

FEMALE EDUCATION AS A MEANS OF REDUCING INFANT AND MATERNAL MORTALITY IN NIGERIA

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Nigeria has acceded to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Though much has been said about universal basic education and combating the spread of malaria and HIV/AIDs, it does not appear that as much effort is being made to achieve the twin goals of two-thirds reduction in infant and maternal mortality rates by 2015. At present, Nigeria has one of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world. Also, despite the Universal Basic Education program, the girl child remains disadvantaged where access to education is concerned. This inequity has far reaching effects as women's acculturation and knowledge juxtaposed against societal pressures are key to effective health care for women and their children. Hence it is said that the health status of the whole family rests on the woman. This paper seeks to expose the enormity of the problem of infant and maternal mortality in Nigeria. It draws a link between illiteracy, poverty and disease and points to the place of women's education in solving this problem. It also proposes Open and Distance Learning as a cost effective means of achieving the goals of reduction in infant and child mortality rates in Nigeria.