecurity and the differences between LGAs.

6. Accountability starts after approval, not before it

An approved allocation may never be released; released funds may not be cash-backed; expenditure may not reach the intended school; and a completed activity may fail to change the outcome. The webinar therefore treated accountability as a chain from appropriation to results, with public reporting at each stage. Girls' participation is part of that chain. Schoolgirls, out-of-school girls, married and parenting adolescents and girls with disabilities should help identify barriers, rank priorities and verify delivery. Participation becomes meaningful when government can show which recommendations altered a budget, a procurement decision, a service standard or a corrective action.

State lessons for Bauchi

State	Useful lesson	Implication for Bauchi
Kano	Joint ownership across public institutions; sustained technical support.	Put the framework inside government systems and support officers through costing, budget defence, releases, procurement and reporting.
Oyo	Needs assessment, measurable budget lines and release tracking.	Do not copy a fixed menu. Use Bauchi evidence to define priorities and make each provision traceable.

3. FINANCING PRIORITIES

What public money should actually pay for

A gender-responsive budget is credible when the line of sight from barrier to intervention is clear. The table below consolidates the financing priorities repeatedly identified across the keynote, panel and participant contributions.

Barrier	What financing should cover	What to verify
Distance / unsafe travel	School siting, transport support, safe routes, community protection arrangements and appropriate infrastructure.	Attendance, travel time, safety incidents, transition.
WASH / menstruation	Sex-segregated and disability-accessible toilets, water, privacy, menstrual materials, disposal, cleaning and maintenance.	Functionality, usability, attendance and retention.

Barrier	What financing should cover	What to verify
Female-teacher shortage	Targeted recruitment, rural deployment incentives, safe accommodation, transport, security, professional support and retention.	Female-teacher presence in high-need schools; retention.
Marriage, pregnancy and parenting	Formal re-entry pathways, counselling, assessment, catch-up learning, referrals, safeguarding and reasonable flexibility where necessary.	Re-entry, 6- and 12-month retention, transition and completion.
School safety / GBV	Risk assessments, emergency preparedness, confidential reporting, trained focal persons, referral services and survivor-centred support.	Functioning safety and referral systems; case response.
Household poverty / disability	Targeted grants, transport, learning materials, meals, examination support, accessible infrastructure, assistive devices and specialised learning support.	Eligible beneficiaries reached; attendance; accessibility; progression.

The economic case is also substantial

> **Accelerate Hub modelling referenced during the webinar**
> US$114 million invested over four years to scale proven programmes for about 1.1 million adolescent girls in Kano and Kaduna was estimated to generate 3.9 million additional years of schooling, avert about 327,000 child marriages and 383,000 adolescent pregnancies, prevent 3,651 adolescent maternal deaths and 35,675 deaths among children under five, and yield about US$2.5 billion in societal benefits — at least a 21-to-1 return.

The policy implication is not that every state will obtain the same return. It is that education financing should be assessed alongside effects on health, productivity, poverty, household resilience, maternal and child survival and long-term human capital. Girls' education is therefore a development investment, not a residual welfare item.

4. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Cost the Gender in Education Policy and re-entry commitments.** Translate each priority into a defined intervention, unit cost, beneficiary group, implementing agency, budget code, release schedule and result indicator.
2. **Put gender instructions into the budget call circular.** Require education MDAs to identify the barrier, cite disaggregated evidence, show who was consulted and submit traceable costed provisions.
3. **Create one cross-government delivery structure.** Use a high-level steering committee and technical secretariat with named focal officers, meeting schedules, escalation routes and reporting duties.
4. **Make releases predictable and public.** Adopt quarterly schedules for priority lines and publish allocation, cash-backing, release, expenditure and delivery information in accessible formats.

5	**Protect high-impact frontline interventions.** Prioritise re-entry, WASH and menstrual health, school safety, rural female teachers, disability inclusion and targeted household support.
6	**Apply gender-responsive procurement.** Specifications should address privacy, safety, accessibility, maintenance, location and user needs — not merely the purchase of an item or construction of a facility.
7	**Publish an annual Gender in Education Expenditure Report.** Show what was budgeted, released, spent and delivered; where; to whom; and with what result.
8	**Use annual needs assessment to change the budget.** Update priorities using EMIS/ASC data, programme evidence and direct consultation with affected girls rather than rolling forward static lines.
9	**Align external finance with public systems.** Partners and private actors should finance agreed state priorities, disclose terms, avoid parallel structures and include a sustainability pathway.
10	**Build consequences into accountability.** Where releases, procurement or delivery are delayed, require explanations, corrective actions, responsible officers and deadlines.

7. YLN's ANNOUNCED COMMITMENTS AND NEXT STEPS

What should happen after the webinar

The webinar did not adopt formal resolutions. Young Leaders Network, however, announced a set of follow-up actions that the discussion supported and that now provide a practical bridge from dialogue to implementation.

Output / action	Lead
Circulate the validated webinar report and a concise policy brief.	YLN
Convene a Girls' Budget Town Hall and document priorities for the budget process.	YLN; girls' groups; education stakeholders
Convene the Bauchi Gender-Responsive Education Financing Framework Development Workshop.	State MDAs; YLN; partners
Develop and technically review the draft financing framework with government, panelists and public-finance/education experts.	State MDAs; YLN; experts
Agree on budget integration, release-tracking and public reporting arrangements.	Education; Budget & Planning; Finance; Accountant-General
Develop a transparent private-sector engagement strategy for complementary financing.	State Government; YLN; private sector

Conclusion

The webinar's strongest contribution was to move the discussion away from a symbolic "girls' education budget" and towards a disciplined financing system. The test is whether government can identify the barrier, cost the response, place it in the right budget, release the money, procure and deliver to standard, and show what changed for girls.

For Bauchi State, the policy foundation now exists. The next task is implementation architecture: convert the Gender in Education Policy and school re-entry commitments into costed packages, budget rules, responsibilities, release schedules, procurement standards and a small results framework. The 2 per cent commitment, rising to 5 per cent by 2030, matters only if it finances identifiable barriers and produces verifiable improvements.

Success should be visible in schools and in girls' lives: safer journeys, functional and accessible sanitation, appropriate teacher deployment, workable re-entry support, stronger protection systems, reduced household barriers and higher retention, transition and completion. The framework should be judged by whether public resources reach those results.