

Review

The Nigerian child in war and peace, 1960 to 2010

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Received 11 May, 2017; Accepted 6 June, 2017

Peace as the absence of both direct and indirect violence in Nigeria has eluded the Nigerian child. From the perspective of direct violence, the Nigerian child has not been spared the horrors of wars that have dotted Nigeria's geographical space since independence. From the perspective of indirect violence, the Nigerian child has been thrown to the center stage of structural and cultural violence. This has combined to challenge the long walk of the Nigerian child to peace and security within Nigeria. However, in the analysis of war and peace in Nigeria, the plight of the Nigerian child is rarely brought to bear. From the home to the streets, the Nigerian child had experience varying aspects of violence that has challenged his/her overall growth, development and progress. The study examines the impact of indirect and direct violence on the Nigerian child. It submits that in spite of extant legislations meant to protect the Nigerian child, the structure of the Nigerian society arguably makes the Nigerian child vulnerable to hardship, hunger, poverty, exclusion, oppression, marginalization, subordination, intimidation, maltreatment and denial. The study recommends that the Nigerian child should be treated as a security issue demanding immediate attention and responses from the government.

Key words: Nigeria, war, peace, direct violence, indirect violence, development, child.

INTRODUCTION

Violence bestrides the intersection of war and peace. The relationship between war and peace is interdependent and complementary; both enunciating the concept of violence. Peace as a distinct set is portrayed as negative peace (absence of direct violence) or positive peace (absence of indirect/structural/cultural violence) (Galtung, 1985).

War and other variants of armed conflicts make for direct violence; while poverty, child labour, child trafficking, poor healthcare, traditional practices, exclusion, intimidation, denial, among others, make for the varieties of structural and cultural violence which are indirectly

expressed and felt (Galtung, 1985). The Nigerian space has been a theatre for the expression of direct and indirect violence.

Existing literature appear not to have examined the plight of the Nigerian child in the context of direct and indirect violence that have dotted the Nigerian geographical space. Peace – both as the absence of direct violence and the subject of any serious scholarship. In situations of armed conflict, like the Nigerian Civil War, children remained the most vulnerable subset; and in the labour market of the post-war environment, the Nigerian child remained the most exploited.

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With high maternal mortality rate and growing irresponsibility of most parents, the social space of the Nigerian child appeared to have shifted from the family to the streets in the search of survival, companion and comfort. While the street was large enough to accommodate the Nigerian child, it was not socially and economically responsible to cater for their needs.

Consequently, the Nigerian child became exposed to social, economic and cultural forms of violence, lacking effective legislations to ameliorate their plight. In times of armed conflict and war as experienced in the Nigerian Civil War, as well as the Niger Delta and Boko Haram insurgencies, the Nigerian child often transforms from an object of provision and protection to an object of armed violent assault. The study sets out to provide changing narratives to this phenomenon and construct.

The child as a social construct and an elastic concept

It is important to clarify what a child means in the context of this study since childhood is a social construct and an elastic concept. As a social construct, there are many possible answers to the questions: 'who is a child?' or 'what is childhood?' For them, each notion of childhood is generated by successive generations out of a mix of tradition, social intercourse and technological development (Qvortrup, 1996). Children are distinct social groups and childhood is used in this study as the years between infancy and adolescence. For the want of a strict definition, the study adopts the definition as provided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child. The Convention defines a "child" as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger. This definition applies to Nigeria since Nigeria is a signatory to the document.⁸

War, peace and the construction of violence

The relationship between war and peace is dated. Peace is seen as the converse of war, a non-war situation or at best the absence of war. However, since Johan Galtung's⁹ theorizing of peace in the 1960s, violence has become central to the understanding of war and peace.

The relationship between war and peace became more pronounced with the works of Galtung who differentiated between indirect violence and direct violence. With the intellectual boost from Galtung, peace as the absence of

direct violence became classified as negative peace while peace as the absence of indirect/structural/cultural violence became classified as positive peace.

An understanding became more and more dependent on the understanding of the kind of violence carried out. War in that construct falls under the subset of direct violence while development variables such as poverty, inequality, unemployment etc fall under indirect violence. Indirect violence has been identified as a kind of violence which is not directly felt and it is argued to be caused by the structure and/or culture of the society involved. War and peace is used in the construction of violence. The presence of a particular form of violence (direct violence) is considered as war, while the absence of all forms of violence (direct and indirect) is considered as peace.

The Nigerian child in the Nigerian civil war and reconstruction period, 1967 to 1985

During the Nigerian Civil War, the Nigerian child experienced varying forms of direct violence. The humanitarian crisis that accompanied the war threw children to the centre stage of indirect violence. An estimated 5.5 million children and mothers were totally dependent on relief or food supplements, and 1,000 tonnes of supplies were needed daily in the affected areas (UNICEF, 2016c).

Children that escaped bullets could hardly escape hunger and displacement. The loss of parents during the war placed on children the demands of early and unprepared responsibility. Some children were victims of the war, while others were voluntary or forced child soldiers. All Nigerian children particularly on the Biafran side who survived the war suffered psychological trauma, economic deprivation and social dislocation after the war. At war's end in 1970, the Nigerian economy appeared to have recovered speedily as the period coincided with an oil boom that brought increased revenues.

The post-civil war period was immediately conditioned with a Federal government policy of Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction which arguably ameliorated the plight of the Nigerian child that was in dire need of rehabilitation. Children returned to schools reconstructed after the destruction of the war and health care services became more available as teachers, medical doctors and other professionals returned to civil duties from war fronts.

Family houses that had been volunteered or commandeered for the war as accommodation for officers or men or as hospitals were returned. Family life resumed normalcy as children became fully integrated with surviving families. Fathers who survived the war returned to families as husbands and heads of households. With the family fabric strengthened, the vital ingredient necessary for the upbringing of children was

⁸In 1991, Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1989 by the UN General Assembly. In 2003, Nigeria adopted the Child Rights Act, which incorporates the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

⁹Johan Galtung has made significant contributions to the concept of peace to the extent that he is popularly known as the father of peace studies.

provided. Consequently, life appeared to have returned to normalcy for the bruised and traumatized Nigerian child.

The oil boom of the 1970's meant that the government's income increased significantly and all kinds of 'elephant projects' were undertaken. For instance, huge sums were spent on the Festival for Arts and Culture (FESTAC) project meant to show case the country's culture but did little to improve the quality of lives of women and children, the most vulnerable groups in the country.

However, the fall in the price of oil, the debt crisis and the introduction of the austerity measures of the Shehu Shagari administration saw a decline in the economic status of thousands, between 1983 and 1987, while the ripple effects of deregulation worsened the plight of Nigerians of all social classes in the country.

Long years of military maladministration left thousands impoverished particularly after the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) that was purportedly a home grown economic policy, but in fact an International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank imposed programme by the Babangida regime. This induced a situation where parents could not comfortably provide to their children. The Nigerian child was the most vulnerable under these conditions similar to those experienced during the civil war as it increased the poverty rate in the country.

The Nigerian child after 1985

Nigeria was soon bedeviled by crises and conflicts occasioned largely by poverty, social inequalities, economic disparities and failed government policies. In some of the conflict spots and zones, children under the age of 18, some as young as 10, were used as foot soldiers not necessarily in uniform. In the Niger Delta region for instance, children under 18 were used in the Ijaw and Itsekiri ethnic wars in Warri.¹⁰

Children particularly in the present day South Eastern zone of the main theatre of the civil war were the most vulnerable to land mines laid by both the Biafra and Nigeria sides in the course of the war. The indigenous land mines in the erstwhile secessionist area made by Projects Development Agency (PRODA) in Biafra were all acquired by the Federal government after the war. Although warning signposts were placed at confirmed mined locations after the war, many children who could not read the warnings lost their limbs when they strayed into such areas (UNICEF, 2016b).

In the period after 1985, the cause for the bad condition

of the Nigerian child was not war but the mismanagement of the country's economy, corruption and unwholesome economic policies which made for aspects of indirect violence. The nature of bad governance deepened economic deprivation, inequality and social injustice and the lack of fundamental human rights even for the Nigerian child.

These rights are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the child declared in November 1989 and ratified by 178 countries including Nigeria. Among these rights are, the right to life, good health, basic and higher education, freedom from discrimination, and protection against exploitation and inhuman treatment among others.¹¹ Nigeria did not ratify the Act until 1991 and state governments in the country domesticated it gradually.¹² By 2009, only 22 out of 36 states including the Federal Capital Territory had domesticated the Act. A number of states in the country have still not domesticated the Act, besides, even those who domesticated the Act rarely enforced it.

In 1990, the summit for children in New York, identified seven similar goals for improving the conditions of children in the next decade. These goals similar to those found in the Child Rights Act again depicted very little had changed about the plight of children around the world since 1989. The Millennium Goal (MDGs) of the year 2000 again identified a number of goals for the development of countries some of which involves the development of children, especially millions of them in Nigeria (Kwanashie, 1998).

Poverty and the Nigerian child

Poverty represents a significant variable in the indirect violence indices. It is often described as absolute and relative (Gordon, 1972). The concept of absolute poverty usually involves a judgement of basic human needs and is measured in terms of the resources required to maintain health and physical efficiency (Lister, 2004). Most measures of absolute poverty are concerned with establishing the quality and amount of food, clothing and shelter deemed necessary for a healthy life.

In relative terms, poverty must relate to the standards of a particular society at a particular time (Funken and Cooper, 1995). The poverty profile of Nigeria had begun to rise from the early 1980s. The poverty profile rose from 17.1 million in 1980 to 34.7 million in 1985 and 39.2 in 1992. This translates to 27, 46 and 42%, respectively in 2006. It was reported that 80% of Nigerians lived in abject poverty, while in 2008, 69 million Nigerians were living under the poverty line (Kwanashie, 1998).

¹⁰For details of the Conflicts in the Niger Delta Region, see O. Ottite and I. Albert, *Community Conflict in Nigeria: Management, Resolution and Transformation*, Spectrum Books, Abuja, Benin, Lagos and Owerri, 2004 and T.A. Omobighe, O. Bassey and B.J. Asumi, *Conflict and Instability in The Niger Delta :The Warri Case*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books, p. 20.

¹¹See, UNICEF Country Office, *Nigeria and the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, UNICEF Country Office, Lagos, 2000, 5-57.

¹²*ibid.*

In 2010, the poverty rate in the country was 54.5%. Between 1996 and 2010, the figures rose to unacceptably high levels of 67.1, 68.7 and 112.4%. However, by 2007, out of every 10 Nigerians, 5 were living under the poverty line of one (1) dollar a day. In spite of the high economic growth rates in the country, the poverty rate rose from 55% in 2004 to 61% in 2010.¹³ The number of Nigerians living on 1 dollar a day has risen to almost 100 million. These poverty rates are reflections of the fact that unemployment rate in the country has been on the increase since the 1990s.

Magnus Kpakol, the chairman of NAPEP, between 2008 and 2011 maintained that the figure had risen to 69% of Nigerians living below the poverty line.¹⁴ Unemployment levels in the country continued to rise and was exacerbated by food insecurity in the country. This was in spite of the rising oil prices in the country. Lastly in 2009, the Human Development Report for that year puts the percentage of poor people in the country to 70%. By 2012 according to official figures, the unemployment rate had reached 23.8%.¹⁵ This increased the level of hunger, undernourishment and malnutrition among adults and children in the country. Mrs Ogundipe commenting on the issue of malnutrition and the Nigerian child, avers thus:

There is much hunger in the land and children are the most affected. Everyday millions of them go to bed with empty stomachs and most definitely wake up hungry. Ironically, their plight is invisible. Three quarters of the children who die from causes related to malnutrition are mildly or moderately undernourished showing no sign of their vulnerability (Ogundipe, 2009).

The dismal statistics aforementioned had a depressing effect on the Nigerian Child. This is particularly in terms of the new instruments for measuring human development. These include: hunger, undernourishment, infant and under 5 years of age children mortality rate, severe malnutrition among children under 5 years of age, maternal mortality, universal access to safe drinking water and sanitary toilets and universal access to primary education.¹⁶

Child mortality in Nigeria

In 1990, 87 per 1000 children under the age of five died in Nigeria. The number rose in 1995 to 105, and there was another increase in 2003 to 113. The under 5 mortality rate rose from 75 per 1000 live births to 90 out of every 1000 in 2006. This figure can be compared to 75

in Ghana, 81 in Cape Verde, 51 in Senegal and 28 in Ivory Coast.¹⁷ In 2007, the figure in Nigeria rose to 201 to every 1000 live births. The mortality rate of 201 per every 1000 live birth appears to have been the highest child mortality rate in the country between 1990 and 2007.¹⁸ Nigeria and India made up half of the under 5 mortality rate in the world by 2009. They also had one third of the world's mortality rate (UNICEF, 2016).

By 2009, according to a Save the Child Report, one million children died before they reached the age of 5, while 248,000 neo-natal deaths occurred annually in Nigeria (Economic and Social Council, 2005). This might be because few pregnant women or mothers attend pre delivery and anti-natal care at health centers which is necessary for the wellbeing of mothers and their infants.¹⁹ Stake holders and scholars have identified three main reasons for the high infant mortality rates in Nigeria which relates to structural violence. These are, direct causes including the persistence of the childhood killer diseases (among them malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia and HIV/AIDS among others), secondary causes and underlying causes.

Malaria is believed to be the leading cause of childhood deaths even after the programme aimed at providing nets for rural and urban families. In 1927, it was believed that only 4% of children under the age of 5 slept under treated bed nets.²⁰ Diarrhea according to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Report was the second leading cause of death among children under the age of 5. A number of these diseases are preventable or treatable and Nigerian children do not necessarily have to die from them.

Maternal mortality in Nigeria and the effect on the Nigerian child

Maternal mortality rates were also high with 82.8 deaths per every 100,000 mothers. Live births were lower in rural areas than in urban areas, as two out of every three women in rural areas delivered outside health facilities and without the services of medically skilled birth attendants. In spite of Government's attempts to improve the accessibility of health clinics, particularly in rural areas, health clinics and medical personnel were inadequate to meet the needs of communities. Even in urban areas, many poor families lack access to medical facilities and could not afford the fees charged at these facilities.

By 2012, it was reported that 60,000 women die annually during child birth. The significance of the

¹³See, *Daily Trust*, February 2007, p. 3.

¹⁴*Business Day Daily*; 2008, p. 3

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶*ibid.*

¹⁷A. Lipede, 'Human Trafficking in Nigeria,' Unpublished Work, 2012.

¹⁸*ibid.*

¹⁹*Multiple Indicator Survey*. Final Report, 2007, p. 35.

²⁰*ibid.*

maternal mortality index for children is that many children who survive at birth would have to grow up without their mothers which is same for their other siblings. The conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme for the poor launched by the late President Musa Umaru Yar'Adua on the 11th of December 2007 was meant to improve the lives of people living in extreme poverty. This was expected to reduce the poverty levels of extremely poor people in various communities and break the transfer of poverty among generations.

In addition, it would also have allowed more children to enroll in schools, be immunized and attend government health clinics when they are sick (Nwachukwu, 2008). By 2012 however, without a solid foundation for the sustainability of the programme, the CCT programme had become what one observer has called a dead horse.²¹

The effects of economic poverty in Nigeria have been the misuse of traditional practices as they affect children especially child trafficking for the purposes of child labour, prostitution and pornography amongst others.

Traditional practices as they affect the Nigerian child

Traditional practices which affect children is often referred to as cultural violence. As poverty increased, parents began to abuse the traditional practice of confiding which saw them mostly in the villages willing to send their children to richer relations in urban areas on the belief of getting better standard of education and care.

Increasingly, families in urban areas began to abuse the system using the children almost like slaves. Many of the children work long hours and are physically and verbally abused (Owolabi, 2012). Those who cannot take the abuse or hard work, run away from these homes and become street children forced to eke out a living for themselves. Out in the cold, not only are they subjected to the ravages of unkind weather, but they are brutalized mentally and physically. They are also vulnerable to traffickers who torture them by forcing them to comply with their demands. Indeed, a number of the children are known to have been killed (Osment, 2014).

Other Nigerian children especially in Akwa Ibom and Cross River states suffer from the traditional practice which allowed parents to abandon children declared to be witches and wizards. They are usually confirmed by churches and other traditional worship places for example, shrines. Such accused children are abandoned in the streets and are stigmatized, brutalized and are left traumatized. Hence, this makes them vulnerable to trafficking agents (Akor, 2011; Nwaaama, 2011).

In May 2008, 200 of such children took to the streets of

Calabar²² to protest the delay in the ratification of the Child Rights Act which they believed would ameliorate their plight (Skolombo epidemic, 2016). Indeed, collaboration between United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Stepping Stones and the Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network (CRARN) provided succor for these categories of children. In 2010, a bigger building was provided for 200 children stigmatized as witches and wizards. Here, care was provided and they were loved. But there are many more stigmatized children outside Akwa Ibom. Many other cases have been reported in Akwa Ibom, Nasarawa and Kaduna States among others (Akor, 2011).

Mention has been made of the abuse of children in Nigeria. The pattern did not change in the post-1985 period and it continued unabated assuming a different character and form at different times. At times it took the form of abuse by parents and guardians, child labour at other times it was child trafficking.

Child trafficking as indirect violence on the Nigerian child

Children in Nigeria and other parts of the world have long been objects of extreme exploitation in labour markets around the world. Many are forced to work for long hours for minimum wages. It is believed that by 2011, there were 80 million child labourers around the world and the figure was expected to rise to 100 million. Without a union to negotiate terms with their employees, they remain the worst paid workers globally.²³ The statistics for child workers are varied although all tell a depressing tale.

In 1995, the International Labour Organization (ILO) suggested that there were 12 million child workers in Nigeria. In its working paper on economically active children in the country, the organization projected that by 2000 there will be 3,859,000 economically active children in the country (Akor, 2011; Nwaaama, 2011). The ILO child labour survey estimated that there were 18 million children engaged in child labour in Nigeria in 2003.

Many children are recruited to work in mines, granite industries where they are forced to break stones in parts of the country all day, in service industries like hotels and restaurants, in the sex industry and in homes as house helps. Others are recruited to fight in wars and violent conflicts as child soldiers. Thousands more are also forced to work extremely long hours as vendors, car

²¹See, *Daily Trust*; 11.9. 2012, p. 56.

²²These street children are popularly known as *skolombo*, which, in local parlance, means those abandoned or sent away from home for different reasons. A large percentage of *skolombos* are children branded witches.

²³See, *Daily Trust*; 11.9. 2012,p. 56

washers, bus conductors, cattle rearers and farm hands. Many more are used in the sex trade in brothels around Nigeria.

There are other cases of children particularly girls who hawk goods in streets all day in an attempt to supplement the earnings of their parents. Take the examples and personal stories of two 11 year old children who had to join the popular *gwandar* women who hawk meat in the northern parts of Nigeria. One of the children complained that the work was usually not free as most of the women are believed to have sexual relations with the butchers. The children are also not left out. This view was also confirmed by Juliana another child involved in the trade. She told a reporter of the Daily Trust (2008) Newspaper that the job is good, but it has its own hazard and temptations. 'What choice do I have? I am the only child of my mother and I have to fend for myself like every other child of my father' she moaned.²⁴

The experiences of children working in the sex industry in Nigeria can best be described as despicable. The experience of Obinna and two sex workers readily comes to mind. Obinna was part of a syndicate in Nsukka, Enugu State who worked mainly in Apapa in Lagos. He had trafficked his sister and her friend for prostitution in the Apapa area and was making huge profits. He next went back to bring Agnes and her four friends after his sister had convinced them that they were better off in Lagos in the sex trade than continuing their education in the village. Agnes soon became Obinna's bedmate. This excluded her from being gang raped to make sure she became experienced in the commercial sex trade.

In addition, she was forced to hawk sex to policemen, park thugs, labourers and street urchins for a fee most of which was handed over to a madam for what Obinna told her was the debt she owed for the transportation fares from Nsukka to Lagos, her accommodation and feeding. Her mother in the village had to call her and encouraged her to go ahead with the plan. Lastly, she had to undergo a blood oath delivered by a priest from Togo.²⁵ Incidents like this depict the type of experiences passed through by some children in Nigeria. Clearly, poverty and ignorance play a greater part in children falling victims of heinous crimes against the society.

Lipede and Chimyo (2008) have shown in their work another form of child labour where young boys some as young as 14 years are trafficked annually from parts of Southern Kaduna to parts of the South West for what is commonly called *Hakin Doya* (growing yam). Many work extremely long hours on farms and live in atrocious conditions. After working for over 10 years they only take home from what they have earned money for a bicycle, a tape recorder or a mattress among other things. And yet at the end of their time on farms they are willing to go

back or to become recruiters for more child labourers (Lipede and Chimyo, 2008). Others who are luckier to be paid decent wages and stay longer enough can still come back home to complete or construct buildings for their parents or for themselves.

Other children are engaged in more hazardous work like artisanal mining, building and construction work; with the potential to cause physical and psychological damage to the health of the child. These are the types of things that happen in the internal child trafficking for labour trade. Most of the children are taken from states in Nigeria, among them, Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Delta, Bayelsa and Edo States. This is not to say however that children from other states in the country are not victims of the internal trafficking trade. Children from the South West zone of the country are trafficked to Lagos in particular and other parts of the country like Port Harcourt. In addition, a number of cases have been reported of children being trafficked from Benue State. Incidentally, the Nigeria Police have rarely intercepted this traffic arguing that it remains the responsibility of NAPTIP officials. Many of these children aged between 10 and 15 are recruited to work in restaurants, bars, and the more hazardous work of stone breaking in the granite industries and construction work in Nigeria.

Children in Nigeria have also been trafficked within Nigeria for the purpose of begging. In Lagos for example, it has been demonstrated how traffickers go to orphanages to get children to be used for begging for a daily fee. These children are taken to strategic streets to beg for alms irrespective of the weather, where it is said that because of sympathy for the children they make almost N2,000 daily. Part of this amount is paid to the orphanage or mother from whom the children were 'borrowed.' These children carrying out the street begging task under sun and rain thereby placing their health at heightened risk.²⁶

It is therefore reasonable to argue that this type of extreme exploitation of children across state borders in the country is endemic and pervasive among the rich and poor. Rich households utilize and exploit children. Mothers on the other hand increasingly find little time for their children. The poor under dire economic conditions in the country are willing to continue that traditional practice of 'confiding'. Hundreds of others are trafficked outside Nigeria for begging, particularly in the Middle East and for the sex trade and pornography outside Nigerian borders (Ebigbo, 2000; Effah, 1996).

The external child trafficking trade

According to the United Nations, 79% of the children trafficked around the world are for the commercial sex

²⁴See, A. Lipede, *Human Trafficking* ...,p. 200.

²⁵*ibid.*

²⁶ ILO, *World Labour Report*. 1992, Geneva.

trade, and 38% of the traffickers and the victims are involved in child pornography, mostly on the internet and 18% were used as child labourers. The child trafficking trade especially forced labour is not limited to the country. Many more children are exported to countries in West and Central Africa and to Europe, the Middle East and the USA.

Stories abound of Nigerian children taken to Britain at a very tender age of between 10 years and 14 years to work in the homes of Nigerians resident there. A number of those children who manage to escape and reported the matter to the British Police has been rescued and their bosses tried and given long prison sentences. According to the US State Department Report on Human Rights Practices, for 1999 out of the 1,888 to 2,500 children who worked as street prostitutes in Italy, 1,500 to 2,300 came from Albania and Nigeria.²⁷ The point was buttressed two years later by Grace Akinboyo of the UNICEF Child Protection Office who believed that 60% of the children trafficked to Italy are from Nigeria.²⁸ Many of the Nigerian children trafficked to parts of the Middle East are used for begging, as house helps in rich Arab homes and as prostitutes (Buchbinder, 2016).

More recently, under the trying economic times, parents are willing to sell their children to strangers. For instance, Mr and Mrs K. Wonoye attempted to sell their children to a British journalist who was on a sting operation for 1 million naira. Later that year, another Nigerian mother attempted to sell two of her children aged 3 and 5 for N170,000.²⁹

Yet in spite of the gloomy situation highlighted by the study, wealthy parents send their children to nursery schools from the age of 2 or 3. Besides, they are immunized as and at when due, attend some of the best primary and secondary schools in the land and receive medical care abroad when they travel yearly for their holidays. This category of children are well prepared to take local and foreign examinations to prepare them for life's journey and they usually get good grades and are admitted into tertiary institutions. The poor results in West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examination Council (NECO) examinations do not bother or concern them. They rarely are in the unemployment queues or go on to improve their skills at government entrepreneurial centers. Nevertheless, even these Nigerian children have their own peculiar problems. They usually experiment with drugs, and engage in other unwholesome practices.

Conclusion

Findings from the study show that the Nigerian child has

experienced direct and indirect forms of violence since independence. The Nigerian society in the period under study appeared not to have provided a safe environment for the growth and development of the Nigerian child. Extant international and national legislations and policies against all forms of violence meted on children in Nigeria appear to lack effective execution from stakeholders concerned. Issues of poverty, hunger, displacement, forced labour, trafficking, denial, brutalization, among others, have continued to plague the progress of the Nigerian child, making for a bleak future. This is significantly a consequence of the obtuse structure of the Nigerian society which pays frail attention to child welfare and security. The Nigerian child as a social construct lacks the attention and affection of the family, and consequently has made the streets a social space of survival. In all, the study submits that the Nigerian child suffers in war and non-war (peace) conditions as violence (especially indirect/structural/cultural) prevails and looms large in both conditions.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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²⁷US State Department, Country Report, 1999, February 2000.

²⁸*ibid.*

²⁹A. Lipede, *Human Trafficking*p. 210

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