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1.0 Introduction

The United Nations General Assembly in 1954 adopted the Universal Children’s Day as a day set aside to encourage all countries to promote mutual exchange and understanding among children and also initiate action to promote the welfare of the world’s children. The holiday was first celebrated worldwide in 1955 under the sponsorship of International Union for Child Welfare in Geneva.

1.1 Rights of Children

The 1999 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights into one document. The Convention articulates the rights of children, who must play significant role in the development of the country.

a) States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or exploitation, and provide for judicial involvement.

b) Such protective measures should as appropriate, include the care of the child, legal guardianship of the child, and other legal or judicial involvement.

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By
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1.2 Human Rights of the Girl Child

In 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasized that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedom set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex. In spite of the above declaration, girls and women have continued to suffer cultural, religious and other forms of social discrimination. Consequently, the UN in 1979 passed the International Bill of Rights for Women, which aims at eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. It defined discrimination against women as "... any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field." In 2000, the UN adopted the Eight Millennium Development Goals and Goal 3 aims at promoting gender equality and women empowerment.

Nigeria being a signatory to these declarations has accepted to set up structures at the macro and micro levels that would end all forms of discrimination against women and girls. In pursuance of the above, in 2006 the Federal Government approved the National Gender Policy. The overall Policy Goal is to promote gender equity and sustainable human and economic development in Nigeria. The policy is in line with international protocols and instruments such as the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), AU Solemn Declaration for Gender Equality, African Protocol on People's Rights and the Rights of Women (APPRRW), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), International Conference on Population Development Plan of Action (ICPD PoA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and a wide range of sectors (FGN, 2006). In spite of the well articulated Policy Frameworks, gender disparities exist in social, economic, physical, educational, legal and political spheres of life in Nigeria. The following human rights of the girls are still being violated:

1. Freedom from discrimination based on gender, age, race, colour, language, religion, ethnicity, or any other status, or on the status of the child's parents;
2. A standard of living adequate for a child's intellectual, physical, moral, and spiritual development;
3. Right to a healthy and safe environment;
4. Right to the highest possible standard of health and to equal access to healthcare;
5. Right to equal access to food and nutrition;
6. Right to life and to freedom from prenatal sex selection;
7. Right to freedom from cultural practices, customs and traditions harmful to the child, including female genital mutilation;
8. Right to education -- free and compulsory elementary education, to equal access to readily available forms of secondary and higher education, and to freedom from all types of discrimination at all levels of education;
9. Right to information about health, sexuality and reproduction;
10. Right to protection from all physical or mental abuse;
11. Right to protection from economic and sexual exploitation, prostitution, and trafficking;
12. Right to freedom from forced or early marriage;
13. Right to equal rights to inheritance;
14. Right to express an opinion about plans or decisions affecting the child's life.

The UN Working Group on Girls (WGGs) identified physical and mental violence against female children as follows: poverty, homelessness, lack of knowledge about human rights, prostitution and trafficking, eating disorders, depression, suicide, self-harm, date-rape, witnessing violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse, gangs and girl-on-girl violence, media violence, sexual harassment in schools, teen pregnancies, racism, homophobia and cultural exclusion, maltreatment, delinquency, verbal abuse, classism, psychological abuse. The female children are much more vulnerable to all forms of violence at the family, community and national levels. The long and short term consequences of violence against girls are immeasurable. Women worldwide must continue to provide all forms of support for the fight.

2.0 Problem of Poverty

Poverty is the primary cause of all problems and poses the greatest threat to building a culture of peace and security. Poverty is multidimensional deprivation that takes the form of hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, unsafe drinking water, lack of access to basic health services, social discrimination, physical insecurity and political exclusion (UNESCO, 2008). This may also be called severe poverty, absolute poverty, extreme poverty, ultra poverty, poorest of the poor, hardcore poverty, indignity and destitution. They emphasized that poverty duration is the length of time an individual experiences a particular poverty state. When poverty persists for a long period of time, it is referred to as chronic poverty.

High level of corruption among political leaders has consistently caused national governments to fail in addressing poverty issues in their countries. In the midst of abundant natural resources, political leaders fail to provide adequate health care services, education, water, sanitation etc. While the political class continues to amass wealth, the poor people are denied opportunity for access to finance and capital. A major contributory factor to poverty is
violent conflicts. At community, national and international levels, individuals and families have experienced displacement occasioned by conflicts. Poverty can be a primary course of conflict. Crime and violence are more prevalent among the poor. The poor youths are readily available to serve as political thugs. The poor are more vulnerable to crime and more likely to break the law. During war periods, the poor people are the most likely to suffer the effects and after effects of war.

The poor are less likely to make maximum use of opportunities available to them. These may take the form of opportunities for gainful employment, loan, political participation, social integration, improved agricultural production, education, health care services. This inability to make maximum use of opportunities is responsible for chronic poverty. It makes it possible for people to join the poverty group and difficult for them to leave the group.

3.0 Building a Culture of Peace and Security for the Nigerian Children

Building means a structure constructed using a plan known as design. To build a house for example you need a quantity surveyor, mechanical, civil, electrical engineers, bricklayer, mason, plumber, electrician, painter, etc. Furthermore, you need materials such as cement, stone, brick, roofing sheets, wood, sand, etc. Culture is the totality of the multifaceted socially transmitted behaviour patterns and traits that have found expression in the beliefs, language, thoughts, arts and sciences, spirituality, social activities and interactions of a particular group of people at a particular time. The New Webster's Dictionary of the English Language defined peace as the condition when nations or groups are not fighting; the ending of a state of war; the treaty that marks the end of war, friendly relations between individuals, untroubled by disputes; freedom from noise, worries, troubles, fears, etc. to keep the peace.

In the present day society, peace has to be redefined and the meaning expanded to include but not limited to the human rights of all children, social justice, prosperity in matters of social or economic welfare, the establishment of equality and a working political order that serves the true interest of all, presence of cultural and economic understanding. Peace means nonviolent lifestyle characterized by respect, justice and goodwill, friendliness, acceptance of differences, resolution of conflicts through dialogue, freedom of expression, serenity, safety, closing the gap between the rich and the poor, love and respect for one another. The redefinition of peace has become very necessary because when children are hungry, homeless and as a result roam the streets, die of lack of basic health care services, lack access to formal education, peace will not reign even in the absence of war. Security is the state of being free from danger or injury, freedom from anxiety or fear, assured from poverty and want.

For us to build a culture of peace and security for the Nigerian children, it follows that as a people we must build in human rights of the children into our behaviour patterns. We have to make the welfare of the children part of our beliefs, language, thoughts, arts and sciences, spirituality, and social activities. In line with the meaning of the word build, we have to assemble the right type of human and material resources to "sincerely design and implement a culture of peace and security for the Nigerian children". How do we sincerely do these?

The United Nations defined the child as any human being below the age of eighteen. From the Biblical point of view children are blessings from God. From the biological point of view children are the products of the union of man and woman. The latter definition is very important in this context because it places a great deal of responsibility on the man and woman who are responsible for bringing the children into this world. That implies why Proverbs 22:6 emphasizes that we train the child the way he should go when he grows up he will not depart from it. Similarly, Isaiah 54:13 states that all your children shall be taught by the Lord and great shall be the peace of your children. This by implication means that parents must direct the children in the way of the Lord, failing which, they shall have no peace and we shall have no peace too. As parents we have not appropriately directed the children in the way of the Lord. Consequently, our children are getting astray and we have no peace. Collectively, we must make concerted and sincere effort to find out what we can do as a people to ensure the proper development of our children. The children are also not left out. Ephesians 6:1-4 states that "Children obey your parents for this is right: Honour your father and mother that you may be happy and long live in the land. And you fathers do not make rebels of your children, but educate them by correction and instruction which the Lord may inspire". We must give our children a new direction by protecting their human rights. We will build a culture of peace and security with the following strategies:

3.1 Value Re-orientation

Values are as old as man. In social context, values refer to those aspects of the way of life of a people, which distinguish them from other people thereby giving them an identity. Values are embodied in the beliefs, attitudes, music, language, social institutions, science and technology, commerce, occupational and family life, mindsets and central tendencies which mark a people out as distinct from all others. These values constitute the culture of a people with language serving as its complete single embodiment and a vehicle for its transmission.

The Nigerian society is plagued with values crises as a result of value crises,
disorientation, that can be attributed among others to prolonged military rule, oil boom, lack of interest in common good, failure of the electoral process, socio-economic problems, imported values, lack of accountability on the part of leaders, fallen standards of education, multiplicity of religious groups, breakdown of the family, technological influence, commercialization of virtually every aspect of the national life such as, politics, justice, religion, education. Among the students value disorientation takes all forms and shapes and includes among others, secret cult activities, demonstrations, destruction of property, examination malpractice, forgery, stealing and looting, impersonation, impersonation, assault of all forms, absenteeism and lateness to classes, possession of offensive weapons, indecent dressing, prostitution, harassment of all forms, drug abuse, alcoholism, violent exchange of words and fighting etc. Values education is the teaching/learning process primarily designed to teach values.

There is adequate provision for values education in the existing curricula. Parents and teachers should be equipped with skills that would enable them teach children such values as cooperative learning, rationalism, curiosity, reflective thinking, empiricism, confidence, problem solving, imaginative skills, tolerance, investigation through synthesis of problems, commitment, perseverance, mastery, openness, honesty, service to God through humanity, care of the less privileged, sense of responsibility, unity, inner peace, contentment etc. The educational system should ensure a total value re-orientation of the student body through conferences, workshops, seminars, retreats, and other activities that should positively impact on the lives of the children.

3.2 Bridging the Gap between the Rich and the Poor
For us to build a culture of peace and security for the Nigerian child, it is absolutely necessary to bridge the economic gap between the poor and the rich in this country. This will make it possible for Nigerian families to be empowered to provide basic necessities of life for their children. These necessities include among others; food, clothing, shelter, education, health care etc. World Bank report showed that about 70% of Nigerians live below poverty level. We should remember that hungry children are angry children and therefore, cannot be interested in a culture of peace.

3.3 Education for All through Strategic Educational Ma
The international community adopted the Eight Millennium Development Goals as a framework for the development activities of over 190 countries in 10 regions. The second Millennium Development Goal occupies a prominent second position. The target is to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. Education is the key to human capital development and human capital development is the key to national and international development. The aggregate contributions of individuals, formal and informal organizations determine to a large extent the nature and magnitude of the well being and human conditions of the citizens of a nation. Education plays a fundamental role in directing and redirecting national resources for human capital development. Strategic educational management is the process of deliberate application of targeted interventions in the process of human capital development. It involves innovative, intellectual, and affordable strategies that will address the multidimensional and intertwined problems of hunger, poverty, and environmental degradation. A necessary focus of interest is the targeted mobilization of new technologies, economic, legal and institutional resources to fight poverty, end hunger, protect the environment, heal the sick, and create an enabling environment for self expression and socio-political participation and partnership.

3.4 Counseling Centres
The human society has become very turbulent and stressful especially for children. This is manifested in the level and magnitude of physical and mental violence against them. Counseling centres are very important in the formation of children. These centres should be in the schools, communities and LGAs. Each primary and secondary school should have at least one guidance counselor who should assist the children in solving their academic, personal, social and psychological problems. A good number of female children are out of school. Opportunity should be provided for them to access counseling services at no cost. This is where the women groups have a very important role to play in their various communities. Very responsible mothers should serve as volunteers in this programme. Girls who married very early, face all forms of difficulties, the counseling centres should take proactive measures in addressing these problems before they escalate to the point of divorce or separation.

3.5 Intensifying Sporting Activities
Sporting activities provide opportunity for team work at all levels of the educational system including the communities. Sports make it possible for children to play together, care for one another, share experiences, disagree and resolve issues quickly through dialogue and most importantly engage in healthy competition. In most schools, apart from the poorly constructed football fields, other sporting facilities are completely not available. Not everybody will be a footballer. Facilities for other sporting activities should be provided at all levels of the educational system to address the individual interests of the children. This is very important because sports will keep
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