

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)

Lift Off - Secondary Space Education (2)

Author: Mrs. Olayinka Abiodun Fagbemiro

National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA), Nigeria

ASTRONOMY AS A TOOL FOR INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY,
ENGINEERING, ARTS AND MATHEMATICS (STEAM)-AN ASTRONOMERS WITHOUT BORDERS
(AWB) NIGERIA/OFFICE OF ASTRONOMY FOR DEVELOPMENT (OAD) INITIATIVE**Abstract**

This paper explains the steps and ways Astronomy is being used to engender gender equality in SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ARTS AND MATHEMATICS (STEAM) in the northern part of Nigeria. The various ways a team of young Astronomers who are members of Astronomers without Borders (AWB) in Nigeria are trying to encourage the female children to aspire to STEAM just as much as their male counterparts and also to encourage parents to enrol their female children and also aspire for them to be great scientists in the nearest future. The northern Nigeria has the country's worst girl child education, highest female illiteracy, highest adolescent girl marriage, highest under 15 child bearing, and highest risk of maternal death and injury. The scorecards underline the links between poor educational attainment for girls, forced marriage of underage children, and under age child bearing. The inequality exists between the male and female involvement in STEAM, which is an extension of the issues associated with girl-child education in the rural parts of northern Nigeria. The gender apartheid places the girl-child in a disadvantaged position, where her potentials are suppressed and self-actualisation is not achieved. According to UNICEF (2017), the global figure for out-of-school children is estimated to be 263 million, out of which 141.5 million (approximately 53.8%) OAD has partnered with AWB Nigeria in taking Astronomy to the girl children in Northern Nigeria in order to bridge this gap that currently exists between the male and female STEAM involvement level in Northern Nigeria. This partnership started in 2017 when the AWB won the first grant to organise the first Astronomy camp for girls in Nigeria. Through the collaboration between AWB Nigeria and OAD, the first Astronomy camp for girls was hosted in April, 2018. The girls, whose ages ranged between 9 and 17, participated in different activities during the camp. The session was very engaging as the Girls learnt some interesting things about Space and Astronomy. The team has been able to follow up with the participants of the maiden Girls Astronomy camp and their STEAM performance has been impressive. The OAD has provided additional fund for the AWB Nigeria for the camp to be replicated in some other parts of Northern Nigeria. Here is the video link to the first Astronomy Girls' Camp summary : <https://youtu.be/tsMG7CKlBbg>