

CHILD ABUSE: THE CHILD'S RIGHTS ACT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Wahab Gbenga Ojebiyi and Olubunmi Rufina Ashimolowo

Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta

ABSTRACT

Child abuse in rural and urban cities of Nigeria is not a new phenomenon because it is a common and longstanding issue. Abuse of children will prevent the children from developing emotionally and economically since the children will be deprived of their basic needs like food, clothing, shelter and even education. Child abuse will in the long run affect the economy of the nation. Sustainable development means development that meets the needs of the present generations without as well as the needs of future generations. It is a long lasting kind of development that continuously meets the need of the people. Sustainable development can only be ensured in places or countries where their future (children) is taken care of. A legal document to ascertain this kind of development by protecting the children in Nigeria is the Child's Rights Act (CRA). It is because of this that this paper reviews the prevalence of child abuse in Nigeria and how sustainable development can be achieved through the effective implementation of the CRA. This paper covers the definition of child abuse, its forms, causes and effects; discussed child abuse as a means of violating child's rights and implication for sustainable development.

Keywords:Sustainable development, Child abuse, CRA, Causes, Effects, Nigerian child

INTRODUCTION

The rate of prevalence of child abuse in Nigeria is increasingly alarming. Its prevalence and kind vary from one region to another. Child abuse covers a wide range of work activities and industries (Owolabi, 2012), such as domestic services, bus conducting, car washing, drug peddling, herding of livestock, industrial work, street hawking, child trafficking, street begging, agriculture and mines, food processing, construction, sex industry, textile industry and tourism. The abuses also include corporal punishments, female genital mutilation (FGM), kidnapping, child marriage, child prostitution, etc. While some of these abuses (such as bus conducting, hawking, street begging, domestic services, car washing, etc) are more prevalent in the southern part of the country, others like child marriage and female genital mutilation are more prevalent in the northern areas.

While reports have been made about the occurrence of child abuse in urban cities of Nigeria by researchers (Owolabi, 2012; Okafor, 2010), less has been reported on this issue in rural areas (except as regards child labour in agriculture) despite the active role played by dwellers of rural areas in the country. This, according to Ebigbo (1989) cited by Ojo (2013) is because children in urban areas are quickly caught up in the daily struggle for survival and material gain. The contribution of rural dwellers to the promotion of human trafficking is enormous as UNESCO (2006) reported that most of the women and children being trafficked are from rural areas, where agricultural activities take place. This has negative effect on food production and food security as the major actors in food production are the ones being trafficked.

Aside from reducing agricultural output from rural areas, human (child) trafficking also has significant impacts on the livelihood of urban residents as it leads to reduction in the value of labour, increases crime rates and even leads to the increased prevalence of other forms of child abuse such as street hawking, bus conducting, house boys/maids, child prostitution, child labour in agriculture and mining, and deprivation of quality education. The unfortunate thing is that the trafficked persons are usually deceived about taking them to destinations where greener pastures await them. This is ultimately due to the prevalence of poverty in rural areas of the nation.

Whether in rural or urban areas of Nigeria, the negative effect of child abuse in the lives of children are enormous in that it affects them socially and emotionally. Knowing fully that the motive behind the enactment of the Child's Rights Act is to ensure sustainable development of the nation by providing for and protecting the rights of Nigerian children from all forms of abuses since they remain the future of any nation (Owolabi, 2012), this paper extensively discussed the subject at hand "child abuse" and how the CRA can be used to effectively eradicate child abuse in Nigeria.

DEFINITION OF CHILD

The word "child" has no generally accepted and universal definition until the Convention on the Rights of the Child came into existence. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defined a child as a young person from birth to the age of full physical development. The definitions vary among continents, regions, countries, and states probably because physical development is reached at different ages. Though, the term "child" was not recognized under the Nigerian Constitution, it has been defined by different legislations within the country. According to Owolabi (2012), the legal definition of "child" generally refers to a minor, otherwise known as a person younger than the age of majority. As also cited by Owolabi (2012), American Heritage Dictionary (2007), described a "child" as a relationship with a parent or metaphorically, authority figure,

or signify group membership in a clan, tribe, or religion; it can also signify being strongly affected by a specific time, place, or circumstance, as in “a child of nature” or “a child of sixties”.

Section 2 of the Children and Young Persons Act enacted in Eastern, Western and Northern regions statutorily referred a person less than 14 years of age to a child, while a person between the age of 14 and 17 years was seen as a young person. The Nigerian Labour Act of 1990 considers a child as a young person under the age of 12 years (section 91-1). The Nigerian Labour Act (1974) also considers a child as a person less than 15 years of age while the National Child Welfare Policy (1989) defines a child as anybody who is twelve years of age and below. As cited by Alemika, Chukwuma, Lafratta, Messerli and Souckova (2005) of OMCT and CLEEN, The Immigration Act stipulates that any person below 16 years is a minor, whereas the Matrimonial Causes Act puts the age of maturity at 21 but allows persons below this age to be married with the consent of the parents.

Aside from statutory definitions, customary definitions of the term child exist and these vary from one ethnic group to another. Federal Ministry of Justice (1991) as cited by Alemika *et al.* (2005) adduced these variations to lack of a uniform system of customary law in Nigeria. It should be noted that these variations make some community to regard a person as a child until he/she is initiated into an age grade society or until he/she is old enough to contribute financially to community development. In some, puberty is used as a yardstick. To most parents a person is still a child (at least to them) no matter how old he/she is. In some societies, childhood is terminated only after marriage while some relate childhood to dependency, hence such societies regard anyone who is independent on parents and other persons or cannot fend for him/herself as a child, irrespective of the age. The above definitions imply that, the meaning given to the term “child” is a function of who is defining it, under what circumstance and the purpose for which the definition is needed.

Following the uncertainty in the confusing definitions given to the term “child” by earlier legal and customary laws, the Child’s Rights Act (2003) in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) defines a child as a person who has not attained the age of 18 years. To serve the best interest of the child in all matters concerning him/her as stipulated in the CRC, ACRWC and CRA, this study therefore adopts the definition enshrined in the Child’s Rights Act (2003).

CHILD ABUSE AS VIOLATING THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Child abuse has emerged as one of the serious social problems that have engaged the attention of scholars, professional social workers, law enforcement officials, legislators, policy-makers and the public over the past three decades (Ladan, 2005). Child abuse has been defined by many scholars. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines child abuse as cruel treatment of children, especially by adults, involving violence or sexual activity. As cited in Umobong (2010), the African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) defines child abuse as “the intentional, unintentional or well intentional acts which endanger the physical health, emotional, moral and the educational welfare of children. In line with this definition, Umobong (2010) believed that Child abuse can be seen as any act of omission or commission, physical or psychological mistreatment or neglect of a child by its parents, guardians, caregiver or other adults that may endanger the child’s physical, psychological or emotional health and development.

Child abuse has been defined as the “physical or emotional mistreatment and neglect of children or the sexual exploitation in circumstances for which the parents can be held responsible through acts of commission or omission” (Doye, 1990). Child abuse is defined as 'the non accidental commission of any act by a caretaker upon a child under the age of 18 years which causes or creates a substantial risk of serious physical or emotional injury, or which constitutes a sexual offence such as rape or molestation (Owolabi, 2012). Child abuse can be described as a situation where a child is denied his basic/fundamental human right as a child/person. Child abuse can then be seen as a situation whereby the fundamental human rights of a child are tampered with. That is, the child is not given adequate care and protection as it is the responsibility of every parent to take good care of their children. The above definitions imply that child abuse in any form amounts to the violation of the Child's Rights to survival, development, protection and participation as broadly provided for in the CRA.

PREVALENT FORMS OF CHILD ABUSE IN NIGERIA

Globally, child abuse manifests itself in different forms in formal and informal sectors. Many scholars have studied different aspects or forms that constitute child abuse. The different forms identified by scholars include child labour, sex trade, early and forced marriages, female genital mutilation, street hawking, child beggars, early marriage, female genital mutilation, child witches, bullying, child trafficking and corporal punishment, bus conducting, etc (Atere, Akinwale and Owoade, 2005; Adewunmi, 1990; Umobong, 2010; Owolabi, 2012; Ogunniran, 2010; Ijaiya, 2005; Opara, 2005; Adewunmi, 1990; Sossou and Yogtiba, 2009 and Jones, Presler-Marshall, Cooke and Aknirimisi, 2011).

The Human Rights Report (2010) identified the human rights problems during the year to include the abridgement of citizens' right to change their government; politically motivated and extrajudicial killings by security forces, including summary executions; torture, rape, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment of prisoners, detainees, and criminal suspects; harsh and life-threatening prison and detention center conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; prolonged pretrial detention; denial of fair public trial; executive influence on the judiciary and judicial corruption; infringement on citizens' privacy rights; restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, religion, and movement; official corruption and impunity; violence and discrimination against women; the killing of children suspected of witchcraft; female genital mutilation (FGM); child abuse and child sexual exploitation; societal violence; ethnic, regional, and religious discrimination and violence; vigilante killings; trafficking in persons for the purpose of prostitution and forced labor; discrimination against persons with disabilities; discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; child labor; forced and bonded labor; and abductions by militant groups.

These forms of abuses are inflicted on children intentionally or unintentionally by parents, guardians, caregivers, employers, elders, religious leaders and other members of the society. Umobong (2010) summarized the different forms of child abuse into 5 subheadings which are: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglects and child exploitation (child labour) discussed below:

Physical abuse: Physical abuse may be seen as the inflicting of a non-accidental bodily injury on a child. The injury may not have been intended by the parent or caretaker and is not an accident but may be due to over-discipline or corporal punishment that may not be appropriate or is unjustifiable for the child at that age. According to the above definition, physical abuse may take the form of severe beating in the name of chastisement and correction or subjecting the child to degrading and inhuman

conditions or lack of proper care and maintenance or abandonment (Owolabi, 2012). Flogging, kneeling, frog jumping and tough physical drill are frequent forms of physical abuse in juvenile homes (Alemika *et al.*, 2005).

Emotional abuse: Emotional abuse is also known as verbal abuse, mental abuse or psychological maltreatment. The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (2006) defines emotional abuse as “acts or omissions by the parents or other caregivers that have caused, or could cause serious behavioural, cognitive, emotional or mental disorders”. Emotional abuse can thus be seen as any attitude, behaviour or failure to act on the part of a caregiver which interferes with a child’s mental health, social development or sense of self-worth. It is probably the least understood, yet the most prevalent, cruelest and destructive type of abuse. It attacks the child self-concept making the child see his/herself as unworthy, worthless and incapable. When a child is constantly humiliated, shamed, terrorized or rejected the child suffers more than if he/she had been physically maltreated. The resulting effect is that most children often withdraw to themselves leading to depression and lack of concentration in school (Khartri, 2004). According to Umobong (2010), bullying is another form of emotional abuse that takes place in schools and at homes by the senior or older children.

Sexual abuse: Sexual abuse is defined by CAPTA (Khartri, 2004) as the employment, use of persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction of such conduct. It is the rape, and in cases of caretaker or interfamilial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other forms of sexual exploitation of children or incest with children. As a result of the secrecy that characterizes these cases; sexual abuse is the most often under-reported form of child maltreatment. Sexually abused children experience emotional problems from a feeling of guilt and shame (Corwin and Olafson, 1997). Owolabi (2012) defined child sexual abuse as the involvement of a child in sexual activities that he/she does not fully comprehend and is unable to give informal consent. It constitutes a serious infringement of a child’s right to health and protection.

Neglect: This is a failure to provide basic needed care for the child such as shelter, food, clothing, education, supervision, medical care and other basic necessities needed for the child physical, intellectual and emotional development (Umobong, 2010). It is a situation where the guardians or parents fail to perform tasks that are necessary for the well being of the child which invariably can lead to the child’s health and safety being endangered. As cited by Owolabi (2012), the Criminal Code (1990: section 301) provides that failure to supply the necessities of life without lawful excuse for those to whom one owes such a duty is a felony punishable with a term of imprisonment where the life of that other is thus endangered. Child in thuggery, child in crime, and child labour were all categorized by Adimula (2005) to be the products of child neglect.

Child Exploitation: Child exploitation often referred to as child labour or child trafficking involves the use of a child in work or other activities for the benefit of others. Child exploitation is a systematic process of using children to work with little or no compensation and consideration for their health and safety (Newton, 2001). These children are used to do hard works in the farms that are above their ages and some are made to hawk wares for long hours without food. Such children rarely benefit from education and will eventually drop out of school. By the time these children reach adulthood, they are physically, emotionally, morally and intellectually damaged.

The definition of child labour varies but it usually means work done by children under the ages of 15, which limits or damages their physical, mental, social or psychological developments (Ajani, Omonola and Oni, 2007). As defined by the

International Labour Organization-ILO (1997) in the work of Agbonlahor *et al.* (2007), child labour refers to labour furnished by persons below their official minimum age of employment, which is 16 years. Ajani *et al.* (2007) summarized child labour as the utilization of children in productive employment. Child labour is defined by the ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age, 1973, and the ILO Convention No. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999, as work that harms children's well-being and hinders their education, development and future livelihoods (2013). Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development-SARD (2007) in line with above definitions referred work that harms, abuses and exploits a child or deprives a child of an education as child labour. It refers to working children below the national minimum employment age." Forms of child labour include children used as house helps, drug trafficking by children, recruitment into the armed forces, child prostitution, child beggars and street hawking. Child labour with its negative effects on child development exists in almost all sectors of a nation's economy.

According to SARD (2007), globally, 318 million children under 18 works in some forms of productive activity, 68.6% (218 million) of these children engage in works defined as child labour. Close to sixty percent of the child labourers are engaged in hazardous activities. About 16 million children in Africa under the age of 13 are working (UNICEF, 1990). Ajani *et al.* (2007) also put the population of under 15 African children in regular employment as 10 million. Jones (2011) also estimated that 15 million children work in Nigeria, most of them in the informal sector.

Seventy percent of all child labourers, more than 132 million children, work in agriculture doing post harvest processing, transport, marketing and a range of agro-industrial activities, thereby ranking agriculture as one of the three most dangerous work activities, along with mining and construction (SARD, 2007). Despite the hazardous works engaged in by child labourers, 70 percent of them are unpaid family workers (Global Report, 2010) in ILO and FAO (2013).

CAUSES OF CHILD ABUSE/ CHILD'S RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Child's Rights Violations through the different forms of abuses are as a result of many factors, some of which are discussed below:

Poverty: Poverty was defined as the lack of empowerment and security (Okafor, 2010). Aluko (1975) regard poverty as a lack of command over basic consumption needs, which means that there is inadequate level of consumption giving rise to insufficient foods, clothing and/or shelter, and moreover the lack of certain capacities such as being able to participate with dignity in society. This made World Bank in one of their reports of 1990 to refer poverty as the inability to attain a minimum standard of living. United Nations Development Programme – UNDP (1997) while viewing poverty from social perspectives defined it as the denial of choice and opportunities for a tolerable life. While considering poverty in a broader term, poverty relates to a state whereby an individual lacks the ability to cater adequately for his or her basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, unable to meet social and economic obligations, lack gainful employment, skills, assets, and self esteem and also has limited access to social and economic infrastructures such as health, education, potable water and environment protection.

Simply put, poverty is a situation whereby an individual is unable to meet his/her basic needs of life and hence, can lead to hunger, ill-health condition, social exclusion and other inhuman conditions. According to Owolabi (2012), poverty is said to be the biggest cause of child abuse in Nigeria. Nasir (1998) also submitted that poverty is a major factor in child abandonment, child prostitution and sexual abuse and infanticide. It cannot be denied that some children (both boys and girls)

that are engaged in child labour e.g. hawkers are sexually abused. Poverty was also considered the main cause of child labour (Ajani *et al.*, 2007). Poverty in this context is referring to the parental socioeconomic factors. International bodies like UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, UNAIDS, USAIDS, etc have reported that an average Nigerian lives on less than \$2 Dollars per day.

A UNICEF report described that the majority of the world's children are suffering greatly due to poverty, war and HIV/AIDS. The Human Poverty Index (HPI) value of 37.3 for Nigeria ranks the country 80th among 108 developing countries for which the index has been calculated (Human Development Report, 2007/2008).

Among the root cause of poverty, some are linked to immutable factors, like climate, geography, and history, while others are linked to a deficient governance, which is subject to change, and includes a core set of factors that perpetuate poverty, such as entrenched corruption, lack of respect for human rights, weak institutions and inefficient bureaucracies, lack of social cohesion, and political will to undertake reforms. The current situation in Nigeria portrays this scenario well, which depicts chaos at all levels of institutions (Offiong, 2001).

Family and environmental factors: Nasir (1998) also considers the family the child is born into as a factor in the abuse of the child. It is obvious that it is in the home environment that the child spends most of its early years of life. The family the child is born into thus becomes the most important unit or factor in the child's life, and all activities in or around the family/home will affect the life of the child. It will not be in dispute, therefore, that most of the cases of child abuse or neglect, occur within the home or are caused by factors arising from the home environment. Nasir (1988) further reiterated that a child brought up in a broken home is more likely to be abused or neglected. Such a child may also grow up to become an abusive parent. The importance of the home/family environment cannot be over- emphasized, the better the home, the better it is for the child. The more mutually satisfying the relationship between husband and wife, between parents and the child is the less likely are the chances of the child being abused or neglected and of course this means moving in the right direction towards the reduction or disappearance of child abuse forms in our societies.

Illiteracy/ignorance: Illiteracy, which breeds ignorance, has been seen as another cause why most people abuse children. Many parents who abuse their children today do that because they lack the needed means of providing for the need of their children as a result of lack of education. These parents could not get better paid jobs and hence had to enforce hawking of petty goods or begging for alms by their children. According to Nasir (1998), education provides its possessor with developed mental capacity and preparation for the future.

Cultural practices: Culture, in its simplest form refers to the general way of life of the people in a social environment. It entails the eating habit, dressing, religious views and so many endeavours of human being. It “embodies the philosophy, worldview, behaviour patterns, arts and institutions of a people” (Falola, 2010) as cited in Uzuegwu (2010). Nigeria as a country is made up of people from different ethnic groups and cultural practices with the dominant groups being the Igbos, Hausas and Yorubas. Some of the cultural practices have contributed to the abuse of children currently observed in the country. The cultural practices which have aided the abuse of children in the country include early marriage, female genital mutilation, religious belief, desire for large family, preference for male children and the need to ensure discipline.

Child trafficking: Though trafficking has been considered as a form of child abuse, it was also considered by Nasir (1998) since it leads to the perpetration of other forms of abuses of child prostitution, child labour, house helps, deprivation of

education and many more. In line with Nasir (1998)'s view, child trafficking is among the many ills which plague Nigerian children today. Child trafficking is seen as a criminal offence in the Criminal Code of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Section 371 which stipulates that:

"Any person who with intent to deprive any parent, guardian or other person who has the lawful care or charge of a child who is under the age of twelve years, of possession of such child or with intent to steal any article upon or about the person of a child, forcibly or fraudulently takes or entices away or detains the child or receives or harbours the child, knowing it to have been so taken or enticed away or detained, is guilty of felony and is liable to imprisonment for fourteen years".

Despite the provisions of this Code, there is still the practice of child pawning in several parts of Nigeria, where a child is given out in lieu of a debt, and works until he saves the amount of money owed by his parents.

Lack of awareness of the rights of the child by parents and the children themselves: The legal framework for the protection of the child in law is not known either by children or by their parents or even those e.g. social welfare agencies, teachers, guardians etc. who are in a position to protect the rights of the child.

Lack of reliable data: lack of reliable data which can be used by Government to plan for the child was also identified by Nasir (1998) as responsible for the cause of different forms of child abuse in Nigeria. Such data include number of childbirth, deaths, abductions, disabilities, abuses, neglects, so it is difficult to ascertain the number of children who need help. Facilities for children are either non-existent or where they exist, of very poor quality, for example, orphanages, remand homes, libraries, sporting facilities are either not available, poorly equipped, wrongly sited or placed in wrong hands. Even legal provisions that guarantee the rights of the child are full of dangerous loopholes (Egunjobi, 1998).

EFFECTS OF CHILD ABUSE/CHILD'S RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Violating child's rights through the various forms of abuses has undesired consequences for both the child, and the society at large. The consequences include poverty, poor health, emotional problems and social isolation (Olatawura, 2009; Obioha, 2009; Osifo and Egbuowman, 2009).

Poverty – The abused children are usually not equipped to live independent lives. They neither receive western education nor trained in any skill so that they can be financially independent and they end up in poverty and its associated evils. The girl child is usually the most affected as they are denied basic rights, used for unpaid and invisible jobs, tailored towards causes of home keeping and child rearing and bearing, their training is regarded as bad investment leading to illiteracy, uninformed mind, vulnerability, disadvantaged in the labour market, dumb in communication matters and invariably poverty (Umuobi, 2010). In Katcha community of Niger State, Nigeria, Oleribe (2007) found out that many girl children are denied education as a result of culture of 'Egikpa' whereby a girl child is given to another family for upkeep and training and, 'Sadakar' – where girls (usually under-aged) are freely given to people as wives This practice of denying the female children basic education is also practised in other parts of country.

Poor health – Due to some of these cultural practices especially FGM and early marriage, some of the children contract illness such as Sexually Transmitted Illness (STI), and Vesico Vaginal Fistula (VVF), which may last throughout their life time or lead to premature death if not properly treated. This fact is confirmed by studies that have been carried out by Akpan (2003) and Yehah (2001).

Emotional problems – The abused children experience emotional problems. Some of the problems they experience include lack of confidence, depression, hostility, aggression, self-destructive behaviour and anxiety etc (Osifo and Evbuowman, 2009) in Nigeria. This arises from denial of opportunities for the children to assert themselves.

Social isolation – The abused children suffer from social isolation as they are excluded from the society. This problem applies mostly to children with disability who the society perceived as being punished by God for their activities or that of their parents/family member and thus are not integrated and accepted in the society (Uzuegwu, 2010). Many of them feel rejected (Lang and Upah, 2008).

Deprivation of education: One major effect of the above is a huge reduction in the number of children who are in school (Owolabi, 2012). Technically, Nigeria is Africa's third richest country because of its immense oil wealth; notwithstanding, official records show that about 8.8 million Nigerian children are out of schools. This is more than the figure obtainable in any other country. Subsequent research by the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Education indicates that the actual figure may be 19.2 million; nearly half of all Nigerian primary-school-age children (Federal Ministry of Education, 2006). The resulting implication of this is that most of the children who fall within this category have been abused. Instead of being in schools, some of them have been thrown into prostitution, bus conducting, and other forms of abuse discussed above. Studies have shown the parents of street children to be largely lowly educated and employed in unskilled work, often making it necessary for children to work instead of attending school to contribute to a family's overall income (Aderinto, 2000).

CHILD'S RIGHTS ACT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

Development is viewed as a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process that aims to improve the well-being of communities and individuals (Declaration on the Right of Development, 1986). Human development is defined as a process of enlarging a range of choices through expanding human functioning and capabilities (Human Development Report, 2000). The goal of development is to create an environment that enables people to exercise such choices thereby enjoying a long, healthy and creative life (Human Development Report, 2000). Central to this basic goal is that people should be empowered to actively participate to their development and benefit from such participation. The term sustainable development has been defined as the development that meets the needs and aspirations of the current generations without compromising the ability to meet those of the future generations (Abdulrasheed, 1994: 1).

In other words, Sustainable development means improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems (Ajai, 1995: 41). In every society, children, and by extension, the youths are the future of their society. That explains why every society ensures that every child is given every available opportunity to live, survive, and develop their full potential for the future. A child who is compelled by the nation's socioeconomic condition to work as domestic servants, bus conductors, street hawkers, and sex workers will grow up to become a burden, rather than an asset, to himself/herself and the nation because the child will lack basic survival skills and knowledge that will benefit him/her and the nation, in the long run (Okpukpara and Odurukwe, 2003).

According to the views of Owolabi (2012), nations that have now become developed are those that maximized the potential of sustainable development by investing in the future of the children and the youths, by investing in their education and providing conducive environments for the families to meet the needs of their members. Sustainable development, in this

context, therefore, depends not only in investing the present needs of the working children, but also eradicating all forms of child abuse that will compromise the future development of these children and the nation, at large. The situation of a working Nigeria child, therefore, does not guarantee sustainable development.

As stated by Adimula (2005), child's rights laws seek to eliminate illiteracy, early marriage, child trafficking, prostitution, street hawking, ritual killing, unlawful sexual intercourse with a child, child neglect, child labour, use of children as house helps, drug trafficking and other criminal activities, recruitment of children into the armed forces and many other forms of child abuse. This is in line with the general provisions of the CRA, 2003 which broadly provides for the survival, development, protection and participation and hence enforcing the CRA is the best means to ensuring meaningful sustainable development in all areas of the nation as children remains the future leaders.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The menace of child abuse is evidently widespread in rural and urban areas of Nigeria. Although, child abuse is more prevalent in the urban cities, the living condition of rural areas such as poverty and ignorance promotes the prevalence of child abuse in the urban cities. Child abuse in all its ramifications have been found to be means of violating the fundamental human rights of children. The prevalent forms of child abuse in Nigeria are numerous and are categorized broadly as physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and child exploitation. These forms of abuses were also revealed to be promoted chiefly by poverty. Other factors promoting the violation of child's rights in Nigeria are family and environmental factors, illiteracy/ignorance, culture, child trafficking, lack of awareness of child's rights by parents and children, and lack of reliable data on children. The consequences or effects of violating child's rights through child abuse are enormous and include poverty, poor health conditions, emotional problems, social isolation and deprivation of education.

This paper concludes that child abuse has negative impact on sustainable development of any nation since no nation can develop sustainably if the children who are the future managers of the nation's social, economic and political development are not properly taken care for as provided by the Child's Rights Act (CRA). The CRA has the potential to eradicate or reduce child abuse in Nigeria since it serves the best interest of the child, if the populace is aware and have quality knowledge of the content of the CRA. This will not only be beneficial to the development of the child, it will also promote the nation's economy in the long run.

It is therefore recommended that the tenets of the CRA should be taught to all Nigerians, especially the primary caregivers for children, through raising awareness of the existence of the Act and organizing training programmes on the content of the CRA. The government at all levels and the governmental organizations should also facilitate the knowledge of CRA among Nigerian residents by providing copies of the CRA in forms and languages that are easily understood by the different ethnic groups in Nigeria.

REFERENCES

- Abdul-Rasheed, K. S. (1994). After rio-what next. In: M. Ajomo and O. Adewale (Eds.). *Environmental Law and Sustainable Development in Nigeria*. Lagos: NIALS and British Council
- Aderinto A. A. (2000). Social correlates and coping measures of street-children: a comparative study of street and non-street children in South-Western Nigeria. *Child abuse and neglect*, Vol. 24, no 9, Elsevier Science retrieved from <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/els/01452134/2000/00000024/00000009/art00172>
- Adewumi, F. (1990), *Policy issues and options in elimination of child labour*, Ghana: Arlac
- Adimula, B. (2005). An overview of the Nigerian Child Rights Act, 2003: Kwara state as case study. *Nigerian Bar Journal*, 3(3).
- Agbonlahor, M. U., Momoh, S., Bamire, S. and Oke, J. T. (2007). Determinants of child labour in rural households of Ogun State, Nigeria. *ASSET series C*, 2(1), 97-108.
- Ajai, W. (1995). Achieving environmental protection through the vehicle of human rights: Some conceptual, legal and third world problems. *U.B.L.J.*, 2(1), p. 41
- Ajani, O. I. Y., Omonola, B. T. and Oni, O. A. (2007). Economic analysis of child labour and health status of cocoa farmers in Ikole Ekiti Local Government Area, Ekiti State, Nigeria. *Asset Series C*. 2 (1), 17-28.
- Akpan, E. (2003). Early marriage in Eastern Nigeria and the health consequences of vesico-vaginal fistulae (VVF) among young mothers. *Gender and Development*, II (2), 70 -76.
- Alemika, E. E. O., Chukwuma, I., Lafratta, D., Messerli, D. and Souckova, J. (2005). Rights of the child in Nigeria: Report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by Nigeria. 38th session, Geneva.
- Aluko S. (1975). Poverty: Its remedies in poverty in Nigeria. *Nigerian Economic Society Annual Conference*, Ibadan.
- Atere, A. A., Akinwale, A. A., and Owoade, A. E. (2005). Child abuse and juvenile gangs: A case study of social miscreants in Oshodi, Isolo Local Government, Lagos State. *The Nigerian Journal of Social Sciences*,5(1):150-159.
- Corwin, D. L. and Olafson, E. (1997). Videotaped discovery of a reportedly unrecallable memory of child sexual abuse: Comparison with a childhood interview videotaped 11 years before. *Child Maltreatment*, 2(2): 91-112.
- Criminal Code Act Cap C42 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (2004)
- Doye, C. (1990). *Working with the Abused Children*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd.
- Egunjobi, G. (1998). Wanted: A better future for the child. *The Guardian* on Saturday, November 14, 1998, p. 15.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (1974). The Nigerian Labour Act
- Federal Government of Nigeria (1990). The Nigerian Labour Act
- Federal Government of Nigeria (2003). The Child Rights Act (2003)
- Food, Agriculture Organisation & International Labour Organisation (2013). Child labour in agriculture. FAO & ILO.
- Human Development Report (2007/2008). Country factsheets – Nigeria. Pp. 1-6. Retrieved from <http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/country-fact-sheets/cty-fs-NGA.html> on 10th March, 2008.
- Ijaiya, H. (2006). Human rights: Gender discrimination against female children in Nigeria
- Jones, N. (2011). Strengthening linkages between child protection and social protection systems in Nigeria. A project briefing No 62 by Overseas Development Institute-ODI for UNICEF. Available at www.odi.org.uk.
- Jones, N., Presler-Marshall, E., Cooke, N. and Akinrimisi, B. (2011). Promoting synergies between child protection and social protection in Nigeria. Report to UNICEF, Nigeria. London: ODI.
- Khartri, K. (2004). Child abuse, definition, prevention, types, treatment, maltreatments articles, children's abuse. <http://www.umicos.umd.edu/users/sawweb/sawnet/childabuse.html>.

- Ladan, M. T. (2005). The rights of child domestics as victims of human rights violation and trafficking in Nigeria. *A paper presented at a two-day workshop for judges, magistrates and prosecutors*. Organised by the Anti-trafficking Agency (NAPTIP), Abuja in collaboration with UNICEF, Nigeria from 21-22, September, 2005.
- Lang, R. and Upah, L. (2008). *Scoping study: Disability issues in Nigeria, Final report communed by DFID*. Retrieved April 6, 2010 from [dfid-nigeriareport.pdf].
- Nasir, J. M. (1998). Impediments to the realization of the rights of the child in Nigeria. Pp. 148-168
- National Child Welfare Policy (1989)
- National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information (2006). Child abuse and neglect prevention. Retrieved from <http://nccanch.acf.hhs.gov>
- Newton, C. J. (2001). Child abuse: An overview. *Mental Health Journal*. <http://www.therapistfinder.net>
- Obioha, E. (2009). Becoming a street Child in poverty ridden society: A descriptive case of Kaduna metropolis, Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 19: 41 -49.
- Offiong, D. A. (2001). *Globalization: Post Neo-dependency and Poverty in Africa*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers
- Ogunniran, I. (2010). Child bride and child sex: Combating child marriages in Nigeria. *The legislative and institutional framework of environmental protection in the oil sector*.
- Ojo, M. O. O. (2013). A sociological investigation of the determinant factors and the effects of child street hawking in Nigeria: Agege, Lagos state under survey. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 3(1), 114-137. Retrieved from <http://www.aessweb.com/journal-detail.php?id=5007>
- Okafor, E. E. (2010). Child labor dynamics and implications for sustainable development In Nigeria. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 1(5), pp. 8-21
- Okpukpara, B. C. and Odurukwe, N. (2003) Incidence and Determinants Child Labour in Nigeria: Implications for Poverty Alleviation *Journal of Economic Policy* Vol. 10(2)
- Olatawura, M. (2009). Culture and child psychiatric disorders: Nigerian perspective. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 24, 497 – 504.
- Oleribe, O. (2007). Neglect of Girl Child Education: Bridging the Gap: A Case Study of a Nigerian Agrarian Northern Community. *International NGO Journal*, 2, 030-035.
- Opara, N. M. (2009). *Emerging issues in the trafficking of African women for prostitution*. New York: Columbia University Press
- Osifo, D. and Evbuomwan, I. (2009). Female genital mutilation among Edo people. The complications and pattern of presentation at Paediatric surgery unit Benin City. *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, 13, 17 – 25.
- Owolabi, E. F. (2012). Child abuse and sustainable development in Nigeria. *African Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(2), 108-119. Retrieved from www.sachajournals.com
- Penal Code Act Cap 89 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (2004)
- Sossou, M and Yogtib, J. A. (2008). Abuse of children in West Africa: Implications for social work education and practice. *British Journal of Social Work*, 39(7): 1218-1234
- Umobong, M. E. (2010). Child abuse and its implications for the educational sector in Nigeria.
- UNDP. (1986). Declaration on the Right of Development. Adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations resolution 41/128 of 4 December, 1986.
- UNESCO (2006). Human trafficking in Nigeria: Root cause and recommendations. *Policy Paper No 14.2 (E)*
- United Nations Development Programme- UNDP. (2000). Human Development Report 2000. p19
- University of Ilorin Law Journal*, Vol. 1, pp. 90-99.
- Uzu-Egbu, C. N. (2010). Culture and child abuse in Nigeria.

World Bank (2000). Child labour, child schooling and their interaction with adult labour: Empirical evidence for Peru and Pakistan. Pp.61-64.

Yelah, K. (2001). *Epilogue to Childhood Encounter*. United Nations Population Fund. Retrieved June 3, 2010 from <http://nigeria.unfpa.org/news.htm>.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS:

Wahab Gbenga Ojebiyi is a Ph.D student in the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta

Olubunmi Rufina Ashimolowo is an Associate Professor in the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta.