

ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TRAUMATISED BEREAVED NIGERIA CHILDREN

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Abstract

The researcher examined the cross section of various Nigerian children that are bereaved as a result of the sudden death of their loved ones. It was also observed that a lot of bereaved Nigerian children are disenfranchised or unacknowledged because there appears to be inadequate or no data about traumatised children in Nigeria as a result of death of their loved ones. The researcher also observed that these vulnerable children in Nigeria appear not to match up with Millennium Development Goals and sustainable National development because of their precarious unacknowledged grief that has been raising its ugly heads. It appears as if the unabated criminality in Nigeria seems to have originated due to the ineptitude of government about the unacknowledged bereaved Nigerian children. It seems that the resources committed to the bereaved Nigerians as reported on daily basis in Nigeria sophisticated media. The study could be of benefit to vulnerable children, victims of sudden death, government agencies, guidance counsellors, curriculum planners, religious bodies, law enforcement agents, prospective researchers as they would learn and make use of the findings. It could be incorporated into the Nigeria curriculum and aspects that could benefit Nigerians could be taught in schools. Based on the discovery, Nigeria government should take a census of the bereaved Nigeria children that incurred sudden death from time to time so that it can help in alleviating their problems. The Nigeria government should enhance that these vulnerable bereaved children are attuned to Nigeria sustainable development goals and implementation. The curriculum developers and planners should incorporate areas that will benefit these vulnerable Nigeria children to the Nigeria curriculum.

Keywords: Sustainable, Traumatized, Children, Development, Bereaved, Millennium.

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Introduction

It is disheartening that a lot of Nigeria children are bereaved and traumatised due to the challenges imposed on them as a result of loss incurred due to horrendous insurgency imposed on them as a result of loss of their loved ones. Loss could arise and be incurred as a result of parents loss of job, status, frustrations, fall in business, loss of loved ones and so on. The most debilitating and incapacitating loss ever incurred by children is the loss of their loved ones particularly parents. Majority of Nigeria school children in same states appears to be in debilitating state due to daily occurrences of killing that seems to have been accountable for their traumatic state. The dramatic trend of mortality that resulted into death in various places in Nigeria calls for national concerns. It is debilitating and appalling that majority of cases of deaths recorded in Nigeria seems to results from accident, suicide, homicides in forms of bombing, kidnapping, genocide and murders of great magnitude. It is rather unfortunate that majority of the victims and vulnerable to these massive killings are the school children.

Unfortunately, majority of the victims and vulnerable of these massive killings in Nigeria are disenfranchised and unacknowledged. Nigeria appears to be one of the few nations in the world that have absolute dearth of records of the victims and vulnerable of gruesome murder. Despite the fact that there are grave and horrendous cases of murder, massive killings and homicide in Nigeria, it appears as if majority of the school age children who are victims and casualties of this gruesome murder seems to be left to their faiths. In a situation where people that are suffering are not catered for, it seems to increase the proclivity and propensity for criminality. These may be accountable for why most of the crimes that are defiling weapons of sanitation remain unabated. In fact, most of the arrested insurgencies in Nigeria claimed that they were neglected by successive Nigeria government.

In certain part of Nigeria, it appears as if crime remain unabated, the cases of arm robbery, kidnapping, insurgency and so on remains unresolved due to the fact that Nigeria government seem to have little or no record of the traumatised. Most of the victims of vulnerable to these various gruesome killings are disenfranchised because the Nigeria government seems to have little or no record of this hardened traumatised Nigerians. A lot of Nigerians in hot zones like Niger Delta, North Eastern part of Nigeria have been dismembered to the extent and termed Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria (IDP)s, they have been rendered homeless in a situation whereby school age children are homeless, there is no way they can have sustainable education and development because of their hampered development, there educational acumen will not be concomitant to development because of the traumatic experience. This accounts for why the cases of destitute and bokoharam and militants remain unabated in the North Eastern part of Nigeria and Niger Delta Regions respectively.

This is because there seems to be dislocation of shelter, shortages of food, poor sanitary and medical conditions. Their mobility has been impaired due to destruction of their facilities. In fact, children in those zones have been psychologically disorientated because of their dislodgement from their settlement. This has been worsened to the extent that they are called Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). This disorientation seems to be accountable for better ground for recruitment of hardened bereaved Nigerians into dreaded unrepentant camps of boko haram hoodlums. A child or an adolescent whose parents, siblings or acquaintances are gruesomely murdered is thrown into perpetual agony and bereavement, whenever the death is discussed, the child is described as the victim and the parents are also victims (Conrad, 1998).

In fact the generation is perpetually injured, though they are survivors but they have been permanently injured. Instead of having wholesome and sustainable development, they look at future with dread. In fact their ego and self-esteem has been deflated and depleted. They seem to lose interest in the activities and event that once gave purpose to their lives. They seem to lose faith in the goodness of mankind and concerning their trust in the world they feel betrayed. This appears to have resulted to unabated killings massively done in Nigeria. Unfortunately, successive Nigeria government appears to have failed to acknowledge this.

A child that from inception has been religiously indoctrinated that killings attract accolades like economic and spiritual gains learns and enjoys the habit. A lot of Nigeria youths are not gainfully employed, majority of them took to crime of abduction, kidnapping and murder because they were given pittances by their assailants and contractors. Also, there have been revelations from arrested insurgents that openly confessed that spiritually, when they kill, it will attract gains to them spiritually and therefore involves themselves in massive killings. There was a case of a suicide bomber insurgent who fended his penis while he wanted to bomb believing that he will remarry. A child whose loved ones are gruesomely murdered and the society did not acknowledge the situation has been injured perpetually, such will have little or no confidence in the society as presently occurring in Nigeria and in the future are likely to take vengeance because he or she has been disoriented, he or she will likely take vengeance. This may be accountable for unresolved insurgency staring the faces of virtually all weapons of sanitation and security in Nigeria.

The Fulanis are wrecking havocs in virtually all regions in Nigeria and seemingly appears to be operating with impunity. In fact, Nigeria sometimes was reported as one of the hottest zones in the world to live, because in any place in Nigeria, one can easily die unnoticed and suddenly. The Nigeria security agents seems not to be helping the situation, because there have been situations and cases they were aiding and abetting crime. Although, death is a natural part of life, the death of a parent, sibling or other attachment figure during childhood is not normative or expected. Indeed, it is considered by many to be one of the most stressful and potentially traumatic experience a child can endure (Keyes, Pratt, Galea, MacLaghlin, Koenen, & Shear, 2014; Yamamoto et al 1996). Without appropriate support, the death can significantly alter a child's worldview, sense of security and developmental trajectory (for example, Sandler et al, 2003; Webb, 2010) especially if the death is sudden and the child is not properly taken care of.

Reactions following a death can be complicated by a number of factors, including a child's relationship to the deceased or their surviving caregivers, their developmental understanding of death (Kaplow, Layne, Pynoos, Cohen & Lieberman, 2012), for instance, while sudden unexpected deaths caused by accidents such as suicide, homicide or other forms of violence are more widely recognized as traumatogenic (Cohen, Mannarino & Deblinger, 2006, Milhen, Porta, Shamsedden, Walter, Payne & Brent, 2011, Rynearson, 2001). There is growing evidence that sudden medical deaths (Melhen et al, 2011), and even anticipated deaths caused by long term illness (Kaplow, Howell & Layne, 2014), can also lead to trauma reactions, particularly for children. Exposure to death and associated circumstances, including observation of physical deterioration, invasive Medicare procedures or prolonged suffering as well as the permanent separation from an important attachment figure can lead to significant difficulties for children (Kaplow et al, 2014).

When left unaddressed, grief and trauma reactions can result in problems such as enduring symptoms of anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress and difficulties including aggression, absenteeism, academic work struggles and relationship issues (Bent, Melhem, Donohoe & Walker,

2009, Brown & Goodman, 2005, Cohen et al, 2006, DillenFantane, Verhofstadt-Denere, 2009, Haina, Ayers, Sandler &Woldchik, 2008, Kaplow, Sawunders, Angold& Costello, 2010; Kaplow et al, 2012, Melhenat al, 2011, National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCRSN), 2015; Worden den & Silverman, 1996). Many youths exhibit difficulty coping with even normal stressors or trusting interpersonal relationships after a death (Sander et al, 2003). Children who experience the death of an important attachment figure as destabilizing or traumatic are at increased risk for psychological and behavioural vulnerability. As such, access to grief-focused trauma – informed care is necessary to mitigate potential obstruction of healthy developmental trajectories.

Sustainable development is the organizing principle for meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend (Wikipedia). The concept of sustainable development can be interpreted in many different ways, but at its core is an approach to development that looks to balance different and often competing needs against an awareness of the environmental, social and economic limitations we face as a society.

Living within our environmental limits is one of the central principles of sustainable development. One implication of not doing so is climate change. But the focus of sustainable development is for broader than just the environment. It is about ensuring a strong, healthy and just society. This means meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion and creating equal opportunity.

The United Nations International Children’s Fund (UNICEF) expressed worries over poor development of Nigerian children. The report launched in Abuja shows that Nigeria is putting its children at risk of under development, both physically and mentally because critical national policies are not providing an adequate foundation for their growth. The UNICEF report early moments matter for every child outlines three policies that can give parents the time and resources needed to support their young children’s healthy development. The situation of bereaved children in insurgent zones in Nigeria is debilitating because they appear to have little or no access to any form of development. The recommended policies are two years of free pre-primary education, six months of paid maternity leave and four weeks of paid paternity leave. Nigeria currently has just three months of paid maternity leave only one year of free-pre-primary education and no paternity leave at all. The situation is even grave for the bereaved children.

According to the Lancet, Nigeria ranks among the 10 countries with the largest number of children at risk of poor development. The situation is worrisome and pathetic at the insurgent or warring zones in Nigeria where a lot of children are left uncatered for. In fact, a lot of them are malnourished. What we call Early Childhood Development which includes physical and cognitive support has a strategic place in the achievement of the sustainable development goals. Investing in early childhood development including services to support caregivers, quality pre-primary education and good nutrition will help to secure healthy and productive future generations in Nigeria.

The UNICEF report in 2018 has revealed that only 10 percent children between the ages of 0 – 8 years across Nigeria are enrolled in schools for primary education for Early Childhood Development (ECD). The statistics according to UNICEF has become worrisome since the cognitive growth of every child depends on ECD. The education officer, UNICEF Bauchi field office Mirana Dikwa explained this at a two days Policy and Advocacy dialogue on Pre Primary Education for Adamawa and Taraba States in Yola. He disclosed that 60 percent under five children in Nigeria are at risk of not fulfilling their full development. This according to her is permeated by poverty and other

environmental and psychological hazards mostly in rural areas are exposed to: toxic stress that influences the personality of most children in their early life stages and that is why most parents are advised not to fight in front of the children because it has negative impact on their wellbeing.

Also if one visit most Internal Displaced Camps (IDC) like in Maiduguri and some degraded places in North East Nigeria, one will hear children saying they will like to become soldiers when they grow up. The violence they have been exposed to in the early stage of their lives have influenced their decisions. However, a review of Early Childhood Development across public primary schools in Taraba and Adamawa states shows there is no available data for ECD budget line. According to a survey in both states, no data of budget line has acquired for the 1945 public primary schools in Adamawa and 1862 of Taraba states. The stakeholders in the education sectors in both states were forbidden from playing politics with the future of children by living up to expectations. The situation is even pathetic in insurgent zones in the North Eastern part of Nigeria where insurgents are worrying on hourly bases.

The Importance of Sustainable Development Goals

Its implementation helps to achieve overall development plans, reduce future economic, environmental and social costs, and strengthen economic competitiveness and reduce poverty. In September 2000, leaders of 189 countries gathered at the United Nations headquarters and signed the historic Millennium Declaration, in which they were committed to achieving a set of eight measurable goals that range from halving extreme poverty and hunger to promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality.

The United Nations support plan for the Sahel has estimated that Nigeria needs not less than \$337 billion to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from 2019 to 2022. The cost of implementing the SDGs in Nigeria according to the plan is \$80.65 billion in 2019, \$82.83 billion in 2020, \$85.07 billion in 2021 and \$87.37 billion in 2022. The News Agency of Nigeria reports that on the investment needs in the Sahel, the plan projected the cost of implementing the SDGs in the Sahel as being between \$140.25 billion and \$157.39 billion per year between 2019 and 2022 in the 10 Sahelian countries. The plan said the 10 countries under the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) needed an average of \$148.7 billion annually to implement the SDGs or \$594.8 billion from 2018 to 2022. The overarching goal of the plan targeting 10 countries namely Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Chad, The Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal is to scale up efforts to accelerate shared prosperity and lasting peace in the region. The plan covering the period of 2018 to 2030 would help implement identified priorities to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union Agenda 2063. UNISS was approved by the Security Council in 2013 and is part of a preventive and integrated approach to strengthening governance, security and development in the region.

It is rather unfortunate that on the contrary, a lot of states in Nigeria are still bathing with security problems. This is because on daily bases, there are reported cases of sudden gruesome and lethal deaths resulting to subjecting Nigerian children to state of bereavement and grief.

There have been various occurrences of militancy in Nigeria for some decades now. This seems to have range from political, ethnic, religion and sociological to economic militants. The activities of militants have been accountable for disunity and in fact this has made a lot of children vulnerable and this accounts for Nigeria's inability to match up with the Sustainable Development Goals. The 17 sustainable development goals in Nigeria was planned to eradicate extreme poverty and

hunger. It aimed at achieving universal primary education, promote gender equality, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability and develop a global outlook. The sustainable development goals are the blue print to achieve a better and more and more sustainable future for all. They address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity and peace and justice.

Sustainable development is advantageous. It is normally more costly to create goods and services in an environmentally save way than in a non-suitable and harmful manner. Sustainable development means development of an economy in a way that doesn't deplete natural resources.

Nigeria having teeming bereaved and traumatised children are not attuned to sustainable development. This involves recognition of the important interconnections between eliminating hunger, promoting and investing in sustainable agriculture, ensuring healthy lives and reducing air, water and soil pollution, promoting economic growth while improving resource efficiency and decoupling this growth from environmental degradation.

Research Rationale

It is worrisome that a lot of children in many geographical zones in Nigeria are bereaved and grieved as a result of fatalities that befell and still befalling them due to the loss of their loved ones. Majority of vulnerable Nigeria children incurred lost due to death as a result of usage of lethal weapons. These gruesome deaths occurred due to vehicular accidents, kidnapping, abduction, usage of bombs, usage of guns and other lethal weapons. Most of the survivors of this gruesome occurrence are disenfranchised and or unacknowledged. It is also pathetic that Nigeria ranks among few nations in the world that has no record or data bank about people and particularly children who are traumatised due to spontaneous or sudden death of their loved ones.

It is also worrisome that due to these deficiencies that Nigeria appears to fail to match or key to the millennium development goals that could enhance national sustainable development. It seems as if the unabated criminality of insurgency, kidnapping and abduction and so on that remains unabated in Nigeria seems to have been raising the ugly heads unabated. For any nation to implement congenial sustainable development for her inhabitants particularly children, there should be peace. There seems to be dearth of peace particularly in certain warring zones in Nigeria, where kidnapping, arm robbery, abduction, insurgency and the rest are going on, where children cannot freely thrive. It is also pathetic that even the colossal amount of money budgeted to cater for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) including bereaved children are embezzled by canal government agents in Nigeria. Also, it is worrisome that the resources meant for these vulnerable Nigerians including the bereaved children are embezzled and stolen even with impunity.

Significance of the Study

The study could be beneficial to victims of death parents, children, government, guidance counsellors, curriculum planners, law enforcement agents and prospective researchers. Survivors of violent deaths, bereaved children could learn to go through the situation with reduced stress. Law enforcement agents, religious organisations could learn how to handle the bereaved. Curriculum planners and school administrators could incorporate the plight of bereaved into the education curriculum to enhance reduction in their stress. Guidance counsellors would learn how to handle, counsel and assist their teeming clients to go through their challenges with little or reduced stress.

Recommendations

Based on the discovery, the Nigeria government should have a census and data bank of all the bereaved Nigeria children that are susceptible to the situation due to sudden death. This can be done by creating a ministry that will handle such cases. Also, the local, state and federal government should enhance that there is avenue for these vulnerable children to match up with the sustainable national development goals. There should be quick or assiduous response of government of the needs of the bereaved Nigeria children to forestall the occurrences of insurgency. The curriculum planners should incorporate into the national curriculum areas that will alleviate the suffering Nigerian children that are mourning, bereaved and traumatised.

Conclusion

The researcher observed that a lot of Nigeria children in various parts of the nation are bereaved as a result of the sudden death of their loved ones. A lot of children are suddenly susceptible to bereavement. Also, Nigeria appears to be one of the nations that have inadequate or no record or data bank for the bereaved children. It is also evident that these vulnerable children did not meet up with the national sustainable development goals.

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