



**Convention on the  
Rights of the Child**

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**COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD**  
**CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES**  
**UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION**

**Second periodic reports of States parties due in 1998**

**NIGERIA\***

[30 January 2003]

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\* For the initial report submitted by the Government of Nigeria, see CRC/C/8/Add.26. For its consideration by the Committee, see documents CRC/C/SR.321-323 and CRC/C/15/Add.61.

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### List of acronyms

ANPPCAN	African Network on the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect
ARI	Acute respiratory infections
BFHI	Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CRIB	Child Rights Implementation Bureau
CSPD	Child Survival, Protection and Development
CYPL	Children and Young Persons Law
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDR	End-Decade Review
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
IMCI	Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses
IMR	Infant mortality rate
IPEC	International Programme for Elimination of Child Labour
LGA	Local government area
MCH	Maternal and child health
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NCFN	National Committee on Food and Nutrition
NCW	National Commission for Women
NCRIC	National Child Rights Implementation Committee
NDHS	National Demographic and Health Survey
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NID	National Immunization Day

NPA	National Plan of Action
NPC	National Population Commission
NPI	National Programme on Immunization
NCR	National Refugee Commission
ORT	Oral rehydration therapy
PHC	Primary Health Care
PONC	Progress of the Nigerian Child
U-5MR	Under-5 Mortality Rate
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UBE	Universal Basic Education

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Nigeria is a signatory to both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) in 1991.
2. In October 1994, the FGN inaugurated the National Child Rights Implementation Committee (NCRIC) with a charge to popularize the two Conventions. The NCRIC was subsequently decentralized to State and local government levels. In September 2000, Nigeria became one of the first African countries to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and also the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.
3. The NCRIC submitted the initial report under article 44 on the implementation of the provisions of the Convention in 1995 and defended it in 1996. The first progress report is due for submission in 2000, and at present is in its last stages of preparation.
4. The main issues highlighted in the first report include:
  - The disadvantaged position of the girl child;
  - The establishment of the Family Support Programme;
  - The establishment of a mechanism for effective sensitization of the public on the rights of the child;
  - Constraints on child rights implementation, which were grouped under sociocultural and traditional practices as well as economic and political factors.
5. Following the Nigerian submission, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued the following important observations:
  - Commendation of the establishment of both the National Human Rights Commission and the National Child Rights Implementation Committee;
  - The persistence of certain harmful traditional practices and customs that have had a negative bearing on the enjoyment of the rights guaranteed under the Convention;
  - The apparent absence of pro-active measures to combat discrimination against disabled children, children belonging to ethnic minorities and children born out of wedlock;
  - The problems of violence against children and the physical abuse of children in the family, in schools, in the community and in society;
  - The non-recognition of social support to families, especially female-headed single-parent households. Indeed, the humiliating experience of female single parents heads of household often compelled such women to falsify their marital status in order to have access to basic services;

- Current legislation with regard to the administration of juvenile justice and institutionalization of children does not appear to conform to the principle and provisions of the Convention;
- The low age of criminal responsibility for children in Nigeria, put at 7 years, was a serious concern to the Committee, especially as children even under the age of 7 years can be brought before the courts.

These concluding observations have been noted by Government and are highlighted here in order to provide the context for reviewing progress made by Nigeria at the end of the decade.

### **Action taken at national and other levels**

6. As a demonstration of its commitment to the implementation of the Convention, Nigeria took the necessary steps to fulfil the requirements of paragraphs 34 and 35 of the World Summit Plan of Action by preparing a National Plan of Action (NPA) which detailed activities to be implemented towards the attainment of the set goals. The NPA also acted as a catalyst for the preparation of plans of action by the lower tiers of Government at State and local levels.

7. The support of the mass media was won towards supporting the provisions of the Convention. Following the statement of commitment signed in 1992, various media messages on the provisions of the Convention are being regularly featured on radio and television, and in magazines and newspapers. The provisions of the Convention have now been simplified and translated into the three major Nigerian languages. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child has been ratified.

8. The country has endeavoured to establish mechanisms for the regular collection, analysis and publication of data required to monitor relevant social indicators relating to the well-being of children and which record the progress being made towards the goals set forth in the NPA. To date, four major surveys have been conducted in the 1990s. There were three major surveys in the 1990s - the National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) 1990, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 1995, and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 1999. Each of these surveys collected data on a wide number of indicators from a nationally representative sample of households. A fourth survey, the NDHS 1999, was just being published at the time of preparation of this report. These were supplemented with data from other sources, including specialized surveys such as the HIV/AIDS sentinel site Seroprevalence Survey and Active Routine Surveillance Reports, for example, of cases of Guinea worm.

9. The country has re-examined its current status of emergency preparedness. Agencies like the National Refugees Commission (NRC), National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the new Ministry of Cooperation and Integration in Africa alongside several United Nations agencies and NGOs are taking up the challenges posed by emergencies. The United Nations agencies have responded in two dimensions: (i) a United Nations working group on emergency preparedness and response has been established; and (ii) the United Nations agencies responded practically during the Kaduna communal crises and the fire disasters in the Niger Delta.

10. The FGN has continued to enjoy the cooperation and collaboration of all relevant United Nations agencies and organs as well as other international institutions in ensuring the

achievement of the goals and objectives of the NPA. Such support has proved invaluable in various areas, including the preparation of the NPA in 1992, the consolidated analysis of the plans of action and their regular monitoring and evaluation, organization for review and meetings towards achievement of set goals, the provision of expert advice, the conduct of national surveys and the preparation of the EDR report.

11. The National Commission for Women (NCW), which was established in 1989 and replicated at the State and local government levels, inaugurated a National Working Committee on Child Welfare in March 1993. In recognition of the increased pressure for the implementation of various Economic and Social Council resolutions and United Nations conventions, the NCW was upgraded to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development in 1995. The Department of Child Development is now located within the Ministry and is largely responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the provisions of the Convention.

12. Other avenues to publicize issues concerning the Convention by government agencies include the following:

- The establishment of the Child Rights Information Bureau (CRIB) in the Ministry of Information. The CRIB, in cooperation with the NCRIC, publishes the Progress of the Nigerian Child (PONC) with data from the Federal Office of Statistics. The PONC is a Nigerian version of the *State of the World's Children* published by UNICEF;
- The formation of child rights clubs in schools;
- The establishment of regional monitoring centres for child rights violations by the African Network on the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect in Nigeria (ANPPCAN);
- The celebration of annual events such as: Children's Day (27 May), National Youth Day (12 August), the Day of the African Child (16 June), International Women's Day and the Day of the Family. These usually provide the opportunity for advocacy and awareness campaigns. These events also provide the opportunity for media dialogue between media houses/practitioners and relevant government ministries/agencies in order to raise awareness of the provisions of the Convention;
- Regular workshops organized by the Federal Ministry of Women's Affairs and Youth Development for policy makers on the provisions of the Convention and its implementation;
- In October 2000, the Senate held a public hearing on the state of promotion and protection of human rights in Nigeria, including child's rights and the rights of women;
- The National Human Rights Commission held a seminar on "Appraisal of international human rights instruments" in November 2002.

## II. GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION

### Reviews of reservations

13. In 1991 Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child without any reservations. Therefore, the issue of maintaining or an intention of withdrawing the reservation does not arise.

### Measures adopted to bring national legislation and practice into conformity with the Convention

14. Since 1993, there has been a draft Children's Decree, which under this democratic dispensation is a draft Children's Bill. The bill has reached the National Assembly, having been adopted by the Federal Executive Council, and it is hoped that it will soon be signed into law. This draft bill took into consideration the provisions of the Convention and as such the rights guaranteed in the Convention are well articulated in the draft bill.

15. Furthermore, some States on their own have promulgated laws that protect children. For example, a bill has been passed by the Ebonyi State Government to ensure that children are not withdrawn from school. In Anambra State, a bill has also been passed making it an offence for any child of school age to hawk during school hours, while the Edo State House of Assembly has passed a bill banning prostitution in Edo State. The States of Niger and Sokoto also have bills discouraging the withdrawal of girls from schools.

16. In addition, several motions and bills are receiving concluding attention at the National Assembly. For example, Mrs. Adeyemi of the Ile-Oluji constituency of Oyo State has sponsored a bill on female genital mutilation. Chief Mrs. Titilayo Ajanaku, the Special Adviser to the President on Women Affairs, sponsored a bill making child marriage an offence, and only recently the wife of the Vice-President, Mrs. Titi Abubakar, submitted a bill against child labour, trafficking, prostitution and sex trade in girls. Though the draft bill has not been signed into law, the initiative taken by the State and some influential individuals are in consonance with the provisions of the Convention.

17. Other relevant State legislation includes:

(a) The recently passed Edo and Delta State laws prohibiting circumcision. In Edo State the law is cited as Female Circumcision and Genital Mutilation (Prohibition) Law 1999. Offenders include those who perform the operation. The punishment is a fine of up to N 1,000 or 6 months' imprisonment;

(b) The Girl-Child Marriage and Female Circumcision (Prohibition) Law 2000 of Cross River State. This law seeks to prohibit some harmful traditional practices against women and girls that are prevalent in the communities in the State;

(c) A law abolishing female circumcision and practices connected thereto was recently enacted into law by the Rivers State House of Assembly;



(d) Ebonyi and Akwa Ibom States have bills before their respective Houses of Assembly on the abolition of harmful traditional practices against women and children as well as on female genital mutilation, early marriage, etc.;

(e) Kebbi State has passed a law banning street hawking by girls of school age in the State;

(f) Sokoto State has banned begging, while in Rivers State a task force to get children off the street during school hours is in place.

### **The status of the Convention in domestic law**

18. With regard to the status of the Convention in domestic law, section 12 (i) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, provides that “no treaty between the Federation and any other country shall have the force of law except to the extent to which any such treaty has been enacted into law by the National Assembly”. From this, it is obvious that since the Convention has not been incorporated into domestic law, it has no status in the country. However, the National Assembly, by virtue of section 12 (2) of the Constitution, may make laws for the Federation or any part thereof with respect to matters not included in the Exclusive Legislative List for the purpose of implementing a treaty.

19. Thus, a bill for all acts of the National Assembly passed pursuant to the provisions of section 12 (2) of the Constitution shall not be presented to the President for assent, and shall not be enacted unless it is ratified by a majority of all the Houses of Assembly in the Federation. Therefore all that is required is to propose a bill that will transform the Convention into domestic law, as is usual with treaties already signed and ratified by the country. This mode will be easier than signing into law a draft Children’s Bill.

### **Provisions adopted at the national level conducive to the realization of the rights of the child**

20. The Bill on Female Genital Mutilation has gone through the lower house, and will go through the upper house before the President can sign it into law. Also, the Children’s Bill has been adopted by the Federal Executive Council. Furthermore, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria signed, on 7 September 2000, the two Optional Protocols to the Convention. The African Charter has been ratified by the Government and the relevant agencies are following up with the implementation. Also, the Bill on Child Trafficking, Child Labour, Child Pornography and Sex Trade in Girls, sponsored by Mrs. Titi Abubakar, has passed the second reading and is about to be passed by the lower House of the National Assembly.

### **Judicial decisions that applied the principles and provisions of the Convention**

21. In *Mojekwu v. Mojekwu* 1997, a case of inheritance in the Nnewi culture of Anambra State, Nigeria, the home State of the parties to the suit, the court of appeal held that a girl child who is a direct offspring of a man who dies without male issue can inherit to the exclusion of other relations. Traditionally, the estate had gone to the man’s nephew or brother, so this is an innovation in the customary law of the Nnewi people. In another suit, in Lagos, 11 children who were under age when they committed murder were pardoned because

they were under age when the crime was committed. Recently, at the *Otokoto* trial in Owerri, a child armed robber was not condemned to death but was sent to the “borstal” section of the Port Harcourt prison being under age. (By “borstal” is meant that even though the child is confined in prison, he is not necessarily kept under the same conditions/environment with hardened criminals.)

### **Remedies available in case of violation of rights recognized by the Convention**

22. The laws that protect children exist but are scattered in different laws. Thus, child victims of crimes are given protection under the Criminal Code, the Penal Code, the Labour Act, the UBE Act, the Beverages and Alcoholic Drinks Act, the Cinematographic Act, the various infants laws of the States, the Evidence Act, the Contract Law, the Matrimonial Cause Act, the Wills Act, the Age of Customary Marriage Law, the Births and Deaths Registration Act, the Children and Young Persons Law, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, etc. Thus, child protection provisions abound in our laws, even though they are not contained in a single document such as the draft Children’s Bill.

### **Steps taken or envisaged to adopt a comprehensive national strategy for children**

23. Pursuant to the 1990 World Summit for Children, Nigeria prepared a comprehensive National Plan of Action (NPA), which was also adopted at State level. An interministerial committee with the support of UNICEF, is implementing this National Plan of Action for Children. In addition to the NPA, there are also several plans of action by the various sectors, e.g. health, education, information, etc., addressing specific issues of child welfare, for example, baby-friendly initiatives, child-friendly schools, national programmes on immunization, poverty eradication programmes, universal basic education, the child-friendly cities initiative, setting up of legal aid centres for women and social services at the Federal level in 1977 by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and the setting up of same in the States. Furthermore, a Directorate on Child Rights NGOs has been set up, a National Council of Child Rights NGOs has also been set up, and there is a draft national policy on children in the making. Recently, a National Summit for Children was held to develop a comprehensive national policy and strategy for the implementation of the Convention in Nigeria.

24. The Education Master Plan, approved in 1994, has not been fully implemented. This plan, when implemented, would make universal basic education available in Nigeria. This underscores the necessity for follow-up and monitoring of policies once adopted.

### **Existing or planned national, regional and local mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention**

25. Following the Committee’s demand for an institutional framework for the implementation of the Convention at country level, Nigeria established the NCRIC based in the Child Development Department of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development has tried to implement child rights down to the grass roots. The States have also been mandated to establish child rights monitoring centres in the States as well as child rights clubs in the schools. Furthermore, they are to establish child rights implementation committees at LGA level. The monitoring centres will ensure implementation of the Convention from a watchdog angle while

the school child rights clubs will help spread awareness. Virtually all 36 States have such committees except Kano, Kogi, Nassarawa and Lagos States. Some States, for example Imo State, Abia State and Ebonyi State, have already established committees in some LGAs. Efforts in this regard are continuing. About half of the States have also established child rights monitoring centres while over 3,000 school child rights clubs have been established across the nation. These efforts have also been supported by NGOs and others that, also on their own, have child rights monitoring activities in various States of the Federation. UNICEF is also a collaborating partner in this process.

26. In addition to the above-mentioned efforts, there are other frameworks for child rights implementation. For example, there exists an interministerial committee at national and State level comprising mainly the Ministries of Health, Education, Works and Housing, Information, Labour and Productivity, Water Resources, Agriculture and Planning that implements the National Plan of Action mentioned above. Furthermore, there is the National Council on Women Affairs and Youth Development, which is the highest policy-making body on children. The Council, which includes the States, meets at least two times a year. Also, there is a regular meeting of the directors of child development from the Federal and State ministries of women affairs and youth development.

27. A number of actions taken by the Government have had far-reaching effects on Nigerian children. The first is the UBE, requiring every child to attend school, which is free, up to junior secondary level. The second is the Poverty Eradication Programme, which establishes institutions that provide loans and microcredit to the poor as well as skill-acquisition training and other measures of empowerment to families to lift them out of poverty. A lot of resources and political will have been channelled towards the National Programme on Immunization which several donor agencies have supported. Finally, with the new democratic order, wives of the chief executives at national, State and local government levels have become involved in independent non-governmental work. The wife of the President, Chief Stella Obasanjo, has established the Child Care Trust specifically to take care of the needs of disabled children. The wife of the Vice-President, Chief Titi Abubakar, has an NGO fighting for children trafficked into prostitution and labour, while virtually all the wives of State governors have their own NGOs fighting against one social injustice or another, including those involving children.

28. These outpourings of NGO activities have motivated the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development to establish an NGO technical support network committee comprising 25 NGOs, not yet including those of the wives of chief executives mentioned above. The network is aimed at stimulating and coordinating various efforts on child rights by NGOs in Nigeria as well as monitoring and evaluating progress achieved in these sectors. The establishment of social mobilization technical committees at Federal, State and local government levels as well as the establishment of child rights information bureaux at Federal, State and local government levels have assured the spread of the Convention.

29. In all these efforts mentioned above, poor implementation has been identified as the problem; therefore, greater effort and effectiveness are needed in this area. There is also need for greater participation of civil society to ensure effective participation as well as monitoring activities and programmes to ensure effective implementation.

### **Initiatives taken in cooperation with civil society**

30. The following initiatives have been taken in cooperation with civil society:

(a) Development of a draft Child Development Policy and the organization of children's summits and camps;

(b) The NGO Technical Support Network assures NGO mobilization for children; the establishment of a National Council for NGOs; mobilization of universities and research institutions and individuals to carry out studies on female genital mutilation; raising the level of awareness of policy makers of international conventions on Women and Children, etc.;

(c) Fund-raising by the private sector, e.g. United Bank for Africa, Sheraton, British Airways, embassies, etc.;

(d) Providing skills and microcredit to poor families, especially women, e.g. Peoples Bank, Community Bank, Agricultural Development Bank, etc.; in order to address scarcity of data, several studies in collaboration with universities, NGOs and research institutions were commissioned in several sectors to establish baseline data to serve as a point of orientation in future monitoring;

(e) The Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development in developing a manual for juvenile justice administration took into consideration the provisions of the Convention, the African Charter and the Beijing Rules.

### **Measures taken to ensure implementation at national, regional and local levels using indicators**

31. There has been a conscious effort in the country, both at Federal and State levels, to set up a budget bearing children in mind: 26 per cent of the national budget was allocated to children in response to their needs as estimated by the Government. However, the proportion of the State budgets devoted to education varied from State to State. Some could provide adequate percentages while others could not, in line with their perceived needs. Education was given the highest priority in Niger State. The others were:

Benue State - 18-22 per cent of its budget allocated to education;  
Zamfara - 26 per cent;  
Sokoto - 25 per cent;  
Katsina - 30 per cent;  
Akwa Ibom - 15.5 per cent;  
Bayelsa - 12.5 per cent;  
Cross River - 19.6 per cent;  
Delta - 4.8 per cent;  
Edo - 14.5 per cent;  
Rivers - 17 per cent;  
Yobe - 70 per cent;  
Bauchi - 50 per cent.

32. This is the area where more effort should be made to carry out an adequate budget analysis to determine the proportions spent on children and ensure the effective use of resources. Bringing this to the consciousness of the Federal and State Governments, which has been agreed upon at the recently concluded Nigerian Children's Summit, will be a first step in creating awareness and putting pressure on the various Governments to comply and do more than they are doing at present. Secondly, the Poverty Eradication Programmes have been of tremendous help.

33. Poverty Eradication Programmes and UBE appear to be promising. Effort should be made to get data on disaggregated budgetary allocations for education from the States, both at primary and secondary school levels.

### **International cooperation in the implementation of the Convention**

34. UNICEF and Nigeria have a five-year programme of cooperation. There is usually adequate mobilization in the formulation of the plan and in the mid-term review. There are also mid-term and annual reviews of the various sectors such as Health, Basic Education, Urban Basic Services/Children in Need of Special Protection Measures. Besides this effort by UNICEF, there is also bilateral cooperation between the Federal Government and the World Bank, UNDP, WHO and international donor agencies. A case in point is the financial support received from these agencies on the National Programme on Immunization (NPI). Also the Government of the United States of America is supporting the IPEC Programme with \$800,000 while other donors have promised their financial support. Some foreign countries and donor agencies have either given support or promised support for the First Lady's Child Care Trust Programme for Disabled Children. ILO has employed a National Manager for the IPEC Programme and is joining hands with the Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity as well as the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, which has inaugurated a steering committee to implement IPEC in Nigeria. Furthermore, the United States of America has provided 9 million dollars to prosecute agents of child trafficking in West Africa, including Nigeria.

35. NGOs are being supported at various levels by international donor agencies.

### **Measures taken to make the principles of the Convention widely known**

36. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, through the National Child Rights Implementation Monitoring Committee (NCRIC), has published a simplified edition of the Convention in order for it to be understood by adults and children alike, and has circulated it widely throughout the country. Translations have been made into three main

Nigerian languages and circulated widely, particularly in the north-east, south-east and south-west. Further translations have also been undertaken for the south-south and north-west geopolitical zones. State Governments have been urged to look into this question.

37. Actions taken to spread awareness of the Convention in Nigeria include:

- Awareness creation through drama, videos, jingles, media missions, posters, calendars, year planners, leaflets, workshops, lectures, sensitization of local government chairmen, creation of children's parks in the Federal Capital Territory and in some States, etc.;
- Establishment of child rights clubs in several Nigerian schools with the provision of child rights kits. The main objective of child rights clubs is to make children aware of the provisions of the Convention. Although the Convention has not yet been included in the school curriculum, there is a proliferation of rallies for children as well as organization of sensitization of Parent-Teacher Associations and seminars for other target groups organized by several governmental and non-governmental organizations. The Children's Day celebration and the celebration of the Day of the African Child are also occasions to organize debates and radio discussions for children;
- There have also been several seminars and workshops for various professional groups - public officials and operators of the juvenile justice system, social workers, lawyers, magistrates, judges, prison wardens, police - to ensure that the Convention is widely known. The NGOs have been mobilized and empowered to individually contribute to the present report;
- Several workshops and seminars have been organized targeting specifically members of the mass media and publishing agencies. The participation of children in Nigeria has hardly gone beyond tokenism, but some efforts at increasing participation are being undertaken by governmental and non-governmental organizations. Children are made to participate in the activities of Children's Day and are increasingly invited to national and regional seminars to organize their own forums. They also participate in activities of young farmers' clubs, child rights clubs, etc. Children's parliaments are beginning to be organized in different parts of the country.

### **Measures undertaken to make reports widely available to the population**

38. Nigeria has produced only one report (the initial report). The present report is the second periodic report. The initial report as well as the concluding observations were printed and widely circulated by the National Child Rights Implementation Committee. No occasion has been spared at seminars, conferences and public activities to circulate these two documents. Following the two documents, the NCRIC debated the concluding observations and made proposals to improve the present report, as described below.

39. Several studies were carried out to ensure the generation of more data on children for this report. Nationwide surveys on HIV/AIDS orphans, child labour and trafficking were also carried out. A National Summit on Children was held with participation from the State, sectoral

ministries and agencies, national and international organizations, United Nations agencies, donor and funding organizations, academia, the childcare profession, children and other stakeholders in child survival and development. Its theme was “The Nigerian child: challenges of the 21st century, a new commitment”. The Summit offered the Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development an opportunity to debate various aspects of the implementation of the Convention in Nigeria with this report in mind. The concluding observations and the initial report were also made available to the members of the Houses of Assembly at Federal and State levels, as well as to the media houses in Nigeria. Also, a recent study carried out by the Centre for Women Development, in conjunction with UNICEF, on awareness of policy makers at the zonal and Federal levels of the major international conventions, protocols and charters Nigeria has entered into showed that there is an appreciable level of awareness of the major conventions, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. However even there, a lot of effort needs to be made to achieve complete awareness. For other conventions and protocols, there is an appreciable level of ignorance.

40. The present periodic report contains input from the various levels of government - local, State and Federal - through the meetings of the National Social Development Council for Child Rights, directors of Child Development Departments of the Federation and States and NGOs.

### **III. DEFINITION OF THE CHILD**

41. In Nigeria, there is no uniform definition of a child. The available definitions differ and depend on the purpose for which the definition is required. We should mention here that laws affecting children are scattered in different legislation such as the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which provides that you can vote at 18 years of age but cannot stand for election. The Matrimonial Causes Act puts the age of maturity at 21, whereas the Immigration Act stipulates that any person below 16 years is a minor, while for the purpose of criminal responsibility the Criminal Code provides for 7-12.

42. For legal and medical counselling without parental consent, no specific age is stipulated. Culturally, throughout Nigeria there is a bond between parents and children until they die.

43. For medical treatment or surgery without parental consent, the stipulated age is 21.

44. The end of compulsory education is 15 years of age, but some children are still in school at 18 years.

45. For admission to employment, including hazardous work, the law recognizes apprenticeship at 16 years and 18-21 for regular jobs.

46. The age of marriage is a highly controversial issue and it varies from place to place. In north-west and north-central Nigeria, 14 years is the age of marriage. In the north-central part the age of marriage is between the second and third menstruation, while in the southern States it varies from 16 to 18 years of age.

47. The age of sexual consent is 18 in most States. However, in two States of the south-south zone, the age is 13. In the west zone, the age of marriage varies from 16 to 19 years, but in the north, particularly in the north-east where the Islamic religion is widely practised, sexual consent is not allowed.

48. On the issue of voluntary enlistment in the armed forces, the stipulated age is 18 years. However, various armed forces divisions have their own schools where minor cadets are admitted and trained. However, beyond parade and disciplinary training, the children are not involved in military activities. There is no conscription of children into the armed forces in Nigeria. Regarding child participation in hostilities, several inter-ethnic, interreligious and inter-community clashes and border disputes have affected adversely children who, among others, are in one way or the other involved in hostility. In some parts of the northern region, Almajiri children have been used to foment trouble and act as human shields in such situations. Usually the children who are involved are those who are tough enough to withstand what they see.

49. The age of criminal responsibility in most States is 18, in line with the Convention, but in some States the age is still below 18, for example 7-12 years in the south-east, 12-18 years in the north-central and 14-21 years in the north-west. In the draft Children's Bill, which is at its final stage of adoption in the House of Assembly, the age of criminal responsibility is no longer important as children are not liable for their actions. The accent is placed on resocialization. Such children are declared in need of care and protection and appropriate measures are undertaken for their care.

50. On the issue of deprivation of liberty of children in conflict with the law, the Children and Young Person Law, which is currently in force, provides adequately for the needs of children deprived of their liberty following criminal actions. Such children can be placed in remand homes, borstal institutions and approved schools. The issues of asylum-seeking children do not arise in Nigeria. However, children go into the homes as from 7 years old.

51. Children are not sentenced to life imprisonment or condemned to death. There have been cases of child robbers who eventually were not shot along with others.

52. With regard to giving testimony in court, a child, under section 183 of the Evidence Act, can give evidence but not in open court, only in the judges' chambers, and the court must be satisfied that the child understands the questions put to him and can answer. However, the evidence of the child, by reason of his tender age, usually requires corroboration (as in sexual offences) in both civil and criminal cases.

53. Lodging of complaints and seeking redress before the court or other relevant authority without parental consent is not culturally acceptable as litigants become enemies for life after the litigation. It is therefore preferred that aggrieved parties exhaust other means of settlement before resorting to a court of law. A child cannot sue at law but either his/her parent or some other adult can speak for him.



54. Children do participate as much as possible in administration and judicial proceedings affecting them, as is provided for by the juvenile justice system and the Young Persons Act.
55. On giving consent to change of identity, including the name, family relations and adoption, the age for change of name is 21 except upon marriage, but on the issue of adoption, when the child is young he/she has no say until he/she is old enough, and this depends on the adopter. The issue of having access to information concerning the biological family is at the discretion of the parent and the required information can be given at any age.
56. There are provisions for inheritance at birth, but in some States of the Federation, tradition and religion still deprive girl children and women the right of inheritance. For instance, in the Ibo culture, only male children inherit while in some parts of the south, women or girls do not inherit, they being objects of inheritance themselves. Under Islamic law, an adopted child cannot inherit except by a will, and he gets only one-third of the estate of the deceased, even where a will gives him more. Furthermore, where there is a dispute over paternity in a divorce under Islamic law, the child cannot inherit from the father but he can inherit from the mother.
57. For the purpose of transactions in property, the person must have attained the age of 21.
58. Regarding creating or joining associations, the rights are guaranteed in the Constitution but the norm is to form or join these associations under parental guidance or professional and/or religious supervision. For the purpose of choosing a religion or attending a religious school, the age of 18 years obtains in most States in terms of choice of religion except in the Islamic-dominated States of northern Nigeria. In practice, the child's religion remains that of his/her parents until he/she attains majority or gets married and leaves home. On his own, he may be able to choose his own religion but faces stiff opposition from his parents.
59. Children are not encouraged to consume alcohol and other substances, but alcohol is totally forbidden in Islam.
60. There are no disparities in the State with regard to the minimum age for employment and compulsory schooling. However, in case of any disparity, the age of employment is usually higher than that of compulsory education, thereby ensuring that the child's education is not infringed upon. In fact UBE provides that the child should leave school at 15 and no employment can take place before 16 years. The labour law (ILO) is taken into account, employment is at 19, while apprenticeship law provides 16, and the shipping law provides that the job should not be hazardous and that where youngsters are employed then two boys should do the work of an adult male.
61. Concerning differences in the legislation between boys and girls, including in relation to marriage and sexual consent, see both article 2 and the Criminal Code.
62. For boys the age of puberty is 14, while 13 is the age for girls. However, these two provisions are not in consonance with the provisions of the Convention.

#### **IV. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

##### **A. Non-discrimination (art. 2)**

63. Section 39 (2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 provides for non-discrimination with respect to all citizens, including children. The constitution in Part IV also provides for fundamental human rights in consonance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

##### **Steps taken to combat discrimination**

64. In Nigeria, there are national, zonal and local government task forces on the girl child set up to remove any discrimination against the girl child. Other policies that relate to non-discrimination include the Nations Policy on Education, the UBE programme, establishment of more schools for girls and the provision of scholarship schemes in favour of girls. Also in existence are various State laws and edicts relating to harmful traditional practices, hawking, withdrawal of girls from school and early marriage.

65. Despite the laws, in practice the girl child, and in some areas the boy child, children born out of wedlock, disabled children, children of outcasts, children from a minority and children from other States often experience discrimination. Public education in these areas is still necessary.

##### **Measures adopted to reduce economic and social disparities**

66. There are conscious efforts by government at all levels, in view of the multi-ethnicity of the country which, besides the three major ethnic groups, has well over 250 distinct ethnic groups, to institute specific measures to reduce economic, social and geographical disparities. Existing institutions and agencies established in Nigeria to tackle this problem include the Federal Character Commissions, the Poverty Eradication Programme, the UBE programme, the National Programme on Immunization, the National Directorate of Employment, the Open Apprenticeship Scheme, the Youth Employment Scheme, the School on Wheels programme, Waste to Wealth, drop-in centres, mass de-worming, etc.

##### **Measures to eliminate discrimination against the girl child**

67. In addition, massive awareness sensitization campaigns and advocacy visits have been undertaken at various levels with policy makers, community, religious and opinion leaders, women, youth and children's groups and other social segments to bring about attitudinal changes in favour of the girl child. The Constitution, in section 25, provides for children born out of wedlock not to be discriminated against. However, they may have social problems within the society.

68. The Federal Government has established special education programmes for itinerant nomads, migrant fishermen and traders and literacy programmes for refugees, and a mass literacy programme as well. In addition, the UBE and the Poverty Eradication programmes help to reduce discrimination in the society.

### **Measures taken to collect disaggregated data**

69. A number of sectoral studies have been undertaken with the aim of collecting disaggregated data on children. The Federal Government, with the support of agencies like UNICEF, ILO, other donor agencies, NGOs, universities and research institutions, has conducted national and sectoral research on various areas of child survival and development such as child trafficking, child labour, HIV/AIDS orphans, child health and nutrition. In addition, there is an ongoing survey on the disabled in Nigeria as well as a survey on gender and child rights-related concerns in Nigeria. The National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey conducted by the Federal Office of Statistics have yielded valuable baseline information and disaggregated data on children.

### **Measures taken to prevent prejudice against children contributing to ethnic tensions and racism**

70. The problem of prejudice against children leading to social and ethnic tension, racism and xenophobia is perceived to be minimal and as such, there are no specific programmes designed to combat it. However, the general programmes of the National Orientation Agency (NOA), e.g. National Rebirth, the Human Rights Violation Panel, President Olusegun Obasanjo's Anti-Corruption Campaign and various youth, peace and reconciliation efforts at the national and regional levels address these concerns.

### **Measures taken to ensure protection against discrimination based on status**

71. Government provision of freedom of choice of school, free access to parks and playgrounds for every child, scholarship schemes for all, etc. have ensured non-discrimination against children based on parental/guardian status. However, there is a need for mass education or public enlightenment on the provisions of the law against discrimination in this respect, especially among law enforcement agents and public officers.

### **Problems encountered in the implementation of article 2**

72. Some of the major problems encountered in the implementation of the provisions of article 2 of the CRC are deeply entrenched cultural, traditional and religious attitudes and practice, such as female circumcision, early marriage, child betrothal, tribal marks, rigid autocratic child rearing practice, boy child preferences and attitude of policy makers to change.

## **B. Best interests of the child (art. 3)**

73. The best interests of the child are paramount in Nigerian legislation. This is supported by the Constitution and other legislation mentioned earlier. The principle also pervades the juvenile system in Nigeria. The Social Welfare Departments, working in conjunction with juvenile courts, handle various issues affecting the child. All are geared towards achieving the best interests of the child, against the background of a very active and supportive media.

74. A number of institutions have been established to ensure the best interest of the child in Nigeria:

(a) The establishment of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth at the federal and State levels, each with a child development department;

(b) The establishment of women development units in local government areas.

75. Despite these institutional structures, consciousness of the need to link the overall interests of the child with budgeting at various levels has not been achieved. Moreover, the policy makers have not started relating the overall budget to meet the specific needs of the child. The budget channelled towards education varies from State to State; hence, some States may concentrate more on infrastructure like building and furnishings while others may concentrate on tertiary institutions. More emphasis could be laid on qualitative education.

76. The child in the family circle still performs the task of making money to sustain the family through hawking, menial jobs, bus conducting, etc. Government programmes so far in this regard have failed to tackle this problem effectively. While there are procedures for adoption, these are subject to various abuses. Childcare institutions exist such as borstals, remand homes and approved schools. However, these suffer from various forms of neglect in terms of inadequate funding.

77. Concerning social life, the Government has been able to encourage the participatory rights of the child. Children are allowed, though under supervision, to join social clubs and cultural and religious institutions that serve the best interests of the child. National and State parks are budgeted to enhance children's recreation activities. An agency has been established by the Federal Government on conflict resolution. The National Commission for Refugees cares for the welfare of children in refugee camps. Guidance and counselling services, improved training for teachers as well as entrance training for staff are being stepped up in schools.

78. There is legislation that protects the interests of the child. This protection cannot be found in a single document, which is a major advantage of the draft Children's Bill as all matters affecting children are contained therein.

79. The current economic recession in Nigeria has affected both the implementation of the Convention and the general populace. More financial resources are required for the implementation of the Convention. The general population has been affected by poverty, which has posed a major constraint to the implementation of the Convention in Nigeria as children are often sent out to work as a way of contributing to the family income. The culture of financial involvement of the private sector in child development has not been developed.

80. Lack of sufficient understanding in governmental institutions, in contrast to cultural, religious and traditional modes of child protection, coupled with ignorance and lack of sufficient information relating to child welfare tend to lead to confusion of norms and values and misplacement of priorities, making the implementation of the Convention difficult. Harmful traditional and cultural practices such as early marriage, withdrawal of girls from school and male-child preference pose further constraints.

81. There is lack of infrastructure to implement the Convention in full, for example, in the justice system, family court, juvenile court, borstal institutions, social work, etc.

82. Several workshops and seminars have been organized by governmental and non-governmental organizations for police, social workers, customs officers, immigration officers and various operators of the juvenile justice system to improve the standard of childcare for the best interests of the child.

### **C. The right to life, survival and development (art. 6)**

83. In all the States of the Federation the penal and criminal codes make adequate provision for the protection of the rights of the child to life, survival and development. In addition, institutional programmes such as NPI, Maternal and Child Health (MCH). Nutrition and Breastfeeding all promote all the rights of the child. These are also enhanced through various childcare institutions in all the State and local government areas of the Federation. For example, primary health-care centres exist in all the LGAs of the country.

84. The National Population Commission does data registration and their offices are located in all the LGAs of the Federation. This includes the registration of births and deaths of children, including the causes of death. Child suicide is rare. There is a draft policy on adolescent reproductive health and some States, supported by United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), provide adolescent reproductive services. Non-governmental organizations such as Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria (PPFN) and Action Health also offer adolescent reproductive services. Street violence is not common, but the phenomenon is emerging, for example the Area Boys in the south and the Almajiris in the north. This is a new challenge for Nigeria, although some government and private sector programmes are being undertaken to rehabilitate these categories of children through training, non-formal education and skills acquisition.

85. More effective performance of the various State ministries of health is required to ensure full registration of births and deaths by private and public hospitals. More enlightenment programmes are required to enable citizens to take advantage of the opportunity to register their births and deaths, both at local government and State levels.

### **D. Respect for the views of the child (art. 12)**

86. Recently, a Children's Parliament has been formed, which serves as a forum for children to express their views. At the National Summit for Children, the children conducted the affairs by themselves. Similarly, in the Progress of Nations Report 1999/2001, children were in charge and their opinions taken into consideration. There is a gradual shift from the widespread attitude that children should be seen and not heard.

87. The draft Children's Bill, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child all make adequate provisions for children to express their views. Moreover, the Nigerian media in all the States have become very active in promoting programmes for children to express themselves. These include: airing of school debates, organizing programmes for children to speak out, inclusion of children in discussion panels and airing the results of decisions held at children's forums. Newspapers also

have children's columns, which provide the opportunity for children to explain things themselves and in their own way. The publication of children's magazines is encouraged and supported, such as the *CRIB Bulletin*. Children are now participants in seminars, lectures, conferences and other such forums where their views form major inputs, as was done at the National Summit for Children.

88. Parents now take their children shopping, when they are given a free hand to pick for themselves, as opposed to time past, when the shopping was done for the child in absentia, even if it meant buying oversized items for the child which the child was expected to grow into.

89. Parents these days encourage their children to report strange activities, instead of shooing them away and shutting them up. Children are no longer caged like before. Moreover, some parents now take their vacation to correspond with when the children will be on vacation from school.

90. The above is not to say that all families are as described above, but a lot of effort is being made in that direction, mostly by city parents.

91. Schools throughout the country encourage children to participate in decision-making through the school prefect system.

92. Instances where children have participated in decision-making:

Children's Parliament (they have a president, etc.);

Progress of Nations launching in Nigeria;

National Summit for Children ;

Television programmes, etc.

In the above instances, children have shown that they have views and can speak. Children participate in decision-making in schools through the prefect system (there has been no opportunity yet with the local council).

## **V. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS**

### **A. Name and nationality (art. 7) and preservation of identity (art. 8)**

93. To ensure that the birth of every child in Nigeria is registered, there is a National Population Commission (NPC) with offices and staff in every local government area whose responsibility this is. Furthermore, it is the function of the National Population Commission (NPC), in liaison with the African Refugee Commission, to ensure that children born of parents in extreme situations are registered. However, there is still a lot to be done in sensitizing the Nigerian populace and Nigerian citizens to take advantage of the facilities put in place for birth registration by Government. Furthermore, it is also a big challenge for NPC and the African Refugee Commission to ensure that children of refugees and foreigners born in Nigeria are fully registered.

94. The National Population Commission embarks on periodic and regular public enlightenment through the media, workshops and seminars as well as posters and leaflets on the need for parents to register their children at birth. In addition, the Commission also has a policy and practice of staff development of registry personnel.

95. The information provided on the registration forms give such details as the name of child at birth, sex, place and date of birth, and the full names, occupation and place of birth of the parents. The Constitution prohibits discrimination on the ground of birth status.

96. Both the Nigerian Constitution and cultural practice provide for nationality and identity for all Nigerian citizens. However, despite the protection given by the Constitution and the Children and Young Persons Law (CYPL), some children born out of wedlock still suffer some subtle social discrimination. Children are allowed dual citizenship in Nigeria.

97. Nigeria forbids adoption by foreigners. However, there are no uniform adoption laws in Nigeria as this falls under the purview of the States. This has created an avenue of abuse.

#### **B. Freedom of expression (art. 13)**

98. In Nigeria a number of steps have been taken by Government, the media and NGOs to enhance children's right to free expression, e.g. organization of the Children's Parliament, media participation, e.g. speak out, camps, children's pages in the newspaper, children's time on radio and television. However, this is against the cultural attitude of the child being seen and not heard. In Nigeria, children usually follow parental guidance in the choice of religion. Islamic law goes further, forbidding change of religion. The challenge is to socialize children towards religious tolerance. Nigeria is a secular nation with provision for much ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of the citizens. In this regard, there are unity schools, two in each State, where children from certain religious and ethnic backgrounds go.

#### **C. Freedom of association (art. 15)**

99. In Nigeria the Constitution provides for freedom of association, and in practice there are girl guides, boys' brigades, boy scouts, child rights clubs, debating clubs, frequent interschool sporting activities and assemblies of Nigerian children.

#### **D. Protection of privacy (art. 16)**

100. In Nigeria the relationship between children and parents is so intensive that the issue of a child's right to privacy hardly arises, as parents are always interested in the correspondence of their children and what relationships they entertain. However, there are measures preventing parents from inflicting harm on their children in the exercise of their rights of control.

### **VI. BASIC HEALTH AND WELFARE**

#### **A. Disabled children (art. 23)**

101. Some efforts are being made in Nigeria to provide for the realization of the full development and enjoyment of life by disabled children. Rehabilitation department/units handling and coordinating programmes for the disabled exist in the State Ministry of Social

Welfare. At the Federal level, Government has instituted and is implementing a community-based rehabilitation programme which de-emphasizes institutionalization and encourages the disabled to learn, walk and live in the same environment with their able-bodied counterparts. Most States have established rehabilitation centres and schools for handicapped children where they are also taught vocational skills. Many of these centres and schools receive government subventions and grants for their upkeep. In some States, local television stations relay programmes and news in sign language. Also, various aids and appliances are donated to disabled children. Sports for the disabled feature prominently in disabled and special schools. It must be acknowledged that many of the special schools in Nigeria are established and managed by non-governmental and philanthropic organizations, though it is to be added that most of them receive government backing and subventions.

102. Awareness on the situation and plight of disabled children is lacking. Financial allocations for the care of this special group of children are also low, while there are little or no efforts to incorporate their needs in our environmental planning. Recreational and leisure facilities for disabled children also require special attention. Training of professionals/caregivers has not been encouraged. It is also important to state that the special schools and rehabilitation centres require replacement or refurbishing. Salaries and allowances of caregivers in this field are poor and discouraging. Conducting a census of disabled children in Nigeria will provide much-needed information on their situation, needs and priority areas of intervention.

#### **B. Health and health services (art. 24)**

103. The National Policy on Health was launched in 1989. It has as its major thrust the primary health-care system, which is more accessible and promotes equity and social justice, particularly for the poor majority living in rural and semi-urban areas. The primary health-care system particularly attempts to meet the health needs of mothers and children through its preventive, curative, promotive and rehabilitative features.

104. By 1990, it was estimated that only 17 per cent of Nigerians had access to modern health facilities. One of the measures taken to correct the unsatisfactory level of coverage was the revitalization of the PHC system through expansion and greater decentralization. The National Primary Health Care Development Agency was created in 1992 to strengthen PHC implementation through supervision and technical assistance.

105. The Recent Poverty Eradication Programme of Government and other efforts of the Federal Ministry of Health have plans to increase the number of PHCs per LGA and provide medical doctors for them (at least two per LGA).

106. The Bamako Initiative, which seeks to revitalize PHC through adequate supply of basic drugs, community involvement in the management of their health care as well as improved financing, was established in 1999. All 774 LGAs of Nigeria are implementing the Bamako Initiative. The principle of the Bamako Initiative is that children from disadvantaged families, particularly poor families, are guaranteed access to health care.

107. Other health measures adopted to ensure the right of the child to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health include the establishment or revitalization of disease control programmes for HIV/AIDS and acute respiratory infections (ARI). The Integrated Management



of Childhood Illness (IMCI) views the management of childhood illness holistically. Other control programmes, including those against Guinea worm, onchocerciasis, tuberculosis and malaria have also been strengthened.

108. The continued implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI) has raised the level of awareness of the advantages of exclusive breastfeeding. The country launched in 1997 a policy to encourage exclusive breastfeeding.

109. The National Malaria Control Programme has also been reviewed and includes the Roll Back Malaria Initiative. Nigeria hosted a successful summit of African heads of State on Roll Back Malaria in April 2001.

110. The National Programme on Immunization (NPI) Agency was created in 1998 to improve immunization coverage. The Agency has conducted National Immunization Days (NID) for the global eradication of poliomyelitis. Nigeria has taken the lead in the subcontinent in mobilizing resources to ensure that the polio virus transmission is halted by 2002 and that the total eradication of the virus is certified by 2005. President Obasanjo is the current Chairman of the Committee on a Polio-Free Africa.

111. Nigeria had two rounds of NID between October and November 2000 during which over 40 million children were immunized.

112. Combating the threat posed by HIV/AIDS is receiving attention at the highest level of Government. The campaign against AIDS was being led personally by the President. Since the last report HIV/AIDS control has been integrated into PHC by the President and a National Action Committee on AIDS was established to ensure multisector, multilevel participation of relevant stakeholders. An interim action plan was developed and more resources allocated for HIV/AIDS. Awareness and enlightenment campaigns have been stepped up. A multisectoral media health committee was also inaugurated in September 1999 to harmonize all media-related AIDS control activities in the country. Instructional materials have been developed preparatory to the integration of HIV/AIDS education into the curriculum of primary and secondary schools throughout the country. HIV testing kits worth 100 million naira have been procured and distributed to screening centres nationwide. The Government has put in place the mechanism to reduce material transmission of HIV/AIDS to the foetus through the supply of the appropriate antiretroviral drugs.

113. Harmful traditional practices exist in all the States of the Federation, particularly at community level. FGM, early and forced marriage, female disinheritance, tribal marks and tattooing are common practices. Efforts to eliminate these harmful traditional practices are gathering momentum in the country. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, with the support of UNDP and other United Nations and donor agencies, has concluded a national survey on harmful traditional practices. Results from the survey have been widely disseminated in the country and have given impetus to various advocacy and sensitization programmes at various levels aimed at tackling the problem. UNICEF, through its country programme, has supported the training of traditional birth attendants and the use of popular theatre and other grass-roots community mobilization strategies to disseminate information on the ill-effects of these harmful traditional practices. The mass media, NGOs, CBOs and religious organizations are also contributing to the fight against harmful traditional practices.

114. The National Hospital (originally known as the Women and Children's Hospital) is a multi-billion-naira, highly specialized and highly sophisticated comprehensive health-care centre that caters for the health needs of Nigerians, especially women and children, who otherwise would have been referred outside the country. It was established in Abuja in 1996, and has provided specialized medical and surgical care since then.

115. The National Health Management Information System has also been established by the Federal Ministry of Health to correct the situation of grossly inadequate data sources for planning and evaluation of health programmes. Collaboration between the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development and the Federal Ministry of Health is expected to provide sex- and age-disaggregated statistics for planning and programme management.

### **C. Standard of living (art. 27)**

116. The new democratic Government in Nigeria has demonstrated its commitment to improve the quality of life of Nigerians, especially that of mothers and children, through its poverty alleviation programme and other forms of microcredit facilities, especially for farmers.

117. The National Committee on Food and Nutrition (NCFN) has been inaugurated. The National Policy on Food and Nutrition was approved in 1998, and has now been referred to the Committee on Food Security to be harmonized with the Household Food Security document. An institutional framework for implementing the Plan of Action on Food and Nutrition has been developed.

118. A new National Water Supply and Sanitation Policy was adopted early in 2000 by the Federal Government. The centrepiece of the policy is the provision of sufficient potable water and adequate sanitation to all Nigerians. The initial target of the policy is to improve service coverage from 40 per cent to 60 per cent by 2003 and to reach 100 per cent by 2011. The policy document identifies the strategies, the policy instruments, the legislative provisions and the institutional and funding arrangements to be put in place to achieve the targets set.

### **Impact of measures taken**

119. The major Summit goals recommend that the infant mortality rate (IMR) and the under-five mortality rate (U-5MR) be reduced by a third, or to 50-70 per 1,000 live births, from 1990 to 2000. The report of the NDHS was still provisional at the time of this report. So the data of NDHS 1990 and that of the MICS for 1999 are compared for mortality rates. They show that IMR actually rose from 91/1,000 in 1990 to 105/1,000 in 1999. The use of two different data sources may be responsible for this. The MICS also showed that southern Nigeria fared better than the north. IMR was as high as 117/1,000 live births in the north-east and lower than the 2000 target of 45/1,000 in the south-west. There were no gender differences, but there were marked urban/rural differentials: 83 and 113/1,000, respectively.

120. Unlike IMR, U-5MR recorded a marked decline between 1990 and 1999, although this is still a far cry from the Summit goal target stated above. U-5MR decreased from 191/1,000 in 1990 to 159/1,000 in 1999. When similar data sources are compared (MICS) the rate increased from 147/1,000 in 1995 to 159/1,000 in 1999. The rates for males and females

were 148 and 167/1,000, respectively. The differentials by region and rural/urban location follow a similar pattern as for the IMR: 119/1,000 and 147/1,000, respectively, and the figures for the north were poorer than for the south.

121. The World Summit for Children set a goal of 100 per cent coverage for all vaccine-preventable diseases. Immunization coverage improved for DPT, poliomyelitis, measles and tuberculosis between 1990 and 1995 after which there was a decline in 1999. The MICS survey shows the 1999 coverage figures as follows:

DPT - 23 per cent

Poliomyelitis - 19 per cent

Measles - 35 per cent

Tuberculosis - 43 per cent.

122. Deaths due to diarrhoea in children under 5 were expected to be reduced by 50 per cent and the incidence reduced by 25 per cent by 2000. These goals were not met. The incidence of diarrhoea, however, decreased from 18 episodes per child for the 10-year period to 15 episodes per child for the same period. The number of children treated with oral rehydration therapy (ORT) increased from 27 per cent in 1990 to 47 per cent in 1999.

123. Constraints encountered in implementing the measures include weak capacity of the health-care system to meet the basic needs of children and women, due mainly to poor funding, lack of community involvement in programmes, inadequate human capacity programmes, poor intersectoral cooperation and lack of integration of vertical programmes, all of which weaken the PHC system.

124. Although some progress has been made, a review of the trends over the 1990s show that none of the end-decade goals of overcoming childhood malnutrition has been met.

125. The stunting of growth among children under 5 has dropped from 43 per cent to 34 per cent from 1990 to 2000 (NDHS 1990, MICS 1999); undernutrition (underweight) also fell slightly from 36 per cent in 1990 to 31 per cent in 2000. However, the prevalence of wasting (acute malnutrition) increased from 10 per cent in 1990 to 16 per cent in 2000. There were marked regional differences, with the north recording poorer figures than the south, the north-east being the worst and the south-west the best.

126. Among children whose weight at birth was recorded, 7 per cent had low birth weight (<2.5 kg) in 1990, suggesting that the goal of reducing the incidence of low birth weight to less than 10 per cent has been met. However, it must be noted that only a small proportion of births (28 per cent) were supervised by trained personnel who could weigh the babies. For the majority of babies, the birth weights were unknown.

127. Approximately 22 per cent of children under 4 months are exclusively breastfed (MICS 1999) as against 100 per cent for 2000. At age 6-9 months, 44 per cent of children are receiving breast milk and solid or semi-solid foods.

128. Ninety-eight per cent of households in Nigeria consume adequately iodized salt (ibid.) and the proportion of children aged 6-59 months who have received a high dose of vitamin A supplement in the last 24 months was 23 per cent (ibid.).

129. Fifty-four per cent of the population has access to safe drinking water, with marked urban/rural differentials: 71 per cent in the urban areas and 48 per cent in rural areas. The usual trend of the south faring better is for the first time broken in this respect as the south-east - 39 per cent is considerably worse than the other regions.

130. Fifty-three per cent of the population live in households with sanitary means of excreta disposal. The situation varies from 40 per cent in the north-east to 58 per cent in the south-west.

131. According to the data from both NDHS and MICS, rural water supply rose from 30 per cent coverage in 1991 to 48 per cent in 1999 while the urban areas experienced a decline from 80 per cent to 71 per cent between 1995 and 2000. Like access to potable water, access to adequate sanitation rose in the rural areas from 48 per cent in 1991 to 53 per cent in 1995. However, the overall sanitation coverage dropped from 57 per cent in 1995 to 53 per cent in 1999.

132. The estimate of Guinea worm cases dropped from 394,082 in 1990 to 13,237 in 1999, representing a 96 per cent reduction. Only in two States of the Federation is dracuntiasis endemic.

133. Constraints encountered in meeting adequate nutrition as well as water supply and basic sanitation include the following:

(a) The National Agricultural Policy, which outlines strategies for ensuring food security at the national level by increasing food production and development of strategic agricultural grains reserves, has had little impact on the levels of malnutrition. Often, projected agricultural outputs have not been met, and have had little impact on the availability of food at household level;

(b) Inadequate storage facilities, difficulties in the distribution network and lack of adequate food processing and preservative facilities are also major constraints. At the household level, inadequate food storage and preservation facilities militate against food security;

(c) The ravaging poverty in the land and the high price of many basic food items reduce access to food by a large number of Nigerian households.

134. Poor coverage for water supply and sanitation is linked with the following:

- Insufficient funding of operations and maintenance;
- Lack of capital, uncompleted water projects and failure to initiate new ones;

- Inefficient billing and collection of water revenue needed for operation and maintenance;
- Inadequate monitoring and evaluation of performance. Most data used in planning are estimated, resulting in poor targeting of resources.

## VII. EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

### A. Education (arts. 28 and 29)

135. Besides being a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nigeria also endorsed the Declaration adopted at the Dakar World Education Forum (April 2000) which, among other things, set as one of its goals expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. Since 1987, the country has been paying considerable attention to early childhood education as a basis for the healthy growth and all-round development of every citizen. The Federal Government's Blueprint on Basic Education (1999) emphasizes the importance of early childcare as a prerequisite for a child's physical, cognitive and psychosocial development. The strong official support which the Early Child Care and Development initiative has received in Nigeria has led to some significant changes. By 1996, the Federal Government had established 2,045 early childcare facilities, which are low cost, community based and participatory, in rural as well as poor urban areas. The initial target was 75,000 children in 10 selected States. To date, over 400,000 children have benefited from 7,379 early childcare facilities set up in 12 States of the Federation. Besides, over 15,000 parents and caregivers have been trained in early childcare concepts. The training has been reinforced through several mobilization visits, awareness campaigns and workshops. Work towards these achievements was enhanced by assistance from local NGOs, the private sector (a grant from the Bernard Van Leer Foundation) and the international donor community (UNICEF, UNDP and UNESCO).

136. The tenets of the Convention on the Rights of the Child have been infused into the curricula of early childcare and women's centres as well as into those of the primary schools. Similarly, culturally relevant readers, training manuals and guides have been developed for use at childcare centres throughout the country. Also available is a reference text on child development in Nigeria, copies of which have been distributed to the tertiary institutions that offer courses in pre-primary education.

137. The National Policy on Education provides and has led to the adoption of measures to teach in local and indigenous languages up to primary. However, this is difficult to implement in urban areas owing to the increasing number of children from different ethnic groups in Nigeria.

138. There are a number of measures put in place in Nigeria to improve the quality of education, including the teaching and learning environment, such as:

- The signing of an agreement recently by Government to assign 26 per cent of its allocation to education;

- The textbook scheme for primary pupils which enables them to borrow books and return them after use;
- The renovation of primary schools at all LGAs;
- Regular assessment of the quality of teaching in schools through inspectorate divisions established at both State and Federal levels;
- The training and retraining of teachers is ongoing, while there is a lot of effort to recruit teachers. Education courses have been established at the primary-school level to enhance the quality of teachers;
- Education secretaries have been nominated by local government chairmen to ensure quality education;
- Government has made the National College of Education diploma the minimum qualification for primary school teachers in Nigeria;
- State primary education boards have been established to ensure regular payment of salaries for teachers;
- Departments and units of guidance and counselling have been established at Federal and State level both at primary and secondary schools;
- Children in conflict with the law also have access to education either within the institution or outside;
- Children, especially girls who get pregnant and those who become victims of very serious ailments such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, poliomyelitis, etc. drop out of school but have the opportunity to continue when their condition improves;
- Corporal punishment in Nigeria can only be carried out with the permission of the school head and must also be recorded;
- Organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF and other voluntary and philanthropic agencies are assisting with projects, e.g. UNICEF child-friendly schools based in the communities/rural areas aimed at improving the quality of education in Nigeria.

139. Despite these efforts, implementation is hampered by factors such as:

- Inadequate and late payment of teachers' salaries;
- Decrease in the number of teachers taking opportunities for training and retraining;
- Lack of sufficient information on the available facilities;

- Education Secretaries are not sufficiently empowered, e.g. with funds and vehicles to carry out their work effectively;
- Inadequate number of schools for disabled children in Nigeria. The level of support for those in existence should be increased while training programmes for teachers in such special schools should be stepped up;
- Lack of a databank to reflect disaggregated data on children with regard to education investment, education outcomes by gender, age, rural/urban residence, and regional, ethnic and social origin.

140. Women in Nigeria are still adversely affected by a comparatively low level of literacy. The latest statistics put the current adult literacy rate at 49 per cent (MICS 1999), but while the male literacy rate stands at 58 per cent, that of women is only 41 per cent. Although this margin is smaller than the 62 per cent:39 per cent ratio in NPC 1998, it still a cause of concern. Reducing the female illiteracy rate to 30.5 per cent from an estimated 61 per cent still remains a challenge. Data from MICS 1999 indicate that material education is a correlate of a wide variety of outcomes including immunization rates, early childhood education, child malnutrition and child mortality.

141. Increasing economic pressures are also taking their toll on women and forcing many of them to take up paid employment or engage in some income-generating activities. As a result, they are having to make ad hoc arrangements for childcare while they are out. According to the Early Child Care survey conducted in 1995, 20 per cent of such children were looked after by grandparents, 17 per cent by older siblings, and 24 per cent were in day-care facilities.

142. Day-care facilities fall into two categories. These are the crèches/day-care centres for children aged 0-3 and the day nurseries for those aged 3½ to 5. In the first type of facility, where child stimulation should be the focus, experience shows that the childminders in those of them run by private proprietors are not always knowledgeable enough about what they should be doing. Sometimes toys are in short supply. A recognition of these deficiencies led to the setting up by each State Government of a model play group/day nursery at the State capitals. Some NGOs and religious groups have also established similar facilities equipped with sufficient play objects and staffed with competent teachers. The Nigeria-UNICEF programme of cooperation has consistently targeted this area of development. With regard to pre-school educational facilities, guidelines have been laid down and fees should be reasonable. To this end, monitoring and supervision are being intensified.

143. Children's involvement and participation in the implementation of programmes that concern them are also a major focus. Through advocacy and mobilization, negative cultural ideas about children are being eroded. Theatre groups, the mass media and other avenues are being employed. Children and the youths themselves are fully involved in the reorientation process. Debates, symposia and essay competitions on topics relevant to their concepts of their place in the polity are among the approaches adopted.

144. The gains that have been recorded in Nigeria over the past decade in the efforts to ensure the survival, protection and development of the child have been considerable, but some challenges still remain to be met. Despite poverty alleviation measures taken in the recent past

such as liberalizing women's access to loans and microcredit through such institutions as the People's Bank and community banks, the economic empowerment of women still remains a pressing concern. With the loosening of extended family ties with the attendant adverse effects on children, Governments, NGOs, and religious and community-based organizations must intensify efforts aimed at offering a safety net to the helpless victims. In particular, children forced onto the street by family break-up, and deformed and disabled children (of whom other family members tend to feel ashamed) need to be given a sense of worth. This is already being done through such private initiatives as the First Lady's Child Care Trust and the street children rehabilitation efforts of some NGOs, but more still remains to be done. For instance, reliable data on such children are still not available. However, encouraging women to acquire education - in the broadest sense - appears to be the most effective approach to tackling the lingering problems of poor environmental sanitation, inadequate child nutrition and ignorance of childcare methods, or of the effects of such devastating diseases as HIV/AIDS. Besides, the rehabilitation needs of children who get involved in petty crimes, of disabled and street children still need to be accorded greater attention within existing policies and laws. One way of doing this is for Government to build the capacity of NGOs involved in rehabilitation programmes.

145. Basic education in Nigeria is made up of formal and non-formal education. The formal aspect comprises six years of primary schooling and three years of schooling at the junior secondary level. Non-formal education comprises functional literacy classes for adults and adolescents who have dropped out of school or those who have never enrolled, with an emphasis on girls. The curriculum is flexible and also covers numeric and life skills. Early childhood education (ECE) has since 1987 been a major focus even though the operation of this component is still largely in private hands.

146. The National Programme of Action of the World Summit for Children envisaged that 25 per cent of the estimated 21.4 million pre-school-aged children (0-5 years) would be reached by the end of the decade through the establishment of 17,200 day-care centres, crèches and nursery schools. Current statistics show that the percentages of boys and girls aged 36 to 59 months who are attending some form of organized early childhood education centre are similar: 18 and 19 per cent respectively. However, there are significant regional and urban variations. For instance, whereas 39 per cent of girls are in attendance at such centres in the south-east, the north-east records 3 per cent, according to the 1999 data. Similarly, 37 per cent of children attend organized play groups in the urban areas but only 12 per cent do so in rural areas.

147. There is a correlation between a mother's level of education and the attendance of her children at organized day-care centres. Of mothers who have themselves received no education, only 5 per cent send their children to nurseries in contrast to 28 per cent among mothers with primary education and 56 per cent of mothers with secondary or higher education. What this obviously points to is that the level of a mother's awareness of the value of education is a determinant of her resolve to give her child a head start through enrolling her in a nursery school or a play group.

148. With the relaunching of the UBE programme in September 1999, the present civilian administration has signalled its intention to overcome the policy somersaults and lack of political will that were the key factors that stalled the takeoff of the programme in 1992. The programme seeks to address the issues of access, retention, quality of service delivery and infrastructure.



It also takes into account the educational needs of under-served groups. The programme also has as a key goal the rising of the consciousness of the citizens towards the value of education. These objectives are in consonance with the goals set out in the National Programme of Action on the World Summit for Children, which includes access to basic education and achievement for at least 80 per cent of primary-school-age children and removal of all barriers to the active participation of women and girls in education.

149. In Nigeria, gender disparities are evident in the key areas of school enrolment, retention and completion. According to CSPD in Nigeria, key social statistics (NPC/UNICEF 1998), the average primary school enrolment for the 1995/96 school year for girls was 75 per cent as against 86 per cent for boys. However, when the average completion rate is considered, the picture for the same year was girls - 71 per cent, boys - 68 per cent. It is noteworthy that the completion rate for boys fell below the national completion average for that year, which was 69 per cent. The phenomenon of boys in the five eastern States dropping out so as to become apprentice traders must have contributed to the imbalance. This disparity has persisted, as evidenced by a recent survey which showed that 67 per cent of the boys and 68 per cent of the girls aged 10-15 years who had entered the first grade of primary school reached primary five.

150. It is when quality is considered that the Nigerian school - especially the primary school - presents a disturbing picture. In a 1997 study ("Monitoring of Learning Achievement") of primary four pupils, the national mean average in each of three key achievement tests was as follows: numeracy - 32 per cent, literacy - 25 per cent, life skills - 37 per cent. In each of the test areas, private school pupils outperformed their counterparts in public schools while urban schools did better than those in the rural areas. Obviously, the low pupil achievement levels cannot be divorced from such factors as infrastructural facilities, teacher morale and frequency of supervision. Curriculum content and teacher competence are also relevant issues that have since engaged the attention of Government.

151. Measures taken to improve the quality of educational delivery include increasing the salaries of teachers (along with those of public service workers) and establishing in some States of special science secondary schools; one State in the north has set up such a school specially for girls.

152. In partnership with UNICEF and six other donor agencies, the Federal Government of Nigeria has embarked on a child-friendly, rights-based school initiative. A child-friendly school is "a place where the learning environment is conducive, the staff are friendly to the children, and health and safety needs of the children are adequately met". The school is expected to be community based and to take cognizance of all the rights of all children. This innovation will initially mobilize local community resources towards solving all the problems that have plagued schools in the area. These are: low access and retention, poor school environment, low pupil achievement and demoralized staff. A former Head of State has agreed to serve as the national patron.

153. The literacy situation in Nigeria has improved, for it has risen significantly from the 1985 levels of 30 per cent for men to 58 per cent for men and 41 per cent for women in 1999 (sic.); the national average now stands at 49 per cent. The National Plan of Action sets the specific target

of a reduction in illiteracy to at least half of its 1990 level, i.e. from 61 per cent to 31 per cent. The challenges that the literacy programme then faces are: raising the national literacy rate and reducing the disparity between the female and male literacy rates.

154. The non-formal education initiatives, which are part of the objectives of UBE, targeted young people, especially girls, who dropped out of school and women who may never have had any schooling. Other potential beneficiaries are children of nomads and other migrant workers, children receiving a Koranic education i.e. Almajiris, and disabled children. The training and retraining of literacy instructors has gone on apace. In several States, a safety net is provided for the completers of the non-formal education programme to enable them to enter the formal school system.

155. The challenges that the programme is facing include the following:

- (a) The irregular attendance of some girls and women at classes;
- (b) The lingering reluctance of some husbands to release their wives to attend literacy classes and of fathers to release their daughters;
- (c) Inadequacy of instructional materials, arising from a paucity of operational funds;
- (d) A weak database on which the programme operates.

156. There has been much greater awareness all over the country of the value of non-formal education. The role of the mass media in bringing this about is worthy of commendation. The resolve of the Nigerian Government is to make every citizen literate as soon as practicable. One clear way in which the commitment is being demonstrated is through increased budgetary allocations. According to figures obtained from the Federal Ministry of Finance, the Federal Government's budgetary allocation to education in 1990 was 5.5 per cent of the total budget and 4.2 per cent of the total expenditure. In 1995, these rose to 11.5 per cent and 4.9 per cent respectively. The percentage of the total budgetary allocation to education for 1996, 1997 and 1998 was 10.8 per cent, 7.4 per cent and 10.9 per cent, respectively. While these allocations fall below the UNESCO prescribed minimum, it should be noted that it is supplemented with allocations by the State and local governments, disbursements from the Petroleum Trust Fund and the Education Tax Fund, and support from donor agencies.

### **B. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities (art. 31)**

157. In Nigeria the child's right to leisure, recreation and cultural activities are realized mainly through educational settings/environment. At primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, children engage in activities such as inter-house sports, debating, essay competitions, excursions exchange programmes and holiday camping. The wives of office holders organize children's parties where children are encouraged to relax and interact with caregivers. Parks and recreational gardens established with the objective of promoting children's leisure and recreation are increasingly springing up in many States of the Federation and even at the community level.

158. At the Federal level, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development, in collaboration with the National Council for Arts and Culture, in 1999 organized the first National Children's Festival for Arts and Culture, tagged NACHIFEST. The programme, which attracted

children from all the States of the Federation, was instituted to promote the child's right to leisure, recreation and cultural activities. Cultural dances and displays, exhibitions of children's art, painting and sculpture, drama sketches, poems, as well as moonlight and traditional games featured prominently at the festival.

159. Various communities in Nigeria have diverse well-organized and coordinated cultural festivities which attract people from both the rural and urban areas. The usual practice is for parents and guardians to take children to such festivities, which are staged mainly during the vacation and school-free periods.

160. Voluntary organizations in schools such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Red Cross, Brownies, etc. also provide opportunities for children who are members to engage in leisure, recreation and cultural activities.

161. In spite of the above, there is a need to increase the awareness and consciousness of Nigerians of the immense benefit of engaging and promoting the culture of leisure, recreation and play, particularly among children in rural and semi-urban areas. This will require additional funding and provision of facilities.

## **VIII. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES**

### **A. Children in situations of emergency**

#### **1. Children in armed conflict (art. 38)**

162. Several studies have confirmed children's involvement in communal or political violence either as victims or, unfortunately, as perpetrators of acts of murder, arson, burglary and theft. Children of 15 to 18 years, according to reports, have been actively involved in the recurring conflicts of Ogoniland, Ife-Modakeke, Ijaw/Itsekiri-Urhobo, Jukun-Dutes, Aguleri-Umuleri and during the more recent communal clashes in Shagamu, Kano, Kaduna and Lagos. Unfortunately, for many children, such communal conflicts have resulted in the loss of their parents, abandonment, disabling injuries and, in many more cases, loss of life and property, added to displacement, living like refugees in army barracks and having to relocate, and in the process losing school time.

163. There are current initiatives to foster conflict-resolution mechanisms in communities by NGOs such as the African Refugee Foundation, the Federation of International Women Lawyers, Space 2000, the USAID/Office of Transitional Centre for African Peace Initiatives and the proposed ECOWAS Child Protection Unit to enhance the protection rights of children and women during communal conflicts. As a result of the increased frequency of communal conflicts and other humanitarian challenges in Nigeria with their direct and indirect effects on children and women, the need for better emergency preparedness is becoming increasingly urgent. Sentinel centres for monitoring violence before it reaches children are being established by both Government and NGOs. For example, Government has established the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to respond to the needs of internally displaced persons, including children.

## **2. Refugee children (art. 22)**

164. To a large extent, the experience in Nigeria concerning refugee children is one in which they accompany their parents or adult relatives as a result of conflicts in the west African subregion. Nigeria has established camps for these refugees where the basic welfare of refugee children are being taken care of. Schools, recreational facilities and medical facilities have either been established in the refugee camps or are available in the neighbouring communities. Indeed, professionals among the refugees have been organized to provide, with their Nigeria counterparts, education, training in arts and crafts, recreational facilities and health care to the children as well as their parents.

165. However, institutional mechanisms that are in place and expected to be the main focal point of addressing emergency preparedness issues need to be strengthened in terms of funding, training of personnel and provision of facilities adequately tailored towards meeting the needs of refugee children and children in situations of emergency. Agencies like the National Refugee Commission and NEMA should not be restricted to their perceived mandate of intervening exclusively only in crises.

### **B. Children in conflict with the law**

#### **1. The administration of juvenile justice (art. 40)**

166. The Penal Code and the Children and Young Person's Law (CYPL), which is still in force, is explicit on the handling of cases of children ranging from arrest to detention as well as appropriate sanctions/punishment. It should also be stated that the draft Children's Bill, which is expected to be passed soon, adequately provides for effective juvenile justice administration in Nigeria.

#### **2. Institutions and training of relevant officers**

167. Childcare institutions such as borstals, remand homes and juvenile centres exist in the various States of the Federation. However, the borstals in Kaduna and that of Illorin, which is yet to be fully operational, are grossly inadequate to cater for the increasing number of children who require such facilities. It is also on record that these childcare institutions are in dire need of modern equipment and facilities, while the social workers who manage and care for the children require training and refresher courses, as well as better remuneration. At the moment, however, various orientation and sensitization training programmes are being packaged and implemented to update the knowledge of various categories of professionals such as social workers, judicial officers, prison and immigration officers and other paramilitary cadres on the administration of juvenile justice. Government ministries/agencies responsible for child welfare/development, the Human Rights Commission, prominent child-focused NGOs as well as United Nations agencies are collectively involved in these efforts.

168. Children who are especially disadvantaged include those who are not living with their biological parents, orphans, and those who are subjected to hazardous work. Qualitative and quantitative studies in Nigeria as well as media exposés have indicated gross abuse of children's rights and widespread recourse to corporal punishment. The problem of domestic abuse has been exacerbated by urbanization and growing poverty which have not only increased the strains

on families' caring capacity, but have eroded the traditional extended family mechanisms for providing mutual support and checking abuse. Child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children and minors are on the increase. Public enlightenment and sensitization programmes on the situation of children, particularly with regard to abuses and exploitation, have been stepped up by Government, NGOs and the media. Child rights monitoring centres as well as legal aid for social services units are in all the States of the Federation. Several States have passed laws and acts which provide stiff penalties for violations against children such as trafficking, prostitution, sexual abuse, withdrawal of girls from school and hawking.

169. Other notable achievements worthy of mention include the following:

(a) A memorandum of understanding was signed on 8 August 2000 between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and ILO, which has launched the ILO-IPEC country programme, a multisectoral integrated approach to the elimination of child labour in the country. The direct beneficiaries will be about 3,000 child workers who will be mainstreamed into regular formal and non-formal educational programmes and vocational training;

(b) Nigeria is also participating in the ILO-IPEC regional programme on combating trafficking of children for labour exploitation in West and Central Africa;

(c) The response to the increasing knowledge of trafficking has been encouraging. A number of NGOs and religious bodies have started responding to the problem. For example, in Benin City, Edo State, a coalition has emerged between a religious NGO (Sisters of Mercy), the Association of Catholic Lawyers and the African Women Empowerment Group to find solutions to the problem. Of particular note is the efforts of the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF);

(d) A national intersectoral plan of action on child trafficking and exploitation has been prepared by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development.

170. However, certain provisions of the Nigerian Labour Act that derive from the International Labour Act and that expose young persons in domestic service to exploitation and abuse is being critically reviewed by the Government with a view to making these provisions child friendly.

171. Nigeria has yet to ratify some of the international instruments relating to the protection of children such as the two Optional Protocols to the Convention. Efforts are on to ensure that these Protocols are ratified soon.

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