

## **Factors responsible for child vulnerability in Nigeria: Suggestion for programme development**

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### **Abstract**

Child vulnerability in Nigeria is an important development challenge that needs a multi-sectoral intervention approach. This is because the plight of vulnerable children poses a significant challenge to achieving goals 1-5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Given the increasing number of children categorized as vulnerable and in need of care and protection, there is a need to prioritize resources and develop social intervention programmes to address causative factors. This paper through literature review seeks to add to the discourse on child vulnerability in Nigeria. The literature search revealed that intervention strategies such as the family strengthening programmes and parenting skill training can be effective intervention strategies. The paper thus recommends that social workers working in various child and family welfare agencies in Nigeria can increase awareness of these intervention strategies. Knowledge of these intervention strategies can help development partners and other agencies providing family and child welfare services in Nigeria during their programme design and implementation.

**Keywords:** Almajiri children, child's rights, child vulnerability, child welfare, vulnerable children,

### **Introduction**

Globally, more than 7 billion people are living in the world, including 2.2 billion children. Amongst them are children who are without parental care and those at risk of losing parental care (SOS Children's Villages International, 2015). Many children who are without parental care or at the risk of losing parental care are in Sub-Saharan Africa where the risk of growing up as a child is ten times higher than any in other continents of the world (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2014; UNICEF. 2015). This is so because, in Sub-Saharan Africa, children are at a greater risk of losing parental care owing to factors such as poverty, insurgency, domestic violence leading to family disintegration, parental ill health due to Human Immune Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDs), social exclusion, lack of knowledge on positive parenting, absence of social protection measures, discrimination and harmful traditional practices. Due to these factors, child vulnerability is at its peak and more pronounced in Central and West Africa regions with little progress made by some countries in these regions to address child vulnerability (Save the Children, 2017).

Child vulnerability in Nigeria and other low and middle-income countries around the world is an important development challenge that needs a multi-sectoral intervention

approach (UNICEF, 2017). This is because the plight of vulnerable children poses a significant challenge to achieving goals 1-5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To address challenges related to poverty, hunger, education, good health, and gender equality, development partners need to work with relevant stakeholders in both rural and urban communities in Nigeria. Stakeholders such as social workers and social welfare agencies are key in developing programmes and implementing intervention strategies that can keep children safe (Nnama-Okechukwu, Agwu & Okoye, 2020). Given the increasing number of children categorized as vulnerable and in need of care and protection, there is a need to prioritize resources and develop social intervention programmes to address causative factors (Bamgboye et al., 2017). Victor (2018) noted that various international and local nongovernmental organizations are involved in service provision across different programme areas for orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria. However, with the increasing economic crisis, high rate of insurgency, and militancy, the need arises for targeted and strategic programmes intervention aimed at making the most impacts for the increasing number of vulnerable children.

In Nigeria, the true statistic of vulnerable children is not well known, notwithstanding, it is estimated that there are 17.5 million children in Nigeria categorized as orphaned or vulnerable (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD), 2014). Children are categorized as vulnerable in Nigeria if they are abandoned, have dropped out of school, living with terminally or chronically ill parent(s) or caregiver(s), child labourers, children in child-headed homes, internally displaced children, trafficked children, children living with HIV, and children living with aged grandparents (FMWASD, 2014). The list also includes abused children, children with disability-related vulnerability, children whose parents have a disability, children in abusive alternative care arrangement, children affected by armed conflict; children in need of legal protection, children who have lost one or both parents due to HIV/AIDS (Charles & Osah, 2019; Ngwu, Nnama-Okechukwu & Obasigwe, 2017; Olusegun & Idowu, 2016; Taiwo, 2014). The list may just be endless given the political, socio-cultural, and economic factors promoting child vulnerability in different geopolitical regions in Nigeria.

This paper is grounded on the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA). The SLA is built on participatory approaches and was developed to organize and improve organizations' efforts to eliminate poverty (Atha, 2017). According to Krantz (2001), there are three insights into the SLA which include the realization that while economic growth may be essential for poverty reduction, there is not an automatic relationship between the two since it depends on the capabilities of the poor to take advantage of expanding economic opportunities. Furthermore, there is the realization that poverty is not a matter of low income but also includes other dimensions like illiteracy and lack of social services (Krantz, 2001). Finally, there is also the realization that the poor need to be involved in programmes and project designs that will help address their needs. Programmes and projects targeted at vulnerable children and their families need to explore contributory factors to child vulnerability. It will also explore empowerment opportunities and social services that families need to address child vulnerability. This understanding will equip relevant stakeholders with the opportunity of addressing challenges related to child vulnerability.

While there are vast studies on the factors responsible for child vulnerability in Nigeria (Abdullahi, 2020; Aransiola & Zarowsky, 2014; Essia, 2012; Folami et al., 2019; Gwadabe et al., 2011; Isioma, 2019; Muktar et al., 2017; Victor, 2018), few studies have focused on programme intervention strategies that can be used to stem the tide on the increasing number of vulnerable children (Bamgboye et al., 2017; Victor, 2018; Nnama-Okechukwu et al., 2019b). This paper seeks to add to the discourse on child vulnerability in Nigeria by further exploring factors responsible for child vulnerability. Further exploration of the need for family strengthening programmes and parenting skill training introduces new insights on how the problem of child vulnerability can be addressed using socially appropriate intervention strategies. Social workers, social welfare agencies, and development partners can thus utilize these intervention strategies to provide needed support for children in need of care and protection.

### **Factors stimulating child vulnerability in Nigeria**

A review of the available literature shows that several socio-cultural factors are responsible for child vulnerability in Nigeria. For instance, there are vast studies that show that the major cause of child vulnerability in Nigeria is poverty (Abdullahi, 2020, Aransiola & Zarowsky, 2014; Folami, Arua, Ibimoyam & Olatunji, 2019; FMWSD, 2014; Nnama-Okechukwu & Okoye, 2019a; UNICEF, 2017; Victor, 2018). Some studies further linked causes to harmful cultural and religious practices like child marriage, Osu-caste system, child witchcraft, female genital mutilation, and Almajiri institution (Anyacho & Anyacho, 2016; Essia, 2012; Isioma, 2019; Magashi, 2015; Muhammad, Jaji & Wakali, 2019; Secker, 2012). It is also reported in other studies that factors such as rural-urban migration, lack of preventive health practices, and child labour put children in a vulnerable state in Nigeria (Ebharevba, Ishmaef & Uzobo 2018; Igwe, Agwu, Okoye, Nkechi, Ngozi & Aloysius, 2019; Muktar, Mohd Jali & Abdul Razak 2017; Okoye & Tanyi, 2009). Few studies have also further identified child trafficking, illegal child adoption, and lack of essential support services to poor families as factors responsible for child vulnerability (Aransiola & Zarowsky, 2014; Makinde, 2015; Nnama-Okechukwu & Okoye, 2019b; Nwaolikpe, 2018; Udechukwu, 2019). Recently, increasing social problems such as Boko Haram attacks, inter-communal crisis, herdsman attack, and occasional natural disaster such as flooding leading to internal displacement are contributing factors promoting child vulnerability in Nigeria (Gwadabe, Salleh, Ahmad & Jamai, 2018; Oduwole & Fadeyi, 2013; Olusegun, 2019). Findings from reviewed articles are discussed fully under germane sub-topics.

#### *Social, cultural, and religious factors stimulating child vulnerability*

Several social, religious, and cultural factors put children in vulnerable states in Nigeria. Factors such as child marriage, migration, child witchcraft accusations, Almajiri system, Osu-Caste system, etc. endanger the rights of children in Nigeria. For instance, witchcraft belief practice that results in labelling or accusing children of witchcraft is a factor that stimulates child vulnerability and puts children in a vulnerable state. Reports and studies show that children accused of witchcraft suffered imprisonment, forced starvation, forced participation in psychologically damaging ceremonies (Battarbee, Foxcroft & Secker, 2009; Chineyemba, 2016; Isioma, 2019). Studies also revealed that children accused of witchcraft are sometimes ostracized and seen as unfit to interact with members of their families and the rest of the community

(Isioma, 2019; Essia, 2014). Secker (2012) affirmed thus that witchcraft stigmatization has led to children experiencing torture, degrading treatment, and punishment.

Belief practice such as ostracizing children from their communities due to witchcraft accusation is a violation of the child's right. The Nigeria Child Rights Act (2003) part II section (a) and (b) states that "no child shall be subjected to physical, mental or emotional injury, abuse, neglect or maltreatment" and "that no child shall be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (p,2). It is worrisome to note that even though many people know what constitutes child abuse their knowledge and awareness of the Child Right Act of 2003 is still very poor. Even in enlightened communities, knowledge, and awareness of the Act are still very low (Okoye, 2011). Lack of knowledge and adherence to extremist religious practices trap parents into compliance with some religious orders. Lack of knowledge may also encourage poor parenting skills, superstitious beliefs that may aggravate parents and caregivers having negative views about their children such as in cases of child witchcraft.

Cultural practices such as the Osu-caste system, female genital mutilation, girl-child marriage, and discriminatory attitude against children born out of wedlock still persist in some communities. Though some of these practices are being addressed by Civil Society Groups (CSOs) and other development actors, children still remain vulnerable in communities where such practices persist. For instance, there are still in existence harmful cultural practices that stimulate child vulnerability in some parts of Nigeria. In places such as the southeast geopolitical zone some groups of people are regarded as outcasts because they come from a caste system known as "Osu" (Anyacho & Anyacho, 2016; Mezie-Okoye, Asike, 2019; Muoneke, 2019). Persons belonging to such caste system are marginalized, isolated, and often regarded as unfit to relate with other social groups in the community. Children whose parents belong to such a caste system suffer the same isolation and marginalization. Worse than the physical isolation that such children undergo is the social exclusion that they suffer from not relating with their peers and engaging in other social activities with people in their communities (Uchenna, 2010; Onwubuariri, 2016).

Though the case of Osu-caste systems is no longer pronounced as it used to be, there are however still communities where a handful of cases are visible (Ajima, 2019; Mmoneke, 2019). While adults can cope with the stigmatization associated with discrimination and isolation from public functions, children who are discriminated against and isolated from participation in social activities cannot express their moments of a happy childhood. This puts them in a vulnerable state. According to the 2003 Child Rights Act of Nigeria: a child shall not be subjected to any form of discrimination merely by reason of their belonging to a particular community or ethnic group or by reason of his place of origin" ... (Child Right Act, 2003, Part II section 10).

Studies found reasons for the persistence of child marriage in some communities in Nigeria to include poverty, protection from sexual promiscuity, promoting family honour, ensuring financial security as well as reducing the economic burden of child care on the family (Onoyase, 2020; Nwaolipke, 2018). While families who give their children out for early marriage may be interested more in preserving cultural and religious norms for family and personal gains, the interest of the child is often ignored

leading to several consequences. Early marriage exposes children to early pregnancy, limits their opportunity to further their education, places the girl-child at an increased risk of domestic violence as well as limits their social interactions with peers. Child marriage exposes children to adverse health conditions such as fistula and also deprives children of moments of happy childhood and education (Abara, 2012; Olusegun & Idowu, 2016). Many children forced into such marriages are not prepared for the challenges that come with family life. This practice traps children into unprepared family life making them vulnerable.

Issues around child marriage are also yet to be given full coverage in media publications and awareness in Nigeria (Nwaolipke, 2018). This lacuna may have resulted in a lack of public awareness of the consequences associated with the practice. It is also important to note that traditional beliefs and customs associated with child marriage in Nigeria are often difficult to be changed due to some contradictions in the law. Though there are laws that protect children and prevents child marriage, there are contradictions with these legal documents which make implementation challenging. For instance, while part III section 21 & 22 of the Child Right Act 2003 clearly explained that a marriage entered into with a child below the age of 18 years is null and void, the Marriage Act orders on the other hand explained that a child below the age of twenty-one can get married if consent is obtained from the parents. Such contradiction encourages the practices and puts children in a vulnerable state. The effort of civil society groups and other activists have however brought challenges with this contradiction to the public domain. There is still a lot that needs to be done with regards to enlightening the public on the dangers of child marriage, especially for the girl-child.

Female genital cutting or mutilation is one harmful cultural practice against the girl-child in Nigeria and other communities around the world which is deeply rooted in cultural beliefs and perceptions (Okeke, Anyaehie & Ezeyearaku, 2012; Waiga, Doos, Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2018). The practice is widely recognized as a violation of human rights that endangers the life of girls and women (Obi & Igbinalolor, 2019). Female genital cutting is a traditional practice that is rooted in cultural beliefs and often undertaken as a traditional rite where the female external genitalia are partially or removed. In some communities in Nigeria, it is still believed that if a woman's clitoris is not removed, it will result in the death of a baby during childbirth. Studies have however found the health hazard associated with this harmful cultural practice such as excessive bleeding, shock, and even death (Obi & Igbinalolor, 2019; Okeke, Anyaehie, & Ezenyeaku, 2012),

#### *Socio-economic factors*

Away from the cultural and religious factors that contribute to child vulnerability in Nigeria, some socio-economic factors stimulate child vulnerability. More recently, it is noted that parents whether married or single now seek to increase family income by working far away from home and in most cases in different cities. Working far from home for some parents often translates to entrusting the care of their children to extended family members especially grandparents. Other extended family members such as aunts, cousins, and uncles can also be entrusted with the care of children when parents are engaged at work. Studies have documented the negatives and positives

associated with grandparent's care for children (Lee, Clarkson-Hendrik & Lee, 2016; Peterson, 2017. Ross & Adaym 2006). With the absence of parents in a child's development phase, vulnerability may be inevitable. Various studies have also revealed the negative impact of parental absence on the educational achievement and protection of children (Gaydosh, 2015; Lawson, Ngadaya & James, 2016; Okunlola & Ikunmola, 2010). On the other hand, single mothers who choose to keep their children may struggle to get well-paid jobs that can sustain them. If they succeed, such single mothers are faced with double pressure of child maintenance and work pressure which forced them to either seek domestic house help or abandon the child with family members to foster. This increases child vulnerability as domestic house helps in most cases are under aged vulnerable children who are employed to take care of a child deprived of parental care.

Children are vulnerable when they are in the care of other caregivers when their parents migrate, they even face multiple risk factors when migration creates family instability due to divorce or separation (Cebotari, & Mazzucctu, 2016; Cebotari, Mazzucctu & Siegel, 2016). Migration and marital problems can affect children's emotional well-being. Poor families can also choose to migrate from rural to urban areas with their children in search of greener pasture. Some may end up settling in poor neighborhoods, which are characterized by lack of adequate sanitation, lack of clean water, poor housing arrangement, overcrowding, and lack of access to modern health services. Such living arrangement increases child vulnerability as children are more often than not exposed to health problems and lack basic necessities for survival. Such lack may push poor families into using children to supplement the family income. This is often the case when parents lack steady means of income or are unemployed. Parents may thus engage their children in child labour in a bid to contribute to the family income.

The use of children by poor families as means of generating income has been reported in studies in Nigeria (Nwokolo, 2011; Okoli, 2009). Contributing to family income however comes with consequences as children who engage in child labour such as street vending are likely to drop out of school and are also vulnerable to sexual abuse, kidnapping, trafficking, criminal activities, and even death. Nwokolo (2011) identified culture, unemployment, large household size, breakdown of marriages, and death of one or both parents as risk factors leading to children engaging in child labour. This has been reaffirmed in studies (Okoli, 2009; Okoye & Tanyi, 2009). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), observes that child labour is work that is likely to be hazardous, or interfere with the child's education; or to be harmful to the child's health, or physical, mental, spiritual or mental development. (CRC 1989, Article 32). There are however divergent opinions on what constitutes child labour.

While the Nigeria Child Rights Act 2003 in part II section 19 2(a) stipulated that a child has the responsibility to "work toward the cohesion of his family and community (P. 6)", part II section 28 (a & b) states that a "child shall not be subjected to any force or exploitation or employed to work in any capacity except where he is employed by a member of his family on light work of agricultural, horticulture or domestic character" (P, 6). This question then is: what can we categorize as child labour and child work? Despite this interpretation, the effect of child labour especially on child development

has been reported in various studies (Ekpenyong 2012, Okafor, 2010). Okoye and Tanyi (2009) opined that children who engage in hawking and other labour not meant for children sometimes pick up bad habits from adults such as pickpocketing in the garage while some turn out to be armed robbers. These consequences have been attributed to parental poverty.

#### *Poverty and lack of access to basic education*

Poverty and the related inability of parents to provide for their children may lead poor parents into taking decisions that are not in the interest of children (Atilola, et al., 2014; Bamgboye, 2017; Folarin, 2015; Nnama-Okechukwu et al, 2018). Decisions that are not in the interest of a child such as forced alternative childcare arrangements, child abandonment, illegal child adoption, and the likes are a violation of children's rights. Poverty also increases the rate of lack in poor families which can manifest in the living arrangement, insufficient nutrition, lack of medical attention, and poor hygiene (Aderinto, 2010; Adesina, 2014; UNICEF, 2018). These challenges can lead families to use their children as a source for productive ventures through income generation such as hawking or other businesses. The decision to use children to earn income for the family has negative consequences for children educationally and also exposes children to undesirable street life. Children who engage in street activities have several negative developmental consequences which often manifest in their education and social life

Many children in Nigeria still lack access to basic education and are often cut off from social life in their communities. For instance, in some northern part of Nigeria, the sight of Almajiris' in many cities hardly escape the eye of a visitor. Almajiris' are traditional Quranic pupils entrusted in the care of their instructors to receive instruction in the Islamic faith from an Islamic instructor known as Mallam (Taiwo, 2014; Olaniran, 2018; Umar, Mburza & Adama, 2007; Yusha'h, Tsafe, Babangide & Lawal, 2013). These pupils who are mainly children are usually without parental guidance. They move from place to place seeking means of survival. Most times, they have to travel far from home losing track of their way back. Being far from home means transferring the responsibility of their upbringing to their instructors who in most cases are their Islamic teachers or Mallam (Yusha'h, Tsafe, Babangide & Lawal, 2013).

According to Olaniran (2018), entrusting Almajiri children into the care of a Mallam often translate to migration to a different settlement where it is assumed that a conducive learning environment exists. Studies however show that some of these children (Almajiri) live under horrific conditions while in the care of their instructor and some are left with no option but to follow other children in moving from place to place in search of means of survival (Muhammad, Jaji & Wakali, 2019; Taiwo, 2014). Charles & Osah (2019) noted that because of their large numbers and the low revenue base of the instructor, some of these children have to go from street or house to house begging to supplement the efforts of the instructors. These children are not exposed to any form of formal education neither are they meant to acquire a skill to give them the opportunity of being gainfully employed after their Quranic training. This makes them even more vulnerable as they are soft targets for some criminal activities. Others serve as aids to physically challenged beggars and many are exposed to health-threatening diseases due to a lack of preventive health practices (Srkingobir, et al., 2019).

### *Poor preventive health practice*

Noncompliance or adherence to preventive health practice is another factor that is responsible for child vulnerability in Nigeria. Studies have shown that many women in some parts of Nigeria do not still subscribe to preventive health due to some cultural and religious beliefs (Tukur & Oche, 2015). Preventive health care has an immediate and long-term impact, particularly on the lives of women and children (Federal Ministry of Health, 2019; Kalipeni, Iwelunmor & Grigsby, 2017; Posch & Capella, 2011). Preventive health care focuses on the prevention of disease rather than treatment as it enhances the lives of people by helping them improve their health. Preventive health care services for child health include increase in the use of vitamin A, immunization, oral rehydration therapy, long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs), exclusive breastfeeding and treatment of common childhood illness (Tukur & Oche 2015; Saifuddin, Qingfeng & Army, 2012; WHO, 2016). These interventions served as preventive measures through which the lives of children can be saved thus reducing child vulnerability. Due to noncompliance, children under five years still die of preventable causes in rural communities in Nigeria (Ezeigbo, Ejike, & Nwachukwu, 2016; Glew & Uguru, 2015; Igwe, Agwu, Okoye, Nkechi, Ngozi & Aloysius, 2019). This largely is due to a lack of awareness on what constitutes simple preventive health care practices.

### **Programme strategies for addressing child vulnerability in Nigeria**

With the rising incident of child vulnerability in Nigeria, many public and private sector actors have been developing programmes and projects to contribute to building a loving home for every child (Folarin, 2015). Literature search shows that available intervention strategies such as the family strengthening programme is an effective intervention tool that can build the capacity of families to care for and protect children. (Bangboye, et al., 2017; Biemba, et. al., 2009; Victor, 2018). Family strengthening programme empowers families through education on what is desirable and undesirable with regards to child's rights. It also provides the opportunity for economic strengthening where poor families are empowered to go into entrepreneurial training for income generation. When families are economically stable, they can provide for the basic needs of their children thereby reducing cases of vulnerability. This is supported by the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA).

Furthermore, family strengthening can change cultural, religious, and traditional belief systems through constant education and engagement of the family. With good planning, monitoring, and evaluation, family strengthening programmes can address child vulnerability and the achievement of goals 1-5 of the SDGs. Development organizations and child welfare agencies can thus consider family strengthening programmes during programme development targeted at addressing child vulnerability in Nigeria. Positive impact has been recorded in studies using family strengthening programmes to address child vulnerability (Bangboye, et al., 2017; Nnama-Okechukwu et al., 2019b; Victor, 2019). It is thus important that social workers and social welfare agencies utilize this intervention strategy. When families are supported using social protection measures, it will reduce vulnerability.

Parenting skill training or education is another intervention programme strategy that can be considered in addressing cases of child vulnerability in Nigeria. Effective



parenting skills training empowers parents and caregivers on knowledge and skills that improve child care. It also helps parents and caregivers enhance personal competencies related to the accomplishment of the parenting task. Studies reveal that parenting skills training has a positive impact on parent-child interaction, parent attitudes, and knowledge, and reductions in harsh parenting (Knerr, Gardner & Cluver, 2013; Okoye, 2016). Parenting skill training can come in the form of weekly town hall meetings and groups fora where families share ideas on both positive and negative child care. Such group meeting provides opportunities for families to discuss what is working and what is not working in terms of child care. Cultural practices that promote or inhibit child care are brought to the fore where families chart the need for a change, enhancement, or perpetuation as the case may be. Adequate knowledge promotes good parenting skills and helps reduce child vulnerability. Lack of knowledge may encourage poor parenting skills, superstitious beliefs that may aggravate parents and caregivers having negative views about their children such as in cases of child witchcraft. It may also determine the kind of support services they may seek when they are overwhelmed with their parenting roles

Knowledge sharing through parenting skills class as the case with the SOS Children's Villages Nigeria exposes parents and caregivers to appropriate child training, child protection, child rights issues, and harmful cultural practices that make children vulnerable. There are also other public and private agencies and organizations that provide periodic parenting training classes to parents and caregivers in Nigeria, though they are limited. Having more agencies develop training courses on parenting skill classes will serve as a veritable tool in curbing child vulnerability in Nigeria. It is however important to incorporate local content into parenting training manuals to help people appreciate training classes. Studies have shown that parenting skill training is a vital tool in reducing children's vulnerabilities in low-income countries by enhancing positive parenting skills and providing effective but non-physical forms of discipline (Prinz, Sanders, Shapiro, Whitaker, & Lutzker, 2009; Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2010).

Poor families in most communities in Nigeria lack social service and still struggle to provide basic needs for their children. This no doubt increases child vulnerability especially when there are no income-generating activities or steady means of providing for basic needs. Often time, programmes and projects are implemented without the contribution of relevant stakeholders. This often results in unsuccessful implementation of programmes and projects. To address this challenge, there is a need for the involvement of relevant stakeholders in programme design. This can help those in need develop the capacity to drive the change that they want to see. Furthermore, social workers need to be part of stakeholders in programme design, implementation, and evaluation. This will encourage support services through empowerment for vulnerable families.

Social workers, welfare agencies, and development partners are key players in addressing issues around child vulnerability given their community development practice approach. Social workers, social welfare agencies, and other development partners in Nigeria can thus develop training manuals on parenting skill education with the support of other professionals such as graphic artists. Such training manual will

address local contents, be developed with local language where necessary, and provides pictorial representation for trainees to engage in more interactive sessions.

Gathering data on the state of child vulnerability by social workers and social welfare agencies during fieldwork practice and research is very vital. This can help contribute to understanding the nature of child vulnerability in Nigeria given that there is a dearth of statistics on the number of children who are vulnerable in Nigeria. This can also help in the development of effective intervention strategies during programme implementation that will further build synergies between development actors in pursuit of common outcomes.

### Conclusion

Poor families in most communities in Nigeria lack social service and still struggle to provide basic needs for their children. This no doubt increases child vulnerability especially when there are no income-generating activities or steady means of providing for basic needs. Often time, programmes and projects are implemented without the contribution of relevant stakeholders. This often results in unsuccessful implementation of programmes and projects. To address this challenge, there is a need for the involvement of relevant stakeholders in programme design. This can help those in need develop the capacity to drive the change that they want to see. Furthermore, social workers need to be part of the stakeholders in programme design, implementation, and evaluation. This will encourage support services through empowerment for vulnerable families.

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