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Girl Child Education in Anambra State: challenges and way forward



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Study by Prof Uche Amazigo
& Prof. L.R Akudolu, July 2016

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ACRONYMS

1. AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
2. ASUBEB: Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board
3. CIC: College of Immaculate Conception
4. CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child
5. DMGS: Dennis Memorial Grammar School
6. DFID: Department for International Development
7. FBO: Faith Based Organizations
8. FGD: Focus Group Discussions
9. GPRS: General Packet Radio Service
10. GPS: Global Positioning Assistant
11. HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus
12. ID: In-Depth Interview
13. LGAs: Local Government Areas
14. MDG: Millennium Development Goals
15. NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
16. PHCN Power Holding Company of Nigeria
17. PTA : Parent-Teacher Association
18. RUWASA: Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency
19. SBMC: School Based Management Committee
20. SDG: Sustainable Development Goals
21. SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
22. SSA: Senior Special Assistant
23. STD: Sexually Transmitted Diseases
24. UBE: Universal Basic Education scheme
25. UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
26. UNICEF: United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
27. UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
28. YWCA : Young Women Christian Association

STUDY TEAM COMPOSITION

Lead Coordinator of Research Prof. Uche Amazigo (FAS)
Prof. Lilian-Rita Akudolu (MNAE)

Research Team Leaders

Prof. Uzoma Okoye, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria
Dr Ifeoma Dunu, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
Dr Angela Ekwunife, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
Mr Paul Eme, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria
Dr Anthony Nnedum, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria
PACIEH technical and administrative team

Ministry of Education representatives and contributors

Prof Kate Omenugha, Hon. Commissioner of Education, Anambra State, (project manager)
Dr Lazarus Okafor, Director, Higher Institutions, Ministry of Education, Awka, Anambra State

Office of the Governor: Ms Pat Offiah SSA, Education
Ms Ijeoma Obodoeze, SSA, Political

Project initiator: His Excellency, the Governor of Anambra State, Chief Willie Obiano

Other Contributors

LGA Chairmen and Education Secretaries of six Local Government Areas.
Community leaders and members, school teachers; drop out girls in 26 communities
20 Research Assistants, data analysts, data entry staff

This report was prepared by Prof Uche Amazigo for PACIEH assisted by Dr Ifeoma Dunu

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is beyond debate that illiteracy is the greatest barrier to development, that people are liberated from the shackles of extreme poverty, low self-esteem and high disease burden when governments and leaders promote education as a supreme investment in human capital development and not as an expenditure of resources. Unfortunately, Nigeria holds the unenviable record of housing the largest number of out-of-school children worldwide. Forty per cent (40%) of Nigerian children aged 6-11 years are not in school. Although Anambra State is one of the States with high per cent of female literacy in Nigeria, the fate of the girl-child in Anambra State, especially in some difficult-to-reach riverine communities has been masked by the good literacy indices at primary education in comparison to the other states and the national average.

As the world drew the curtain on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with observations of the fact that the achievement of gender related goals were jeopardized in many developing countries, including Nigeria, the Education 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was put in place as a road map for countries to embark upon for the achievement of 17 goals. As a signatory nation, it is expected that Nigeria would have started since January 1, 2016 to move towards sustainable development. In recognition of the fact that sustainable development cannot be realized when only one gender (male) is actively involved while the other gender (female) is dormant, goal number 5 calls for the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls by 2030. Education is the central issue in the empowerment of women and girls.

All over the world, primary education has been recognized as the most important as well as the foundation of the whole educational pursuit, which is expected to provide literacy and enlightenment to the citizens. It constitutes the bedrock upon which the entire education system is built. The success and failure of the entire education system are determined by it and it is at the heart of the concept of basic education also defined as universalization of access to education.

In consideration of Anambra State's determination to become a model State in education, we highlight through this study some of the indicators and patterns to girl's school dropout so that it can help illuminate the complexities around girl child education and bring new insights to educational policy makers and practitioners on the issue. By understanding how and why girls drop out from schooling in some parts of the State, there will be greater interest to move towards immediate short-term and long-term customized interventions that will bring girls back to school or take school to them, so that the State's, "No-child left-Behind" policy in education is realized. The risky challenges

of getting to the study areas not accessible notwithstanding, a research team visited communities “*beyond the end of the road*” in Anambra State and studied the girl child access to basic education.

In all, 521 households with 3,488 household members in 26 communities across six selected local government areas (LGAs) were studied. Twenty-six (26) Primary and 15 Secondary Schools were also studied.

What we found

The communities studied are predominantly agrarian and the food basket hub of Anambra State. However, the economic profile truly justifies the curious question - are these people and communities part of Anambra State which is among the few states with the highest per capita income in Nigeria? As example of absence of basic social amenities: 81% of the 521 households use firewood for cooking; 74% use the kerosene lamp for lightning and 2% have pipe-bore water. The main source of drinking water for 60% of households is the stream and 74% of 3,488 household members defecate in bushes and streams. 21.2% of the households live in hut/mud house, 9.4% live in thatched house and 8.1% live in Plank/Carton shanty.

It is also incomprehensibly disturbing to document with first-hand evidence that in these parts of Anambra State, children of school age (2-14 years old) are left to read in classrooms made of bamboo stalks and school blocks with windows similar to those built for generator houses. Studies from both high and low-middle income (LAMI) countries have documented how being reared in poverty is linked to compromised child development.



Only 2.3% of 521 households have adequate income.

Access to utilities is used as a relative measure of affluence/income of the household since the study data set had no other income data set. The rationale is that the more a household has access to utilities like television, motorbikes, canoe, phone, refrigerators, the less likely it is that it is poor. Being agrarian communities, they predominantly prefer to have large households. 51% of the 521 respondents have household size of at least seven members. 96% have 4 or more members and only 4% have small household size of 3 or less members. In all, families with female household head account for 24% of the entire households in the study.

Education and literacy

Literacy level in the 26 communities is far below from the average literacy level of the state. Literacy in Nigeria is defined as having completed basic education (i.e. junior secondary education). The most recent rating of UNESCO (2015) puts Anambra state as third most literate state in Nigeria, having 75.1% literacy rate. Surprisingly, only 15% of head of households and 18% of 3,488 household members have secondary education. 22% of head of households and 20% of household members have never been to school. 53% of 3,488 members of households dropped out at Primary School level while 47% dropped out at Secondary School level.

These statistics are in contrast of what is known of Anambra state but the reality is that these are communities in Anambra state. If we scale down the definition of literacy to just the completion of primary education, almost 30% of 521 head of households will fall into the category of illiterates and 36% of the entire respondents' household members (3,488 people) will fall into the category of illiterates.

Six hundred and eighty-eight (688) out of 3,488 household members of the respondents had dropped out of school in the six LGAs. This represents

20% of the total household members of the respondents. 469 school dropouts are children comprising of 146 (31%) males and 321 (69%) are females. Children aged 11-20 (54.3%) are the most vulnerable to drop out of school in the 26 communities. And girls in elementary class 6 (10.1%) and junior secondary 3 (19.7%) have the highest dropout rates. These figures are in sharp contrast with both national and State figures. The male: female ratio in the study population is 47:53 while the dropout rate is 31:69. Though the population distribution is not even, the difference cannot account for variation in the dropout rate.

The situation in Awka North LGA is alarming as the LGA has the highest (43.6%) out of school children; accounts for nearly half of the dropouts. 16.4% and 10.1% of girls less than 10 years old had dropped out of school in Awka North and Anambra West LGAs respectively. Between 2011 and 2015, in the eight schools studied, the number of girls drop out in Awka North LGA increased almost steadily from 79 in 2011 to 91 in 2015. There is also a notable increase in the 5 schools in Ogbaru LGA. The number increased from 6 in 2011 to 23 girl child drop out in 2015. Remarkably, there is no evidence of a decrease in the number of dropouts in any of the six LGAs studied. The dropout rate of the girl child in the twenty six communities studied is a serious cause for concern when compared with other communities and in relation to the level of achievement of education sector in Anambra State.

At a glance

- 521 households were studied
- 3,488 household members
- 688 (20%) of 3488 members dropped out of school in the six LGAs.
- 467 (69%) school dropouts are children.
- Of 467 school dropouts (31%) are males and 69% are females.

There were 52 reported current cases of teenage pregnancy in the 521 households during the study; 19 (37%) pregnant girls are from Ayamelum LGA.

The regression analysis showed that once there is more than two income earners in the family, chances are the additional person is a girl child who has dropped out or who would drop out in the future.

Reasons why girls drop out of schools in the study areas

Poverty

As evident from the research the lead cause to girls' drop out of school is poverty, "no money to pay" for education. More than 90% (91.4%) of the head of households that have dropout children cited lack of money as the reason their children are out of school. The regression equation provided empirical evidence underscoring that the dropout of the girl child is, in part, an outcome of the poverty challenge facing most households in the survey. As mentioned above, access to utilities is used as a relative measure of the income of the household. And the regression analysis showed that a family's income level, more than any other factor, affects access to education in the family; access in terms of entry and completion of education; and access in terms of being able to afford it. Households with low access to utilities have higher chance of having girl child dropouts.

The size of the household is another causal factor. Of 521 households surveyed, 96% have 4 or more members; 51% have large households (above 6 members), a high proportion of households in this study fall into larger household category. The study has established that poverty is the major culprit for girl's dropout in these communities and also discovered the willingness of these dropouts to go back to school if given the opportunity for a second chance at schooling.

Level of education of the household head.

The results showed that 83.6% of household heads did not exceed primary education and 22.3% has never been to any school. Education level of the head of household could be a pointer to the level of prioritisation given to education in the family since households whose heads have primary education or less accounted for 86% of the total dropouts in these communities while households whose heads have at least secondary education accounted for only 14% of dropouts. Being educated does not eliminate completely the chances of having children that will drop out of school; rather it reduced the chance to a very large extent. The regression model showed the education level of the heads of households ($p=0.031$) as the second most important factor influencing girl's dropout rate. Also, the more educated the head of household is, the less likely it is that children from such household will drop out of school.

In summary, the education level of household head and family income are statistically significant drivers to dropout of girls from school while total number of income earners in the household is not statistically significant.

Free tuition and not free Education.

Even when primary school is technically **free and compulsory**, we found the real challenge to the achievement of the vision of Governor Willie Obiano to provide world class education to *umuakwukwo ndi Anambra* within the framework of the provision of free basic education to pupils in primary school, is in the translation of the compulsory free education scheme by the senior education managers.

Definition of free education

There is a dichotomy between government and people's definition of free education in Anambra State. While ASUBEB and senior education managers consider free tuition to mean free education, parents and the people include all extra fees and levies in their definition of school fees and free education. From the data analysis, parents spend on the average N6,985.90 per term to keep a child in school. The minimum fee per term is N260 while the highest is N12,300. Ninety-eight (98%) of the households had two to six children in the primary school. It is important to relate the cost of schooling to the number of the children in school.

Cost of compulsory textbooks and non-compulsory books for Primary school children

We found a high cost of compulsory textbooks (Mathematics, English, Igbo, Social Studies and Continuous Assessment) across all 26 primary schools visited. Parents complained bitterly about the cost of these compulsory textbooks and workbooks which we gathered (from Focus group discussions (FGD) with parents) amount from N3000 to N3,600 per child per session. Yet, children are not allowed to use textbooks and workbooks used by older siblings. Through interviews we gathered from teachers, head teachers and Education Secretaries that in a school term, children in senior primary classes are expected to buy 'compulsory' text books at a minimum cost of N3,000 while pupils in junior primary pay a minimum of N2,500 for text books. In addition to text books pupils are expected to buy activity/workbooks including novels at a minimum cost of N450. Ninety-eight (98) households have 2 or more children in primary schools.

"We don't like this selling of compulsory textbooks to these pupils, because we are with them and know how poor their parents are and how difficult it is for them to even feed. But what can we do? ASUBEB Awka insists that we must carry these text books and so we have no choice. Our hands are tied even when we don't support it."

Head Teacher, In-depth Interview

Consequently, a household with two children – one child each in senior and junior classes – spends on books per term and annually a minimum of N5,950 and N17,850 respectively, for one child.

Levies by Anambra State Universal Basic Education Board (ASUBEB)

Apart from compulsory textbooks and workbooks, the levies by ASUBEB are too many and some unjustified, especially in situations where school facilities, the basis of the fees and levies, are non-existence. For example, only 4 out of 26 primary schools have functional toilets yet parents of 290,839 pupils in public schools pay ASUBEB N50 for toilet roll. 11 schools had insufficient number of white boards, one school had no board; 14 schools had sufficient boards. Since children still copy their exams from the white boards the fifty naira (N50.00) examination fee looks suspicious as other sundry fees – lesson, handicraft and development fees. These are just a few disturbing examples (see, chapter 3 for details). Additional charges for uniforms, textbooks, levies – accounted and unaccounted for, salaries of ad-hoc teachers (indigenes) employed by Parents Teachers Association and school maintenance create financial barriers for many families in already impoverished rural settings. The parents see every charge as being school fees hence in their opinion, such charges (fees and levies) when high is a disincentive to sending their child to school.

Early Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy

There are other issues peculiar to the girl child alone. About 35% of the 521 respondents cited early marriage as being a causal factor for high dropout rate of girl child. According to FDG with out-of-school girls, some cases of early marriage were supported and even orchestrated by the parents of the girl. This could be poverty-related.

Oyi local government has the lowest rate of teenage pregnancy with 37% of the respondents agreeing to its high prevalence. Next to Oyi local government is Ogbaru with 52% acceptance of its prevalence in communities. The highest rates were found in Awka North LGA with 92%, Ayamelum LGA with 83% and Anambra West LGA with 81%. The regression results showed that the total dropout children in a household has statistically significant impact on teenage pregnancy.

Cost of schooling is another variable that has positive impact on teenage pregnancy. Increase in cost of schooling will push the children of the poor out of school. As have been found out, out-of-school children are at more risk of teenage pregnancy. Hence almost every factor that has strong impact on dropout rate will also have impact on teenage pregnancy.

Contrary to the view that a large household is beneficial for farm work in agrarian communities, the results showed that increase in the number of household members does not mean much in terms of

income earned by the household. Rather, the larger the size of the household, the more likely it is that a teenage daughter might get pregnant.

Remarkably, only 1% of the respondents see education for the girl child as not being important. Over 98% of household heads will allow their girl child continue education if they have any form of scholarship or support for the education of their girl child. Over 60% of the respondents do not see education as an opportunity cost for lost labour.

Conditions of public schools in communities beyond the end of the road.

The physical environment and state of facilities of these schools as against what we have in other places in the State presents a sorry sight. What did we find? Dilapidated buildings, dingy classrooms without windows, collapsed ceilings, classrooms devoid of seats and absence of toilet facilities for boys and girls (See, chapter on school infrastructure). We saw to our amazement children kneeling down to write on bare floors without chairs or desks.

A head teacher in Ogbaru LGA sums it up this way: “What they need here is complete free education, including free books, which is a 100% free education. They cannot afford to pay for anything. Even when I provided the free uniforms, it made many of them to enroll into the school. Free education will be a major incentive.”

Eleven (11) of the 26 schools studied had no toilets; 10 schools have non-functioning toilet facility; only 5 schools have decent toilets. Eighteen (18) schools have no water supply; 4 have non-functional water source and 4 have potable water.

- 54% (53.8%) of teachers interviewed reported that 14 out of 26 schools have enough white boards. (Table XXX).
- Interestingly, in Awka North, 50% of the schools visited have enough white boards but no available space to hang them due to shortage of class rooms and leaky roofs.
- 98.8% of the schools have School Based Management Committee (SBMC) and PTA.
- 89% of household heads have attended PTA meetings in the last 12 months.
- Accessing Omasi-Agu, Umueje and Anaku in Ayamelum LGA and Abo-Atani in Ogbaru LGA was very easy as the three communities were located on the tarred road and the location of schools also easy. Others communities were embarrassingly inaccessible.
- Few schools such as Igwebundu Primary School, Urum, Awka North had reasonably good infrastructure and facilities.
- Teachers are dedicated but they were not enough in these communities.

All the 26 schools studied had supervisory visits, the highest frequency achieved by Oyi and Anambra East LGA supervisory teams. In these two LGAs, 50% of schools are supervised monthly. The frequency

of supervision by the Awka North LGA to the eight schools included in this study was twice or maximum three times per term – perhaps unrelated to “hard-to-reach” location of the schools in this study

Many like the Island Primary School, Okpageorge, Odaekpe in Anambra West have no potable water. The pupils of Island Primary, Okpageorge, currently drink the River Niger. In front of the abandoned water project was two dilapidated male and female toilet facilities which have been eaten up by the forest. If these toilet facilities were repaired and rebuilt, primary school pupils would be saved from defecating in the forest – ***a method faster than the speed of a train in spreading infectious diseases.*** St Paul’s Catholic Primary School, Awba Ofemili in Awka North is poorly furnished as most of the classrooms lack seats for the pupils. One of the school blocks is in a terrible state of disrepair. More disturbing is the situation research team found in Ugbenu Ime Primary School, Ugbenu –classrooms without seats. This has forced the pupils to kneel down to write while studies are going on. We found other disturbing conditions children are subjected to.

- (i) Absence of secondary schools. For example, girls in communities like Obagwe 1 without a secondary school trek more than 2 hours to attend classes in another village in Ossamala with a secondary school.
- (ii) The architectural design of school buildings in most schools is poor. It does not allow for proper ventilation and as such some students and teachers complained of discomfort while inside the classrooms.
- (iii) All the 26 schools studied had supervisory visits, the highest frequency achieved by Oyi and Anambra East LGA supervisory teams. However, three LGAs have low frequency of visits.

We found in the course of the study other not education sector related factors that hinder the girl children access to completion of basic education.

Lack of access roads to some communities. Social amenities such as roads, electricity, potable water and basic health facilities are almost non-existent in these communities. We established that these LGAs also had the worst road network {Chapter 4} in a State already identified nationally and even internationally as one with the best road network in the whole of Nigeria.

There are cultural practices such as Agiri” and “Nwabi” that facilitate girl’s drop out of school since these practices suggest that education of girls is beneficial only to the future husband.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are distressing and highlights a deeper learning crisis that needs to be addressed. There are 290,839 children in Anambra State public primary schools. If nothing is done and fast, it is estimated that 29,375 (10.1%) of them will drop out of school at primary 6 and 56,295 (19.7%) at JSS3. It is inconceivable that 22% of household members did not attend school and may never, thus, some will reach adolescence without the necessary skills needed to lead successful and productive lives. The study concludes that in the six LGAs studied, the high rate of girl child drop out from primary school is a serious cause for concern in Anambra State. Several factors act in concert or separately to keep the girl child out of school. With so much fees and levies – it is not her fault she dropped out of school. In the state, tuition is free but free tuition does not translate to free education. The consequence of this high cost is the withdrawal of the girl child as the first victim.

Getting basic education right in Anambra State demands provision of **total free education** at primary level. And reducing girl's drop-out of school is central to achieving the "No-Child-Left-Behind" Policy of the State Government.

We, here, present recommendations to improve the education of the girl-child. These recommendations are in addition to ***the concerted and outstanding efforts of the State government*** in the education sector, which we note has yielded very positive dividends. However, our recommendations are based in the light of evidence as found in the research and as such are empirically based.

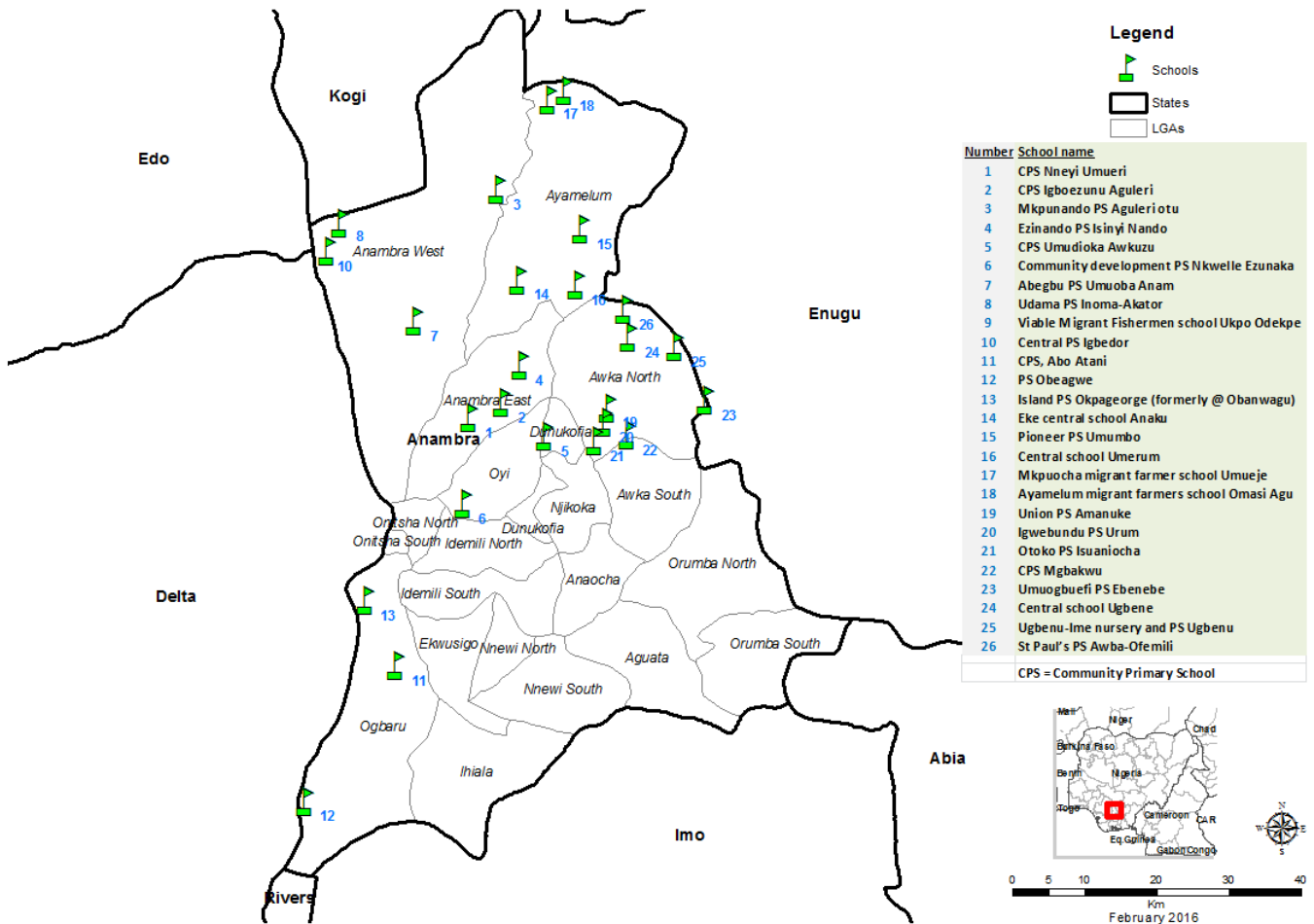
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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Mapping of 26 Primary schools and documenting their coordinates for future need



Annex 4: Schools selected for the study

Local Government Areas	Schools selected
AWKA NORTH	Saint Paul Catholic School, Awba-Ofemili Central School Ugbene Umuogbuefi Primary School Ebenebe Ugbenu-Ime Primary School Ugbenu Community Primary School Mgbakwu Igwebundu Primary School Urum Otoko Primary School Isuaniocha Union Primary School Amanuke
AYAMELUM	Pioneer Primary School Umumbo Central School Umerum Eke Central School Anaku Anyamelum Migrant Farmer School Omasi-Agu Mkpoucha Migrant Farmer School Umueje
ANAMBRA WEST	Migrant Fishermen School Ukpo, Odekpe Abegbu Primary School Umuoba, Anam Central School Igbedor Udama Primary School Inoma
OYI	Community Development Primary School N/Ezunaka Community Primary School Umudioka Awkuzu
OGBARU	Community Primary School Abo-Atani Island Primary School Obanwagu (Okpageorge) Primary School Obagwe
ANAMBRA EAST	Community Primary School Igbozunu Aguleri Ezinando Primary School, Nando Mkpunando Community Primary School Aguleri-otu Community Primary School, Nneyi Umueri

Annex 6: Location of health facilities in the six LGAs studied (+ represents a PHC)

