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It is now five years since the World Summit Declaration and the task of taking stock of the past and reflecting on the present realities with a view to ensuring efficiency in future implementation of the Convention, is very crucial if decade goals are to be achieved and maintained.

In March 1990, Nigeria along with other countries of the World ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Children and agreed to strictly adhere to its provisions. The Summit succeeded in setting 27 child health and welfare goals and these have been incorporated into the national plans of more than 100 countries.

In spite of government's claim that the socio-cultural problems of the state has major implications for child rights monitoring, the will and commitment of government is much responsible for the lack of enforcement, promotion and monitoring of the Articles contained in the United Nations Convention.

Contrary to government's submission, Nigeria's socio-cultural system cannot be said to be much of a set back or impediment to the implementation and observance of Children's Rights.

No religion or culture in Nigeria condones or support child rituals, exploitation, physical, mental or sexual abuse of children or does any section or ethnic groupings promote the violation of the rights and welfare of children, except the parochial, selfish and retrogressive acts of some traditional leaders and people's in high places, who out of ignorance and inferiority complex, lord their influence through the deprivation of other peoples rights.

On Background to Convention Ratification.

The State Report, mentioned the existence of National policies, such as on Health, Education, Social Development, Population including that of the defunct Better Life Programme (BLP) between 1981 and 1993. None of these policies could be said to have made any significant impact on the lives of the family, particularly those at the grass root.

These policies are endangered by the ineffective methods and strategies for which they were

implemented, the zeal, will and commitment of the operators and most importantly the non - involvement of direct community participation in the planning, implementation and supervision of programmes and funding.

Promulgation of Laws, its protection, enforcement and monitoring, which is most wanting in our political life, is all that is required to influence the development of the total personality of the child, his social capacities, values attitudes and aspirations.

Extensive and effective enlightenment campaign and education on the consequences, advantage and benefits of the application of such laws and decrees on the observance of both child and human rights to the entire nation, are very much lacking due to government's inaction, political instability, fire brigade attitude to matters of public interest and in particular the failure of the Civil Service to maintain and protect government policies for subsequent administrations to follow.

On his return from New York as the head of the delegation to the World Summit for Children in September 1990, the nation's Vice President was full of promises for children and went ahead to tell the world that Nigeria, would among other reforms, establish a National Commission for Children, in order to accelerate the Convention for the Rights and Welfare of Children. Until that administration was terminated in August 1993, little to nothing was achieved in advancing the Convention.

The Federal Government in 1991, through the Ministries of Health/ Social Welfare and that of Information/Culture in collaboration with a formidable team of experts (CWLN inclusive), under the coordination of Unicef, set out to formulate a national frame work for implementing the goals of the World Summit for Children and in the same year a Trust Fund for the Nigerian Child was established to enhance the talents of children through Arts and Cultural activities and in particular, to raise funds for the execution of programmes designed for child welfare services.

The reports of the Child Rights Committee was very comprehensive and highly commendable, but most unfortunately governments commitment and failure to provide funds to carry out the recommendations and programmes contained in the reports, compounded the problems in the implementation of the Convention.

However, the recommendation of the Child Rights Committee for a National Seminar on Child Rights was approved by government with the conduct of an elaborate programme which, held in March 1992, helped sensitize media executives on the implementation of the Rights of the Child in Nigeria. Though quite successful, the institutional capacity was not well facilitated, as follow up mechanism for consistent publicity, observance and monitoring.

The government has failed to give an account of the activities of the Children's Trust Fund, particularly the state of its finances.

The First Lady's Concert for the Nigerian Children's Trust Fund received tremendous financial support and with so many millions of Naira donated by corporate firms, philanthropists, government agencies, international donor agencies and all lovers of children, the management of the funds later became questionable.

Casting doubts on activities related to child welfare, the lack of accountability on the part of government, has substantially discouraged the spirit and support from the organized private sector, thereby endangering the relationship between NGOs and prospective donors as well as having untold effects on the laudable programmes of credible NGOS.

HARMONIZATION OF LAWS AND POLICIES

If government insists that it has taken measures to harmonize national laws and policies with the provision of the Convention, then such laws could be seen not to be adequate, enforced or monitored. Due to lack of awareness campaign and publicity, considering our level of illiteracy, over 85% of Nigerians are ignorant of their "human" rights, not to mention that of the Child and

with close to 65m illiterates, Nigeria rates high among the 9 largest illiterate population in the world.

Poser: If in 1991, a Committee was set up in 1991, to review all laws related to Children, has government applied such recommendations made by the Committee despite the huge expenses?

Similarly government claims that a 62 point communique which provided a national framework for a new legal dispensation on the child was released after a workshop on the review and application of the archaic Children and Young Person's Law, it will be important to examine the application of some of the major points, if they were in the first case, ever decreed in the last four years.

The Law itself, particularly the Children and Young Persons Law of 1964, contradicts the plight of children in areas of child labour and street trading, a phenomenon that continues to have devastating and retrogressive effects on the safety, education and welfare of children.

Though, the decrees on sales of Tobacco and Alcohol, prohibiting the use of children from promoting the sales of cigarettes and alcohol is well enforced, little children as low as five years of age, are in the habit of been sent to buy cigarettes and alcohol in stalls and beer parlous by parents and guardians, has there is no existing law that forbids the indecent act.

The defunct Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) now christened National Orientation Agency (NOA) by the present administration is regarded as dead wolves by the generality of the masses and thus, no longer serves its usefulness for its failure to serve as the corrective indices for change in the country.

Existing and planned Mechanisms

Government in its report, claims to have existing or planned mechanisms at all levels for coordinating policies relating to children and for monitoring the implementation of the Convention.

With the establishment of the National Commission for Women, under the Presidency, in 1989 and subsequent switching of Child Welfare Services under the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Services in 1991, to the Women Commission, the Convention until 1993 suffered a set back.

This was as a result of a power tussle and budget sharing between the Federal Ministry of Health and Human Services and the National Commission for Women on one part and the Federal Ministry of Education and Youth Development and the Commission on the other. Collaborating International Agencies activities with government, particularly that of Unicef recorded set backs within the period.

Important mention is the first seminar on the Education of the Girl Child, organized in Lagos, in December 1992, by the Federal Ministry of Education in conjunction with Unicef, to mobilize NGO participation, a meeting which later culminated in the formation of the Non-Governmental organizations in Education (NGOSED) Network, of which CWLN Executive President holds the position of 1st National Vice President.

Barely six months after, a similar conference, where the National Task Force on the Education of the Girl Child (CWLN inclusive) was constituted, was without reference to previous exercises held by the Education Ministry, organized by the National Commission for Women along with UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNDP and World Bank.

Secondly, before the advent of the Women Commission, the Ministry for Social Welfare, had established a Committee (CWLN inclusive) to deliberate and map out strategies for the celebration of the 1994, International Year for the Family IYF '94.

With its closeness to the First Lady and the Presidency, the Commission for Women, without considering the implications of its shoddy actions vehemently usurped the activities of the Committee, without relevance to the existing special IYF Committee.

This evidently shows the lack of coordination and co-operation amongst relevant child related government agencies.

The relationship of the Commission with non-governmental organizations also suffers the same fate and thereby decrease the level of the implementation of the Child Rights Convention.

A Child Welfare Department was carved out of the Commission, under-staffed and inadequately funded, until date, has only three key staff, even when the Commission has been upgraded to the level of a Federal Ministry.

It is also pertinent to request a progress report on the strategies adopted on the recommendations of the National working Committee on Child Welfare that was inaugurated in March, 1993.

If in actual sense, the existing National Child Rights Implementation Committee, established a year ago, is to ensure maximum observance, implementation and monitoring of the Convention in all its ramifications, its present activities and mode of operations would have to be reviewed. Currently, Nigeria falls short of expectation in the stipulated declarations and objectives of attaining the mid-decade goals set at the World Summit for Children and the mechanisms in place cannot guarantee better results except credible NGOs at the grass root are effectively mobilized and encouraged by government in achieving the set decade goal.

Despite the formation of the National and State Task Force on the Education of the Girl Child and the consistent awareness campaign by NGOS, except a drastic political will is in place, the Girl Child, will continue to suffer for a long time to come.

One major constraint apart from extensive enlightenment campaign is the incessant closure of public schools and strike actions by teachers due to non-payment of salaries and welfare packages.

Rather than staying at home and compounding the problems of their parents, children particularly girls are withdrawn from schools into early marriages and into extensive child labour (street trading and the likes).

Influenced by miscreants and hoodlums in society, some of the kids are seen roaming the streets and alley ways, engaged in child prostitution, illicit drugs and crimes.

Recently in Adamawa State, an 11 year old girl took her guardian to court for collecting bride price and giving her to marriage thereby giving her of her childhood and education. Quite unfortunately, the presiding magistrate dismissed the case for an out of court settlement. On investigation we reliably gathered that the magistrate was equally guilty of such an offence having married a 12 year old girl - child in 1994.

Withdrawal of girls from school for early marriage should be prohibited by law. States such as Bauchi, Niger, Kaduna, Kano and Benue have already passed laws prohibiting the withdrawal of girls from school for early marriages. While other states are expected to follow, the law should be properly enforced and monitored.

Family Support Programme (FSP)

Prior to the establishment of the Family Support Programme (FSP), the First Lady addressed the media and promised to have as her programme "Child Welfare" as a response to the proposal earlier presented to her officially by CWLN. CWLN had wanted Her Excellency to adopt "Social Justice for Children" (SJC), however its proposal for government to establish a National Commission for Children under the Presidency to promote the Convention was widely

acclaimed in the first lady's letter of March 1994 to CWLN and also by the Chief of General Staff during his March 17, 1994 official meeting with the Board of Directors of CWLN.

However, FSP received much attention of the first lady, with Child Welfare given little mention in her agenda, with the idea of establishing a Children Commission shelved. While lobbying for changes in legislation and practice, measures to exact pressure on the First Lady (as CWLN Grand Patron), to prioritize the establishment of the Commission by the present regime is being intensified.

With the FSP officially inaugurated in November 1994, and realizing over 500 million naira financial support from government, corporate bodies, donor agencies and individuals and subsequently the launching of Family Trust Fund by the Head of State himself, specifically for assisting distressed families, the welfare of children and the development of the youth, all that is required by government is to learn from the mistakes of the past and ensure accountability of public funds, maintain that such funds are judiciously used for its purpose and that achievements can be quantified in both FSP short and long term nation building projects.

From all indications the FSP since inception in November 1994, at national and states level, cannot claim to have made any significant change in the lives of distressed families or a particular set of community. It is rather seen as a political game-plan that lacks steam, credibility and direction.

Media Concerns

The level of press coverage, particularly that of the electronic media on the propagation and monitoring of the Convention needs much emphasis. In most cases the TV and Radio operators complain of lack of funds to maintain their equipments while corporate sponsorship of child related advocacy programmes are not encouraging as required.

Magazines and comics devoted to children have diminished on the Newspaper stand due to escalating cost of production and the inability of children to afford the increasing prices.

Unlike government establishments, where the Minister's speech is reported on the news items, NGOs relatively enjoy free publicity of their community programmes on television and radio.

However there is need to improve the standard of Child Right reports in the media.

CONSTRAINTS

In enumerating its constraints in implementing the Rights of Children as contained in the UN Convention and the African Charter, government considers Socio-Cultural and Traditional Practices of the people, the Economic and Political instability, as factors militating against the advancement of the convention.

This could be said to be true to a large extent, but invariably lack of the will power, commitment and exemplary features of government and its agencies to advancing the rights of children are responsible for the present state of affairs.

With an extensive campaign at the grass root and enforcement of existing laws, the socio-cultural and traditional practices negating the promotion of the Convention can be considerably reduced.

Evident economic growth in post-independent era, marked by various indications led to increase in real average income, life expectancy, school environment, adult literacy rates and health care services. Reduction in infant mortality was duly recorded.

By mid 70s, the promising change began to fade, stagnation occasioned by global economic recession and the oil crisis of 1974, was discernible through negative trade balance, low demand, declining prices of export, growing international debt, dwindling foreign exchange,

higher unemployment rates, severe drought and inflation.

Unfortunately, governments responded by cutting the already inadequate investment on social services including health care facilities. In 1994 the budget for the Presidency exceeded that of the Health sector.

With an effective community support mobilization, an increase and restructuring of budgetary allocations and commitments in favour of child and women related projects, most problems facing children, would certainly be curtailed and drastically eliminated.

On the issue of political factors based on recent experience in administrative changes, a law protecting adopted policies from politicking and discontinuity should be enacted in the interest of the child and the younger generations.

LABOUR LAWS

On 31, page 16 of the report, there is rampant violation of these rights without any checks from government enforcement agencies.

Over 90 % of adults, in many aspects, abuse children ignorantly and it could only be reduced through effective counselling and enlightenment campaign and later followed up by stringent measures front trained and capable law enforcement officers.

Section 31 of the 1979 Constitution protects 11 the child from performing forced or compulsory labour"

Every child irrespective of class, status, religion or culture according to the Convention, "shall be protected from all forms of exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous and, or interfere with the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development".

With the state of the nation's political status, economic, social and literacy level, that provision is far from being realized.

Deprived of normal childhood development, the Nigerian Child is made to source for survival. Exposed to harsh weather conditions and stunted growth, rituals, crimes and inhuman activities, physically, sexually and emotionally abused daily, as a survivalist, the child is made to work endlessly into the nights, without a ray of hope for a better tomorrow.

Practically all the quoted municipal laws have no enforcement, evaluation and monitoring mechanisms. From all indications, it is convincing that government does not in itself bother on the observance of these laws.

Even members of the police force and the judiciary are ignorant of the articles contained in the Convention.

Criminal Responsibility

The criminal code provides S.30, thereof : " A person under the age of twelve years is not criminally responsible for any act or omission unless it is proved that at the time of doing the act or making the omission he had the capacity to know that he ought not to do the act or make the omission."

The justification of the existing law and the arrest of 11 year old Stephen Bamidele, on March 3, 1994 in Lagos with some wraps of Indian Hemp (Canabis) and, taken to Onikan Centre Zone 11, police station, where he was later transferred to Kirikiri maximum prisons, cannot be explained. Penal Code S.50 provides that "no act is an offence which is done by a child not above 12 years of age and has not attained sufficient understanding to judge the nature and consequences of such act" and according to Article 17 Juvenile Justice: " Every Child found

guilty of any offence shall have the right to special treatment and administration of human rights"

The above Article 17 and even that of 37 of the Convention have severally been flagrantly violated by government and should be redressed in the interest of children fallen in this circumstances.

Under the Penal Code, sections 26 (1), 27 and 28 of the Children and Young Persons Law provide that where a child within the age of seven commits an offence, he is to be brought before the juvenile court while section 31 of the 1979 Constitution ensures for the child the dignity of his/her person accordingly "...the child shall not be subjected to any form of torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment".

At the Adeniji Adele and the Alakara Juvenile Centres in Lagos State, children from the age of 3, found roaming the street without identification from their guardians are locked up in cells without any adequate care or instant arraignment in juvenile courts.

The police in 1992 confined in CWLN over the existence of secret hide-outs in Lagos and Port-Harcourt where children are taught how to shoot guns, use daggers and jump high fences and barricades by hoodlums and men of the under-world. The explanation of the police on why it could not combat the criminal act rested on financial and material resources, same argument given over the dehumanizing state of the toddlers in police (juvenile) cells.

Considering the fact that under the Nigerian Constitution of 1979, the right of the child to life, survival and development is guaranteed vis--a-vis the pathetic state of its children, the Nigerian government in clear terms should be considered violators of the Convention. Positive steps must be taken to correct the existing anomalies.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES:

With the provision of the protection of children's fundamental rights in the Constitution, the life of today's average Nigerian child, his dignity, freedom of expression, movement, peaceful assembly and the right to freedom from discrimination among others are very much in danger and needs all necessary protection.

The best interest of the child is hardly considered a top priority by government, a testimony to the dilemma of today's child's survival, education and welfare and the current occurrence in inconsistencies of policy decisions and implementation.

With the untold hardship faced by many homes and the increasing socio-economic activities that make parents seek means of livelihood and spend less quality time with their children, no special measures has been taken by government except its pronouncement to bring succor to distressed families through the Petroleum Trust Fund among others.

Non-Discrimination

Section 39 (2) of 1979 Constitution can be enforced through adequate counselling and education of the traditional and religious leaders in relation to the changing times.o

Religion itself embraces all children irrespective of the circumstances of their birth. Established religious NGOS, particularly those at the grass root level , with governmental support can ensure the implementation of the Act.

Best Interest of the Child:

With due reference to government's violation under the Penal Code and that of Article 3, 17 and 37 of the Convention, its claim that Article 4, was already in force is undoubtful, however the implication of the constraints is not seen by government as violation of child rights and as an accomplice against the best interest of the child, fail to address these anomalies.

In practical terms, contrary to section 71 (i) of the matrimonial cases act of 1970, the court hardly regard the interest of children as the paramount consideration.

Rights to Life and Development

The right of the Nigerian Child as to the above, notably those born under difficult circumstances are said to be guaranteed under the 1979 Constitution. Indications from the provisions of the country's annual budget and social policy cannot be seen to protect the child's deprivation of the right to shelter, nutritious food, health services, education and leisure.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOM

In Nigeria the freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly and religion and access to appropriate information, right to private and family life and the protection of the dignity of the child can only be guaranteed through adequate counselling, effective and extensive media and public campaign.

Recovery of Maintenance

On paper, a maintenance obligation law in Nigeria guarantees a child's basic necessities where parents cannot afford, owing to economic and social reasons. In reality such obligations do not exist.

Equally, the social welfare officers for children deprived of a family environment at state and local levels, no longer carry out their functions to the letter.

Child Abuse, Neglect and Social Re-Integration.

To what extent is there access to the Courts? Are remedies adequate? Does the child or his family aware of their rights? Are they confident enough to enforce them? What are the key ingredients of effective enforcement? Most importantly, is government aware of its - responsibility to its citizenry?.

The violation of the rights of children remain unchallenged for a variety of reasons, such as lack of knowledge of rights and ineffective enforcement mechanism.

On the criminal laws against murder, abuse, sales, abduction and trafficking of children, if proper analytical surveys could be conducted, Nigeria would certainly have on record, millions of children that have fall victims to the perpetrators of these acts, particularly child rituals, whose nefarious brutality on the child is mostly covered under religious groupings, fanaticism and satanic injunctions. Not unaware of these demonic actors, some leaders in government go as far as offering them protection. Government has been selfishly incapacitated in bringing justice to bear on the protection of Child Rights.

Pronouncements and the mechanism for the development of specific enforcement procedures of the rights enshrined in the UNCRC and the ACRWC should contain the following:

1. Powers given to specialized enforcement agencies to conduct investigation and take appropriate action in the child's interest:
 - (i) Draft legislation to empower social welfare units and relevant agencies, particularly NGOs to appropriately effect the work of rescuing homeless children.
 - (ii) Establish special department such as proposed National commission for children, to handle all matters relating to children and that which will ensure that no Child is detained for more than one night in police custody, but sent within 24 hours to well established remand homes or otherwise, in the interest of the child.
2. Education and awareness creation among law enforcement agents and the public on child psychology and protection.
3. Enhancement of police/community relations and child rights education to develop mutual

trust and better interaction.

4. Clarification and strengthening of the Legal frame work for child rights and the elimination of child labour, abandonment and harmful traditional practices.

5. In the interest of the child, a review and enforcement of the adoption laws and regulations.

Child Survival-Basic Health and Welfare Development

It is quite absurd, unfortunate and disappointing to note that over 30 million Nigerian children suffer unjustly from deprivations of basic needs for sustainable development, adequate nutrition, shelter, good health and education and have therefore become survivalists and refugees in a country said to be stable.

In a special CWLN report carried out by the media, it was revealed that not less than 120,000 dehumanized children, aged between 4 - 18 years are languishing in various jails and police cells (juvenile).

In another CWLN survey, a population of 213, 950 street children in 8 centres of Lagos alone was arrived at. About one third of this number live perpetually on the dirty and busy streets of Lagos.

Population Policy

The failure of government to enact a law forbidden child labour, particularly that of Street trading, would continue to breed more children into the society as most families depend on their children for survival. With about six kids bringing in a minimum of N100 each daily, the more the family continue to bear children, the better its economic visibility, as against the past where the reason for many children was due to very high and uncontrolled infant and child mortality rate.

The large exodus of urban migration has raised the level of inflation, created economic stagnation and devastated the environment among others.

With no infrastructure and job opportunities established in the rural areas the cities shall continue to be over populated with no corresponding resources to sustain the increasing populace.

However while SAP contributed immensely to the drastic cut in Nigeria's population growth, the review of the 1988 population policy, held in February 1994 did not indicate much progress. one of the key issue advanced, was lack of accurate data, sex education and family planning.

State of Disabled Children

Government at National, State and Regional levels cannot deny the fact that disabled children in Nigeria do not enjoy any special assistance or priority attention in accordance with Article 13 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children, which among others, states that "every child who is mentally or physically disabled shall have the right to special measures of protection in keeping with his physical and moral needs and under condition which ensures his dignity, promote his self reliance and active participation in the community".

Due to lack of commitment and sincerity on the part of government, the state has failed to ensure that Corporate Firms employ the disabled, which according to government's stipulation, "... 2% of the work force of any company should be those with physical disabilities". Even government agencies do not abide by these policy which is aimed at preventing disability from constituting a handicap and in protecting the rights of the disabled.

The unavailability of the braille and earring aids for the education of the blind and the deaf continues to constitute a devastating handicap for these group of handicapped children.

The present deplorable state of neglect of most remand homes and welfare institutions

indicates governments lack of concern for the disabled. The Wesley School for the Deaf and Dump, the educational centre with the largest intake of deaf and dumps in the nation, with 80 pupils at its inception in 1960, now accommodate about 600 pupils without any form of expansion to the existing facilities there-in.

It will be more satisfying if government could explore their high potentials and accord special priority by placing due emphasis on the education of the handicapped.

The categories spoiling for educational opportunity are:

The physically Handicapped, Visually Impaired, Speech and Hearing Impaired, Behaviour Disordered and the Mentally Retarded all need special attention of government.

These can either be main streamed in regular classrooms, segregated in special residential schools or educated in resource centers or Special day schools, depending on the severity of the handicap.

Special needs to ensure the rights and integration of the disabled.

- 1. CENSUS OF THE HANDICAPPED**
- 2. PHYSICAL FACILITIES FOR THE HANDICAPPED**
- 3. SPECIAL EQUIPMENTS AND MATERIALS**
- 4. TRAINED PERSONNEL**
- 5. RESTRUCTURED CURRICULUM**
- 6. SPECIAL EDUCATION**
- 7. ACCURATE FUNDING**

Protective Legislation

In view of the existing attitudes to the education of the handicapped, the need for a comprehensive plan for balanced educational provision and the involvement of heavy government investment, is essential, more so that the operation of education of the handicapped in Nigeria be guided by appropriate legislation or Act of Government.

Such legislation should aim at :

- i. Ensuring that all handicapped children age 6 - 21 years, have access to qualitative education, and all supportive services required for their individual development.
- ii. Ensure basic uniformity in the provision of special education for the handicapped in Nigeria.

HEALTH SERVICES

Most Nigerian hospitals have been described as mere consulting clinics and in some cases, mortuary for the living dead, as medical experts and consultants have continued to depart the country's shores for wealthy countries, notably United States of America, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia and Germany. Governments have failed to encourage these set of people to have social and economic prosperity in their own countries in the mist of so many wastes.

Furthermore, over 75 million Nigerians are denied adequate nutrition and rudimentary health services, while modern health services are out of the reach of the child of the common man, a total contradiction to the Nation's Health for All by the year 2000.

The Bamako Initiative has been the main strategy for strengthening the operations and management of PHC through cost sharing at the community level and this has, since its inception, been carried out in over 30 LGAs and based on the increasing importance attached to the program, the Federal Ministry of Health agreed to establish at least one Bamako Initiative LGA in each state of the federation.

Reports of a national survey and assessment on the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) carried out in February 1991 indicated that immunization services reached 96% of Nigerian children and to control diarrhoeal diseases between 1988 -1991, nearly 3 million oral rehydration sachets were dispensed.

The government also embarked on several child survival projects. However a cursory look at the entire allocation to the health sector between 1986 and 1991 shows a 0.292 per cent of the Gross National Product. It is worthy of note here that the collapse of the hospitals, clinics and schools began in 1987 with a decline in allocation to those sectors. The decline was as much as 0.7%.

Considering the fact that the budget for the Presidency for the year 1994, far exceeded that of the Federal Ministry of Health and Human Services, a cursory analysis of Nigeria's budget as it affects children in the past seven years indicates that consistent efforts to substantially address the distortions that continue to plague allocation of resources and policy implementation should be accorded priority.

The nation's coverage of EPI which stood at about 80 per cent in early 1993, shamefully reduced to about 23 per cent without any corresponding drive or concern of government.

Decertification and the control or elimination of diseases, such as malaria, measles, poliomyelitis, tuberculosis, guinea worm, cholera, AIDS, pertussis and diphtheria should be intensified.

The proposed National Programme goals on health, with reference to state report's table is rather too ambitious considering the progress made between 1990 and the 1995 mid-decade goal. For example, moderate and severe malnutrition of children under 5 is today about 20% and 60% respectively. The expectation of 12% and 10% for universal access to safe drinking water by A>D> 2000 are not only realistic but a distortion of facts.

Child Care

Child care exists only in few cities, and even then there is need to ensure that corporate firms and government agencies, establish creches for nursing mothers.

The existing centres within women commissions are run as Day Care Centres mostly for the privileged elite, while pre and post natal services are really rendered, even by the Women Centre established in the federal capital territory, as claimed in the state report.

The approval of an Act on Child Benefit Rights and the implementation of a National Health Insurance Scheme would for socioeconomic planning and distribution of resources enable government, have an accurate data on impoverished, disabled, uneducated and homeless children.

Standard of Living

The living standard of the average Nigerian family is quite pathetic and fast deteriorating, largely due to the political imbroglio of the rulership.

The existence of a Household Food Security programme would have been much appropriate at this crucial time, to alleviate the sufferings of the average family particularly children, but quite unfortunately this programme of government is unknown to generality of Nigerians.

Cost of food, health services, shelter and even education at the pre and primary levels have become unbearable for most families.

However it is important to know the collaborating donor agencies working with government on the said programme and identify their goals and its impact on the common man, in best interest of the malnourished child.

COMMITMENT IN EDUCATION

In 1990, in Jomtien, Thailand, Nigeria along with other countries of the world signed a declaration which among others, recognized the right of every citizen to basic education and the achievement of providing education for all by the year 2000.

Inconsistencies in policy financing, management and implementation are reason for Nigeria's failure to record any significant achievement in the set 1995 EFA mid-decade goal.

A case in point is the Decree No. 3 of January 1991, which dissolved the National Primary Education Commission (NPEC), by repealing Decree No. 31 of 1988 and giving direct control of schools management and financing to local government councils.

That decision resulted in a protracted primary school teachers strike in 1992 and on January 14, 1993, and repealing Decree No. 3, Decree No. 14, was promulgated.

Between January 14, 1993 and August 25, 1993, no law was passed on the administration of education in Nigeria.

In 1993 alone, due to political instability, 3 Ministerial appointments were made for the education Ministry.

Decree No. 96 of August 25, 1993 was later promulgated to re-establish NPEC and not until April 1994 did the Commission began to function as a body charged with the management of primary education in Nigeria.

Administrative bottleneck has been responsible for the set back on the 1990 \$120m World Bank Primary Education Project. The non settlement of the equivalent counterpart fund of \$30m, expected to be provided by the Federal Government, also compounded logistics.

In the South, the high un-enrolment ratio of 55% for Lagos, is indicative of the loss of confidence of parents in public schools.

There is also the loss of confidence of parents in public schools, because of protracted strikes of teachers and government incessant long closure of schools.

Contrary to EFA goals, in the last five years, enrolment has drastically reduced nationwide. More than 65% of school age children are out of school, majority of which are girls. Ironically while girls are retained in schools in Ibo speaking states, boys, are leaving en-masse into the business of trading as apprentices.

While teachers relief package approved over the last one year by government, is still expected to be paid in October 1995, teachers from many LGAs are still owed salary areas and allowances up to 1994. In late September 1995, the 400,000 strong Nigeria Union of Teachers again went on strike due to government's failure to meet an agreement reached on its 5 point demand for improved conditions of service:

- 1.Setting up of Teachers Salary Structure (TSS)
- 2.Payment of all relief package owed teachers
- 3.Payment of all outstanding retirement benefits to teachers
- 4.Inauguration of Teachers Registration Council
- 5.Establishment of a National Negotiating Council for Teachers.

According to NPEC, Nigeria requires about N20 billion to maintain current level of activity in primary schools and while over N60 billion will be needed to provide infrastructure in all states, about N70 million is outstanding payments of salary areas and allowances in one state's local government alone.

Education at all levels in Nigeria, out of neglect, lack teachers, instructional materials and infrastructure, and in most parts of the North, children learn under trees and make-shift enclaves, schools with no sanitary, sporting and physical education facilities. More than 90% of Nigerian schools have no libraries and laboratories, that will help promote science and technology.

Apart from insufficient numbers of teachers, most on the job are not qualified and in some parts of the North, more than 70%, have not even their grade two Certificate replaced.

The non-challant attitude of government officials in ensuring the-smooth running of public schools and curtail prolonged teachers' strikes is largely because most of the officials of the education ministry do not have their children in public schools.

Therefore, if adequate measure is to be advanced to curb this retrogressive acts and ensure significant improvement in the quality of education and facilities in public schools, it should be urgently decreed that children of policy decision makers in government must attend public schools.

In the words of a research professor of social policy, " The Nigerian educational system subjects the child to too much harassment, abuse and frustration".

The government as part of its October 1, 1995 political broadcast invited interested voluntary bodies and individuals to establish private schools, although a welcome gesture, the agencies will require government's support, such as on tax rebate to succeed.

Leisure and Child Development.

In the past years, children were more mentally alert and do grow properly through the effective use of recreational play grounds.

Unfortunately recreational parks have become a thing of the past in our urban setting as children now have their growth stunted.

Children are often seen playing on major roads and in most worrisome cases fatal motor accidents occur.

Private buildings, religious and business centres have taken the place of community and children's play grounds, without the protection of authorities.

SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES.

According to recent pronouncement by the police, "Within a period of 60 days, over 500 armed robbers, consisting mainly of Kids, were arrested all over the country, and that however made government to beef up security and expend huge sums of money on security gadgets. Unfortunately government fails to seek solution to the source of this social decadence and continues to overlook the priority of social security in rebuilding our family and environmental disintegration.

This social upheaval is closely related to the economic down turn in the country, the increasing unemployment, the disintegration of social values and collapse of the extended family unit.

Ironically most of the rehabilitation centres and reformatory homes established for these sets in some parts of the country are suffering from neglect and mismanagement.

In the Isheri (Lagos) rehabilitation centre established to cater for about 500 children, there are only 4 kids, while the influx of street children continues unabated.

More importantly, the fact that about 90% of mothers of children below the age of five now work outside their homes on full time employment and trading, there is need for society to protect

their family unit through the provision of essential Child Care facilities and benefits as daily separation of mothers from children have tremendous psychological, emotional and un- healthy effects on children.

Refusal from making child care benefits obtainable for working mothers is not only a negative step to development but discrimination against children and women.

The senseless killings of children in mysterious circumstances for rituals and outright sales into slavery should be addressed by security forces, Community and Religious Leaders.

Recently an arrested suspect by name James Omonigbo had confessed that on the order of an Abraka businessman, who wanted human blood of pregnant women, he had along with two other persons, Peter and Kennedy, carried out a mass murder of expectant mothers.

There was also the case of a 12 year old boy, Emeka Chiwuzor, who fell victim to a church and was reported to have had his head nailed to a cross in the church's chamber and his blood used to re-erect the cross.

Sexual and physical abuse of children, notably young girls, have become norm in our troubled society. Its no longer news having fathers and guardians sexually molesting their wards. Many are daily raped and are lost in their own world as there is no place to seek protection.

Drug trafficking and drug abuse is quite frightening and its usage by our children has reached a pathetic stage. Its destructive manifestations can be seen in the increasing number of children in the Psychiatric Hospitals in Yaba, Lagos and Aro in Abeokuta.

Basically, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) , as established under the National Drug Law Enforcement Decree of 1989, is responsible for the control of the use and sale of narcotic and other psychotropic drugs.

Through mass enlightenment adequate measures should be strengthened to save our children, as victims of drug abuse, from becoming vegetables and criminals in their lifetime.

Young dehumanized and sexually harassed kids in a Borstal Home in Kaduna share a common (broken) fence with the state prison and over 60% of the inmates of the welfare centre have turned homosexuals.

Government has no specific concrete programmes in enforcing the protection for children in especially difficult circumstances and thereby continues to breed an army of kid robbers, destitutes and outcasts.

From the look of things, a separate world where children could recreate, receive basic education, and adequate health facilities and their inalienable rights protected, has to be created without any opposition or unnecessary delay from government. Invariably, these Are promises the Federal Government had earlier approved and promised in its ratification of the Declaration contain in the 1990 World Summit for Children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Concerned and extremely disturbed on the neglect, abuse and suffering of millions of our children, various appeals among those hereby listed have been made to the Presidency by CWLN, in an effort to preserve the quality of Nigeria's future leaders.

1. While improving closer cooperation between the voluntary and statutory sectors, government should of priority, allocate sufficient resources that could be mobilized for the successful execution of activities relating to the care and survival of the neglected.
2. Provide adequate incentives and resources for the strengthening of Non-Governmental

organizations in child related programmes as well as encourage public and private investment in child development activities.

3. Direct existing deplorable and appalling welfare homes, borstal homes, day care, vocational and Police juvenile (prison) centres to be revitalized and resuscitated.

4. While we commend the present government for its bold decision to enact a decree that will protect innocent young girls, being married off, only to end up with the terrible scourge, Vesico vaginal Fistula (VVF) and Gisiri Cut, we appeal for urgent action on its promulgation and plead for the establishment of parameters for adequate monitoring and enforcement when decreed.

5. Through enrolment, instruct the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) and other relevant agencies, to extend their functions to less privileged, disabled and homeless children.

6. On social security, ensure that child benefit rights and health insurance scheme is available for young mothers particularly those without a means of livelihood and care for their children. This process would enable government develop accurate data on distressed families and children in the society.

7. Equal priority attention given to pilgrims to holy cities in areas of subsidy on foreign exchange rates should be enjoyed by the importers of children educational books, laboratory equipments and on health related products for distribution at lower cost.

8. Educate the Police on the Convention and develop Police/Community Relations on the observance, enforcement, monitoring and protection of Children's Rights.

9. A specialized structure under the Presidency, National Commission for Children (NCC) should be urgently formalized and decreed to facilitate the redress of violations of the rights and welfare of the Nigerian Child and effectively coordinate all activities of relevant agencies involved with the rights and welfare of children.

Child Welfare League of Nigeria (CWLN)

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