

OIF
MINDS ©

MANAGING INTOLERABLE NEGLECT & DOMESTIC SITUATIONS

A Quarterly Newsletter of the OIF Foundation

Violence ...make it stop!

Inside: **Child Rights**

**Sarah, the girl that never lived.
From cradle to grave - still a child...**

- **Addressing Child Abuse and Domestic Violence**
- **Child Rights** - Nigerian perspective (myth or reality) - by Mrs Folake Osin (*Chief Magistrate, Lagos*)
- **Child Rights** - U.K. perspective - by Mrs Manminder Mangat - a UK Solicitor and expert in Child and Adult services
- **The Girl Orphan and her Fluid Identity** - by Julius Adagbon (*CEO, Orado Technologies*)
- **Sport and the Child** - by Efan Ekoku (*Former Super Eagles and BBC Sports Correspondent*)

OBI IKENCHUKWU FOUNDATION®



OIF

Beautiful minds... realised dreams.

***Our voice... the change**
...giving voice to the voiceless*

Tel: 08100000923, 08182008228 • Mail: info@oi-foundation.com • Website: www.oi-foundation.com

MINDS" is published by: **I&G Allianz Nig Limited** 96A, Island Way, Dolphin Estate Ikoyi, Lagos Tel: 08100000923

© All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature, without the written permission of the copyright holder.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

- straight from the heart

Welcome to the first edition of MINDS! I am so excited because MINDS is my "story book reality". As a young girl in secondary school, I belonged to a group of writers called the "Writers' Club" and I was the Editor in Chief. I wrote for fun then but today, I write with a purpose.

"MINDS" is a quarterly journal by the Obi Ikenchukwu Foundation (OIF). Its main aim is to raise awareness on the plight of Orphans and Victims of Violence (domestic and general), especially, under aged abused girls. OIF is a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) the object of which is to promote the welfare of the Orphan Child and under aged female victims of violence, *inter alia*. Consequently therefore, the existence and sustenance of OIF hinge on the support of the public, especially you our readers and well wishers. Our cover story is that of a young girl whose life was cut short by violence not even within her home but on our streets, which beg the question – *how safe are our children on our streets?* As you read along, I urge you to avert your minds to how you might be able to make a difference in our world by supporting the cause of OIF.

"The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well". – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Sarah's Story

Over the years and as I pass through life, I have come to realize that certain experiences remain with us for the rest of our lives. They

are going nowhere - literally. These situations and/or experiences, whatever we choose to call them, either make us or break us. The story of Sarah Ibikunle is one of such stories that will stay with me for the rest of my life. Until the 12th of March 2015, Sarah was just a regular 13 year old girl who had so much to live for. She left home for school on the morning of that fateful day and by afternoon, Sarah's lifeless body was lying on a major street in Lagos. She had been shot dead in broad daylight having been hit by a stray bullet from an armed robbery operation at the Lekki branch of the FCMB Bank. You might ask, what was she doing there at the time? Good question. I asked myself the same question until I met the family and the answer stared me in the face - POVERTY. My late uncle (Dr Jackmerry Mosieri), used to say in that endearing tiny voice of his, "...I hate poverty, poverty is a disease...." I agree with my uncle Jack.

Sarah had become her family's breadwinner at the tender age of 13 by selling smoked fish for her mother and the proceeds of sale went towards her education and their general upkeep. She often hawked fish right after school. On this fateful day, with her fish tray on her head and her moneybag secured around her waist ready for the day's sale, it became her final journey on earth. Until her death, Sarah dreamt of becoming a lawyer and although she was in primary 3 at the age of 13 when her equals were in secondary school, she did not allow this deter her from achieving her dream of some day becoming a lawyer which was only going to be made possible by pursuing education, however late or difficult it might be. If only she knew what providence had in store for her.

My Story

My life as a child was nothing like Sarah's. I come from a privileged background and to an extent, had just enough material wealth to get by. What I lacked however was something that money could not secure for me - parental care, love and attention. No one could give me that even when they tried. Again and like Sarah, this was providence's way of dealing with me and so many other children. I was orphaned at a very tender age leaving a lacuna that has not and can never be filled by anyone else and even now, decades later, I still yearn for my parents. Every now and then, when I see how parents treat their children and efforts they make to give them a better life I feel a deep sense of loss. Sometimes, I am filled with admiration whilst also thinking about other children on the other end of the sphere, the orphans who have no one to care for or about them, no one to help them plan their lives, no

one to ensure that they get the basic things of life such as education, shelter and clothing. These are the children that OIF has become a VOICE for. They are the reason OIF was born. We might not be able to save the world and indeed, we are not here to do that but, If we can EDUCATE just one child every year and FEED a hungry child and CLOTHE a naked child, provide SHELTER for the homeless child and RESCUE a girl child from the sex trade and violence, then, and only then can we say confidently that our MISSION here on earth is accomplished. We can achieve this, one child at a time.

The Way Forward

That word "poverty" has been defined as the deprivation of a "want" or "need" which could be financial or otherwise. It is the "otherwise" element of this definition that bothers me the most. This has been defined as the deficiency of necessary or desirable ingredients or qualities in a thing or individual. My focus is on the "individual" with a mental deficiency or mental poverty. These are people with sufficient material wealth but for one reason or the other, are unable to connect the dots between their wealth and the indigents who desperately need their support. These people make plans for themselves, their children and generations yet unborn but when approached to assist indigents or orphans or homeless children on the streets, they do not see it as their responsibility. Infact, I am often *gobsmacked* when I approach the MDs of organisations for sponsorship and I am faced with similar responses – "what is in it for us" or "we all eventually become orphans you know" or "I lost my parents when I was a teenager and I suffered to be where I am today" or "why should we help you when charities in Nigeria are set up by people who just steal", etc. This is in spite of the bold "Corporate Social Responsibility" (CSR) page on their various websites, by the way.

These people appear to forget the information posted on their company websites or they are just completely oblivious to such information perhaps because all they had to do was to pay someone to build the website for them and made little effort to peruse the information contained therein. When these people give, they do so with a motive – to be noticed. Sadly, this "poverty mentality" has plagued our country for so long that we have lost all sense of commitment to others save for our family members (including those unborn). What we find therefore is the segregation between the indigents and the rich/affluent getting wider by the day and the nonchalant (or indeed, the total lack of it) sense of accountability even to the universe diminishing with every second. This I find alarming to say the least.

In the midst of all this however, there is HOPE. There are people, albeit, just a handful, who appreciate the concept of *charity* and the need to give back. Unfortunately, most of such people might not have the material wherewithal but they have a HEART that wants to SERVE and GIVE to the deserving and needy in

our society. Whether we like it or not, child labour continues to exist in our society. Whether we like it or not, the girl child continues to be abused in our society. Whether we like it or not, the orphans continue to litter our streets and whether we like it or not, indigents will continue to constitute a public nuisance as they run after your vehicle and mine begging for funds just to feed for the day. Some of them will get raped whilst running after cars and the next thing you find is such a girl having multiple births and the circle gets more vicious.

Whose Responsibility Is It?

So, whose responsibility is it to ensure a safer and indigent free society? Who is to be criticized for this menace, the Government, the Parents of these children (*for those of them who have parents*) or you and I? I think you will find, that the answer lies between the first and third options. The Government owes a responsibility to the society that they govern but the society also owes same responsibility to themselves. In any event, who makes up the government but you and I?

What therefore is the way forward when there is so much discouragement all around us? *OIF*, like many other *Foundations* and *NGOs* is at the mercy of givers. It is not enough to *wish* or *intend* to give. We need actual giving and actualized intentions to achieve our goal and make the dream of a child come true. Sarah's family is in desperate need of financial assistance and *OIF* is doing the little it can to assist. As part of the Foundation advocacy responsibilities, we are currently collaborating with Airtel Telecommunications and I am pleased to inform that through their Airtel Touching Lives, CSR arms, Airtel are considering assisting the family with basic necessities of life such as a home, education, etc. We will continue to update you on the involvement of Airtel in the welfare of the Ibikunle family.

"The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don't wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope". – Obama

So, as we go through life and we define the facts of our life on daily basis, how we live, our morals, what defines us and how our eventual story will be written, we invite you to become part of that story. We are therefore using this medium to appeal to the conscience of Nigerians to support us as we strive to make life a better place for some of the most vulnerable in our society. If only we can stop to think and indeed *stop painting everyone with the same brush*, maybe, just maybe then, we would begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel and the Doctor, Lawyer, Teacher, Actor, Sportsman, Accountant, Governor, Senator, etc that some of our "children" might turn out to be - with your assistance.

Thank you!

Genevieve Ikenchukwu
Editor - MINDS

SARAH, THE GIRL THAT NEVER LIVED

- from cradle to grave...still a child

On the evening of 16 March 2015 at approximately 5:30pm, my plane touched ground at the Muritala Mohammed Airport in Lagos from Heathrow Airport, London and upon settling into my vehicle, I was "greeted" with the harrowing story of the Lekki Armed Robbery incident a few days earlier - 12 March 2015 to be precise. According to my informant, the new Ikoyi/Lekki bridge had been "disvirgined" by this incident. The next morning, the incident was on the lips of everyone but the core of the story for me was the killing of an innocent child who had been hit by a stray bullet whilst trying to escape the mayhem. To some people she was a "10 year old orphan" and to others a "15 year old orphan". Whatever the age, 10 or 15 years, she was still a child whose life had been cut short in the most gruesome circumstances whilst doing what was expedient for hers and her family's survival - hawking on the streets of Lagos.



The story of this innocent girl has triggered a sudden realisation of the inherent and indeed, imminent danger to which our children are exposed on daily basis on our streets. May I also add that this danger to life on our streets cuts across the board irrespective of background but more so, to the likes of this young girl whose life was far from affluent or comfortable, not being chauffeur driven and shielded by daddy's retinue of guards and armed police men but of one, who by sheer necessity and perhaps fate, had to slap

the streets in the burning afternoons in order to provide for her family. This young girl knew nothing but poverty and hardship in her short life and never had an opportunity to know better or experience "the other side" of life, which is why this particular story is heartbreaking to me.

Since hearing this story, I have experienced all sorts of emotions from anger to sadness and even frustration. I have asked myself several questions such as "Who could these heartless beings be to have shot a little girl?" "Should she have been on the street at that time of the day in the first instance?" "How did she feel at the first impact of the bullet on her head?"

Whilst it would appear that the nation has "moved on" and everyone is going about their daily chores like this never happened, I could not get my head round the fact that a little girl had lost her life in such gruesome manner. I therefore felt I needed to affiliate with her aborted dreams and her family's grief. I thus embarked on the task of investigating and searching for the family of this beautiful soul to find out more about her and perchance, just perchance, be able to appeal to the conscience of our Government (and some individuals) to do something about the inherent danger to our children on our streets and most importantly, consider future plans to support this and other families in similar circumstances.

This is the story of Sarah Oluwakemi Ibikunle the little girl who never had the opportunity to live her full life.....

I was taken to the deceased's home by her uncle, Mr Tobi Ibikunle on 02 May 2015. On arriving the community, I stared directly into the ugly face of poverty. This is a community made up of sheds enshrined within the slums of Lekki phase 1.

We were ushered into the shed where Sarah's mother, Mrs Omolafe Blessing Ibikunle (the woman misunderstood to be her "aunty") and her sister, Oluwaseun Justina Ibikunle welcomed us. There was hardly enough space within to accommodate the five of us, i.e. myself, my

colleague, Sarah's uncle, mother and sister. So, her sister took her position at the entrance of the shed, just by the door and the rest of us squeezed into the shed. I stared into the face of a mother, who had just lost her last child and for once in my life, I was lost for words as I had never been confronted with such a situation neither had I prepared questions for my interview. What do you say to a mother who has just lost her child, not due to a natural cause or even starvation from poverty but as an innocent victim of an armed robbery? How do you find words to console a mother who is traumatised not only by the death of her child but consumed by the guilt that her child might still be alive if she had not sent her on that errand? After the strained pleasantries, Sarah's mother amidst tears gives me an insight into the life of Sarah.



The story begins here...*from cradle...*

My intention was to commence the below section with a photograph of Sarah as a baby. Unfortunately, the family was unable to provide me with a baby photograph of Sarah as some years ago, they lost all their belongings to a fire which engulfed their former abode. They managed to escape but lost everything, save, for their lives. At this juncture therefore, I will urge you readers, especially parents and in particular mothers, to form the picture of the birth of a perfect, chubby, adorably cute little and helpless baby in the arms of her mother as you follow me on the journey into the life and times of Sarah Ibikunle.

Sarah was born on 18 September 2001 in Lagos State. She was a healthy and beautiful baby with no infirmity or illness. She was the last of 5 children and had lost her father some years ago. At the age of 4 following her mother's ill health, Sarah was taken to live with her great-grandmother (her mother's grandmother) who took care of her until her own demise in 2010. Unfortunately, whilst

with her great-grandmother, Sarah had no formal education but desired one. Upon her return to Lagos, she was assessed as possessing the IQ of a child of less than 5 years of age and so, she was home schooled from 2011 to 2014. In 2014, her mother enrolled Sarah at the Itedo Community Primary School, a public school where she was again assessed as possessing the mental capacity of a primary 2 student and placed in that class. Her mother had wanted her to attend a private school but Sarah insisted on attending the public school and she was happy there. She sat the exams and got promoted to primary 3. She was thus in primary 3 at the age of 13 years when her peers were in secondary school but she was happy and did not mind being many years behind her peers. In fact, she loved every moment of her time in school. She was happy to be seen in her school uniform as to her, this was the ladder to becoming a lawyer, her dream profession. It did not matter to her that she was almost a decade older than her classmates. Unfortunately, that dream was never to become a reality for this beautiful soul. She told everyone who cared to listen to her of her ambition to become a successful lawyer someday. She even drew and wrote down her plans. She was hopeful and full of life and dreams. She sang, she laughed and saw her own future of being in black and white (a lawyer's robe, wig and bib) some day fighting the cause of the less privileged.



Illustrated by: Sarah Ibikunle

There was only one thing that threatened her bright future - her mother could not afford to keep



Tolaram Group

Indomie®

Instant Noodles

Tasty Nutrition. Good For You.

You Like No Other



MANUFACTURED BY: DE UNITED FOODS INDUSTRIES LIMITED: Km 4, Idiroko Rd, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria.
DUFIL PRIMA FOODS PLC: Unipoint Road, Choba, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. NORTHERN NOODLES LIMITED: 168, Refinery Industrial Layout, Kaduna, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

DISTRIBUTED BY: MULTI PRO ENTERPRISE LIMITED: 44, Jimoh Gbolake Street, Ikorodu, Lagos, Nigeria. Tel: 01-7736574

PORT HARCOURT: 119, Trans Amadi Industrial Layout, Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Tel: 064-236858

KANO: Plot No. 13, Independence Road, Doka Road, Kano, Nigeria. Tel: 064-6378802

ABUJA: 2, Leventis Close, Central Business District, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.

BENIN CITY: 205, Sapele Road, Benin City, Nigeria. Tel: 08077454115

GHANA: MULTI-PRO PRIVATE LIMITED: 28/2, Sanyo Road, Heavy Industrial Area, Tema Greater Accra, Ghana. Tel: +233244317557

BENIN: Platinum Enterprises Benin S.A. LOT 989 HINDE 2 PARCELLE J, COTONOU, BENIN. Tel: +22984025252

IVORY COAST: Platinum Enterprises Côte D'Ivoire Treichville Rue des Pecheurs 18 BP 3369, Abidjan 18, Ivory Coast. Tel: +22559826226

CAMEROON: Platinum Enterprises Cameroun SARL. Tel: +237652039191

KINSHASA: Platinum Enterprises Kinshasa SPRL. Tel: +243822726457



Making Life Taste Better!

Website: www.dufil.com

her in school and even though she attended a public primary school, she still needed to be able to support her family and to save for their future. The only way she knew to achieve this was by selling roasted fish. So, in order to assist her mother in shaping her future, Sarah often hawked her mother's roasted fish on the Lekki Admiralty way. Her routine therefore would be to go to school in the morning and upon her return in the afternoon, she would change into her "work clothe" and after lunch, left to hawk fish for her mother to return home anytime from 6pm. This was their main source of income and survival and at such tender age, Sarah had become a breadwinner. Despite this arduous lifestyle, Sarah, remained hopeful and to her, the end justified the means. All she saw was herself in black and white someday advocating the cause of others and with this image in mind, she took on each day's challenge with renewed vigour. Ironically, for a few hours everyday, she mingled with the middle class citizens of Lekki whilst hawking as she sold her mother's goods to them. She probably said to herself, "one day, that would be me in my corporate outfit, in my car.....".

...to grave - still a child...

On that fateful day, Sarah, as was the norm, chatted and got ready for school. According to her mother, save for a slight headache that she had during the day, there was nothing to suggest that their lives would change so drastically before the end of that day. It was just a normal day. When Sarah returned from school, she changed into her "work clothe" and picked up her fish tray ready to go hawking. She refused to take her lunch promising her mother that she would get lunch on her way.

**I Stand For
Children's
RIGHTS**

Apparently, she was almost done for the day and getting ready to go back home when she heard

the gun shots and realised there was robbery going on around her usual spot, inside the First City Monumental Bank (FCMB). She picked up her belongings and started to run away from the scene hoping to escape the mayhem. Alongside 3 police men on duty, Sarah was shot in the head whilst trying to escape the scene. She died instantly. With that one fatal shot, heaven gained one more angel, one that the earth could do with so desperately. How did she feel at the impact of the bullet to her skull? At the point when she was running away, was she scared and crying? Did she suspect that she might not make it? Had she even "died" from panic before she actually "died" being hit by bullet? Sarah Ibikunle, unknown, yet, most popular following the manner in which she exited this earth. She was only 14 years of age and would have been 15 in September 2015.

MESSAGE TO US ALL AND TO THE GOVERNMENT

The Case of Sarah Ibikunle calls for a reassessment of our individual and collective responsibilities to the welfare and safety of the youth and especially the underprivileged youth in our society. We have collectively failed them. We have sacrificed substance for form. Despite our being signatories to all manner of international protocols safeguarding the rights of children, we have fallen short in constructively taking steps to ensure that indeed "Children Rights are Human Rights".

Initially, I was optimistic when the Child Rights Law was promulgated. I thought that the time for regarding these vulnerable children as human beings deserving of equal rights has come. However, the case of Sarah Ibikunle, along with countless similar incidents shows clearly that whilst our governors are quick at adopting all manner of foreign laws, regulations and protocols, they are completely unequipped in making sure that these laws, guidelines, protocols are effectively implemented. The reason for this is not far fetched, simply put, we have "no political will" to implement.

There are provisions in the law that if implemented, would have certainly curtailed a situation in which a child becomes a breadwinner and deprived of the joys and playfulness of childhood. Where families are made to live below basic necessities of life, they are left with no choice but to resort to all manner of child abuse in order to survive. One just needs to visit and/or interact with the likes of the Ibikunles to realise that Government and indeed all of us have failed

in our responsibilities. These people live in completely inhabitable conditions. Their children are untrained, lack all form of leisure necessary for the full development of a child. If they are not killed by stray bullets, they are sexually abused by perverts or physically abused by frustrated parents, relatives or even teachers. The dangers are too numerous to mention and best left imagined.

As stated above, Nigeria is signatory to all sorts of International Treaties and Laws on Child Rights

and Violence towards children and women, not to mention the numerous domestic laws and policies in place supposedly for the same purpose. It is time for us to begin to implement these laws and act/speak out against VIOLENCE in our society. MAKE IT STOP!

Long live Nigeria. Long Live Delta State. Long Live Lagos State. Long Live the Kingdom of Agbor!

GENEVIEVE IKENCHUKUWU

(In memory of Sarah Ibikunle, victim of the Lekki armed robbery incident of 12 March 2015).

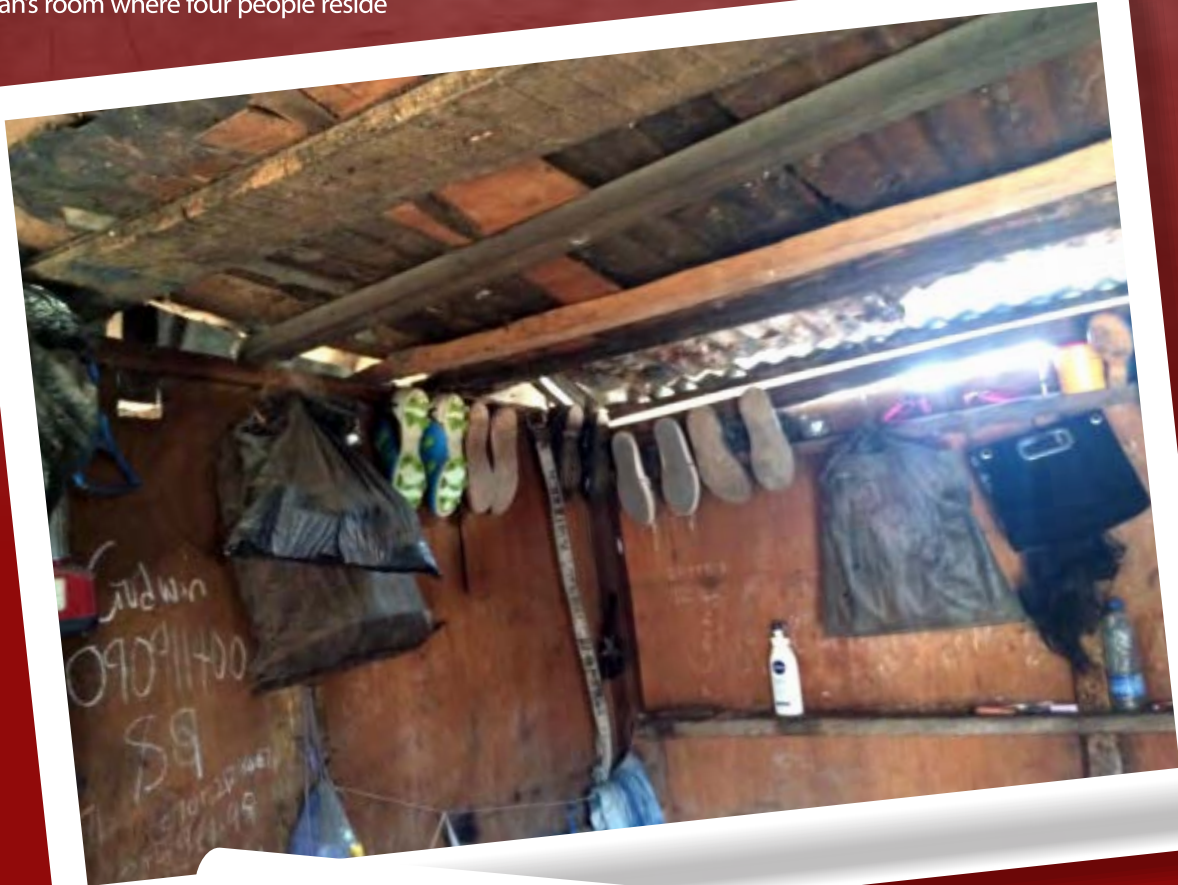


● Sarah's Sister sitting at the entrance of their abode



● From L-R: Justina (Sarah Ibikunle's Sister), Abigail (OIF Staff) Genevieve (OIF Founder), Mrs Ibikunle (Sarah's mum) Tobi Ibikunle (Sarah's uncle) and a relative during OIF visit in May 2015.

- Sarah's room where four people reside



- Genevieve and Mrs Ibikunle (Sarah's mum)



CNEICO NIGERIA LIMITED

Technical Support | Maintenance and Repairs | Operating Instructions



Cneico Nigeria Limited was founded over 50 years ago. We are a leading company in the supply, installation, and maintenance of high quality industrial machines and machine tools.

Over the years the company have provided world-class services to its numerous clients across all sectors of the Nigerian economy and neighbouring countries in the West African region.

We provide products and services to clients in the Construction, Engineering, Manufacturing, Agricultural sector.

We also render our services to private individuals.

For further information please contact:

Plot 8, Block E, Amuwo Odofin Industrial Layout
Mile 2, Badagry Expressway, Lagos, Nigeria
Tel: +234 (1) 7734317, +234 (1) 4546100, 2955503
Website: info@cneico.com



240 Litres DUSBIN

- Europe en 840 standard
- Volume 240 Litres
- Waterproof and UV resistance recycling bin
- Made of new HDPE
- Resistant to heat, frost, decay, chemicals
- Rounded corners, for easy and perfect cleaning
- Complies with en840 norms
- Solid Durable rubber tyres
- Lid attached to body with 4 separate solid pins

CHILD RIGHTS

- Nigerian perspective (myth or reality)

“Easier to prepare a Child than to repair an adult”

There is no universally accepted legal definition of a child though there are Statutes concerning children which contain relevant definition of the word child. It is safe therefore for the purpose of this presentation to adopt the definition of the word "Child" as defined in two International Instruments namely the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 and the Organisation of African Unity Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1991 both of which Nigeria is a signatory. Under Article 11 of the latter a Child means every human being below the age of 18 years and the same definition obtains for the former.

It is universally accepted that the Child is the foundation of the society and he or she assures it's continuity. It is therefore expected that the protection, preservation, nurture and development of the Child is key to any nation. The rights of the Child in Nigeria is guided by our Municipal laws and enshrined in sections 33-46 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 and the Child Rights Law 2007.

It is not practical to set out the Child Rights Law in this presentation but I will address a universally acceptable list of Child Issues.

CHILD ISSUES- consist of some of the following (and definitely not limited to these):

1. Abuse- child abuse is a day after day occurrence and sadly a high percentage of these abuse are perpetrated within the family by the closest of kin or by the teachers in schools. To curb this drastic steps need to be taken and children require education to identify the offender and get help from people they can trust.

2. Neglect- the lack of family cohesion such as divorce, strife, domestic violence has prolonged effect on the growth of children. The constant quarrels among parents and lack of care for children lead to loneliness, stress, depression and

decadence among children. This in turn affects their personality development. Another cause of Child neglect is that in our present society both the parents are working resulting in less time for parents and children to come together.

3. Migrant Children - the quest for greener pastures and the need for economic survival causes a lot of criss-crossing of children from rural to urban areas. The wage earning possibility in the urban areas triples that of rural areas. This sees many families co-opting their children to help in working in small scale industries, households etc.



4. Child Labour and Beggary - children are subjected to exploitation and hazardous conditions such as farm hands, domestic helps etc. Children work due to demand for cheap labour, many work to help their parents and other adults in the family, in some instances of extreme poverty families "sell" their children to contractors who promise the children lucrative jobs in cities. Tragically they end up being employed in brothels, domestic work whilst others run away and end up as street children where they engage in rummaging for recyclables from rubbish dumps in order to sell the recyclables for little to nothing to enable them buy food for sustenance. They also engage in street vending, begging, prostitution, etc. The major impact of child labour relate to both education and health. These Child labourers

forfeit their right to schooling and other training and also denied the opportunity to play and rest. Health wise many suffer from exhaustion and work related injury and other physiological afflictions.

HOW HAS THE NIGERIAN CHILD FARED?

There appears to be a gap between law and practice resulting in gross inability of the Child to realise its rights. Child labour and abuses are still rampant and most streets are still plagued by street children and child beggars. Sexual harassment and abandonment are still rampant and children are still exposed to physical and moral insecurity. Many parents because of the quest for survival abandon their children for economic gains. Children are trafficked from their villages to urban areas and are turned into breadwinners at the detriment of their education. According to the U.S Department of Labour, 31% (approx 14,000,000.00) children of Nigerian aged 5-14 years old are working children who engage in forced labour in various sectors . In Nigeria around 43% of women are married under 18 years old.



It is painful to admit that Nigeria still pays lip service to protection of Child Rights. A fairly recent event underscores this. The Senate had embarked on the amendment of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Amongst several discussions, Sections 26- 32 of the Constitution which deal with citizenship came under review. Section 29(1) provides " any citizen of Nigeria of full age who wishes to renounce his Nigerian Citizenship shall make a declaration in the prescribed manner for the renunciation". Section 29(4)(a) and (b) provides- " for the purposes of subsection (1) of this Section: (a) "full age" means the age of 18 years and above;(b) any woman who is married shall be deemed to be of full age". The Senate voted to remove the latter,

that is Section 29(4)(b) and the majority carried the day. However Senator Ahmed Yerima of Zamfara raised an objection on the ground that the removal of the provision was "un-Islamic". He mobilised certain like-minded in the Senate and got the amendment put to vote and by a majority of two-thirds the Section remains in the Constitution. The same Senator in 2009 got himself a 13 year old Egyptian bride.



An area which has recorded a high percentage of failure to meet up with the protection of Children's Rights is in the offence of rape. There have been relatively few prosecutions especially in areas of Child rape, defilement, sexual abuse. The Family Court system which deals with issues concerning the Child is characterised by the unrealistic demand of burden of proof hence even where it is clear that a Child's Rights has indeed been infringed in cases as rape or defilement, the perpetrator usually goes free because of the unrealistic burden of proof.

Despite the prevalence of rape only a little fraction end up in the Courts and of course because of the inability or lack of logistics to gather evidence and the unrealistic burden of proof especially with minors unable to communicate most cases are lost and victims set free. The cultural indifference to rape results in a lack of community support for victims, discouraging them from reporting rape. The situation is worse where the victim is a young girl, whose decision making power is still dependent upon her parents or guardians taking the initiative. Such attitudes indicate the ignorance of the impact of rape on the victim (physically, psychologically, post traumatic disorders, unwanted pregnancies and maternal mortality). People believe a victim suffers nothing from rape, a point demonstrated by the fact that even when a rapist settles with compensation, it is not actually given to rehabilitate the victim but to her

family instead. A school of thought is of the opinion that reconciliation between the rapist's family and the victim's family is a better method for handling rape cases than seeking recourse in Courts of law. A Court case involves complicated, time consuming procedures, the law is burdensome for the victim (as a witness), and the result is rarely a conviction. This writer however differs and would rather tilt towards a combination of both because whilst reconciliation appears seamless it not only fails to sufficiently redress the problems of the victim but also fails to prevent future occurrence.

Another obstacle to the effective implementation of the legislation on Child Rights is the Police, many of whom do not know the law despite efforts to educate them and they often treat reported Child Rights infractions as they will adult cases.

The Police response to Child Rights issues must be dynamic and revolutionary to ensure that cases reported to the Police are speedily forwarded to the Directorate of Social Services with whom they are meant to interface where it concerns Children and if need be prosecution of offenders in Court.

CONCLUSION

For the Child Rights Law to make sense, it must be mixed with enlightenment. The goal of enlightenment is Child protection social Policing whereby every primary and secondary custodian within the four institutions (family, community, State and International Community) responsible for the protection of the Child are equipped with knowledge, skills and attitude.

It is high time our Courts begin to interpret the Child Rights Law in light of social reality and consistent with the spirit of the International Protocol on Child Rights as opposed to judicial restraint in which the Courts apply rules formally and consistently, unconcerned with the larger issues of social justice. The Police should be re-orientated with regards to handling issues concerning children as they are the first official point of contact for report of abuse of children or even children in conflict with the law. It is this first contact that will determine the success or otherwise of the report. With concerted effort on the part of all stakeholders the Child will indeed grow up to be the future upon which society continues to build.

OLUFOLAKE OSHIN

(Chief Magistrate Lagos State Judiciary)





Affinity

NATURAL DRINKING WATER

So pure, so natural



Enhance your daily living with nature's gift to mankind.
Affinity Natural Drinking Water in its pure form gives you multiple nourishment your body requires as you quench that thirst!



For enquiries please call: 08100000923, 08182008228

THE ROLE OF CHILDREN SERVICES IN ENGLAND AND WALES TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN

Mention child protection to any lawyer, Social Worker, teacher or other person who regularly comes into contact with children in England & Wales and it won't be long before they mention the Children Act 1989. The Act is the leading piece of legislation concerning children, and it came into force in 1991. It brought together under one roof an array of definitions, duties and provision concerning children, some of which are discussed further below. The Act, together with the subsequent 2004 Children Act, charges Local Authority (local government) with overarching responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people in their area. They have a number of statutory functions under both Acts. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

This domestic provision for child protection can be set in the context of wider international obligations. The European Convention on Human Rights, incorporated into Law by the Human Rights Act 1998 is crucial because of the right to a family life, which may only be interfered with where necessary to do so and in a proportionate way. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, was ratified by the UK government in 1991 (but never directly incorporated in Law as the European Convention was). The UNCRC provides a child-centred framework for the development of services to children, provides for their right to be protected, to participation (rights to expression and receiving information) and to provision.

The regime in more detail – available protective measures

The Children Act 1989 sets out the specific protective measures Social Workers can take to safeguard children, including initiating

proceedings to remove a child from the care of his/her parents. Some of the key tools/interventions and steps that professionals can take are as follows:-

Section 20 accommodation - Some children in need may require the state to provide accommodation because there is no one who has parental responsibility for them, because they are lost or abandoned or because the person who has been caring for them is prevented from providing them with suitable accommodation or care. Accommodation may be with a foster carer or in some cases a residential setting. The ultimate aim is to reunite the child with a parent or extended family member following social work assessment and recommended interventions to ensure necessary change has taken place, so that "good enough" care will be provided to the child. If there is no suitable carer, the Local Authority initiates proceedings to make long-term plans for the care of the child until his/her maturity.



Strategy discussion - whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm, a strategy discussion involving Children's Services, the Police, Health and any other body is convened.

These meetings enable professionals to share information, and to see if Children's Services should initiate an enquiry under section 47 (see below) and to consider the need for legal action to protect the child whether now or in the future.

Section 47 enquiry - Social Workers have a duty to lead assessments under this section. The Police, health professionals, teachers and other relevant professionals help the Local Authority in undertaking its enquiries. Social Workers are responsible for deciding what action to take and how to proceed following the enquiry. Where concerns of significant harm are substantiated and the child is judged to be suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm, they should convene an **initial child protection case conference** at which family members and professionals most involved with the family are brought together. The aim is to make decisions about the child's future safety, health and development having brought together and analyse all relevant information. Key Conference tasks can include drawing up a **child protection plan**.



The aim is to ensure the child is safe from harm, prevent him or her from suffering further harm and to promote the child's health and development. The plan also is designed to support immediate and wider family to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child, provided this is in the best interests of the child. The Social Worker is the lead professional for work with the

child and family, and completes an in-depth 'Child and Family' assessment. A review of the progress of plan (a child protection review conference) must be held within 3 months of the initial conference. This is an important marker for professionals, the family and the child. The review considers whether the child is continuing to suffer, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Options to the review conference include continuing the plan, amending the plan (in either case a further review must occur within 6 months) or commencing court proceedings, if sufficient change has not occurred and is not deemed likely AND the child is considered to be suffering significant harm.

Court proceedings under The Children Act 1989

Where there is risk to the life of a child or a likelihood of serious immediate harm, Social Workers use their statutory child protection powers to **act immediately to secure the safety of the child**. Firstly, if it is necessary to remove a child from their home, a local authority must, wherever possible and unless a child's safety is otherwise at immediate risk, apply for an **Emergency Protection Order (EPO)** by which authority to remove a child from his/her parent(s) is given and the Local Authority shares parental responsibility for the child. This is a serious and draconian remedy and the Court must be satisfied that this is a fair and proportionate approach taking into account the Human Rights Act 1989. Where a Local Authority has serious concerns about the safety or welfare of a child, it can apply to the court to take a child into care by seeking an **Interim Care Order (ICO)**. The Authority has to satisfy the court that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm from the way he/she is being looked after by his/her parent(s), or where the child is beyond parental control. The basis for such an application may be that the Local Authority believes a child is being **neglected**, and this involves ongoing, serious failure to meet a child's basic needs. It may be that a child is being abused. **Abuse** includes physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse. **Emotional abuse** occurs when a parent behaves in a way that is likely to seriously affect the child's development, and can include constant rejection, continual, severe criticism and witnessing domestic violence. Again the Court must consider the human rights implications of granting any such application for an **ICO**.

Parents are given notice of a court application, and they can instruct a solicitor to represent them. The child too is represented by his/her solicitor and a Social Worker (not from the Local Authority) known as the child's Guardian. The Guardian will provide the court with a view on behalf of the child as to desirable assessments, and will make a recommendation as to what is in the child's best interests in terms of future care.



During care proceedings in-depth assessment of parents and extended family are undertaken by Social Workers and often other experts e.g. psychologists, to assess if they are able to provide "good enough" care to the child in the long term. Where a suitable long-term carer cannot be identified for the child, then he/she is made the subject of a full **Care Order**.

This continues until the child is 18 years old. A **Care Order** enables the Local Authority to provide long-term alternative care outside of the family by way of fostering, residential placement or adoption.

A further order permitting a child to be placed with adoptive carers and ultimately to become their adopted child is necessary to complete a plan of adoption. Issues of birth parents' consent to adoption have to be considered, and the court is able to dispense with their consent to an adoption on welfare grounds if deemed necessary.

Concluding thoughts

The above is a canter through the system in England & Wales. This brief overview highlights the following:

- Information sharing between professionals and across services is key to the protection of children and to meeting children's needs;
- Working with families, setting timescales and assessing change is a key part of the process of safeguarding;
- Child protection and safeguarding is complicated and challenging, but nevertheless effort has to be made and sustained to create a workable and transparent system for children and families.

MANMINDER K. MANGAT

Solicitor & Expert on Children and Adult Services, London Borough of Hounslow, London.

The girl orphan and her fluid identity

How does the girl orphan self-define? As just a simple unfortunate girl whom circumstances have conspired to buffet? No one appears to know the internal workings of her mind. But it is not always hard to see a discrepancy between her self-definition and the sticky identity externally thrust on her by the more favourably circumstanced society. Chronicler, Trevor McClaughlin in his *'Barefoot and Pregnant?: Irish Famine Orphans in Australia'*, once documented the story of one Mary. Just Mary - for it is sometimes the case that the surname of the girl orphan hardly matters! Between October 1848 and August 1850, over 4,000 female orphans arrived in Australia from Irish workhouses as part of Earl Grey's pauper immigration scheme. Mary was one of them. She might have reckoned herself just a little girl orphan lucky to have survived the Irish famine.

But historians Hayes and Urquhart were later to tell us that the orphans were *erroneously equated with prostitutes in the public mind*. Only the girl orphan, unguarded by parental hedges, who knows indeed that she is saner and sometimes purer than the ill-clad inscription that larger society unrepentantly bestows.

It even gets messier getting to know that locational movement (and they could be many in the girl orphan's life) merely digs a hole to cover a hole. So it was that our Mary left the workhouses of Ireland to work as a kitchen maid for James Boucher, an Australian farmer of Geelong!

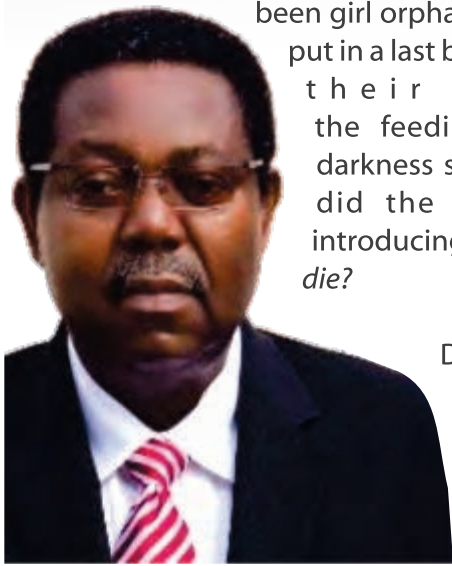
Except where her future is charted as one would have one's own done, the girl orphan has prodigal room in her heart to agitate over the vicious horizon that tomorrow and many more days after flag. 1994 is still fresh in our minds.



Kevin Carter's 1994 Pulitzer Prize-winning photo of a Sudanese girl dying during famine. Carter became depressed and committed suicide 3 months later.

South African photographer, Kevin Carter took this photo of a Sudanese girl who, an hair's range away from death, had lost all chances of getting to United Nations food camp during a famine. Her life was petering away; the vulture was beholding correctly! In step with the nature of captive humanity, the photographer had done his work, hurrying away to capture other stories! He had won the 1994 Pulitzer Prize; and the United Nations had wound up a *successful* mission. And by the time the right questions began to be asked around the globe, it was robustly feared the vulture had feasted.

But the logic did not escape us: if she had not been girl orphan, her parents would have put in a last breathe effort to bear her in *their arms* to the feeding camp! Just before darkness set in permanently for her, did the girl salute the world, introducing herself as *one about to die*?



Did the world differently identify her? What a

festering difference! Luckily, it is said that the best exercise for the heart is to bend down many times a day to help someone in need. As our girl orphans who collectively self-define as we who are about to die salute the larger society, may OIF in partnership with the stroke of Providence continue to acknowledge these pale salutations and bend down to give lasting succour. Even when *the harvests of yesterday were stolen; those of today are being stolen; and the land remains to yield tomorrow* as Kole Omotosho once said, let it be said that the solid foundation these orphans are being given today stands them in good stead. And for long!

JULIUS ADAGBON -Trustee
CEO, Orado Technologies



Melka West Africa Limited

The Marine Company of Choice



Melka West Africa is an indigenous company solely into the provision of marine, logistic and support Service provider, both from offshore to onshore and vice-versa. We operate fleets of offshore support vessels, serving the offshore oil and gas exploration and production industry.

The M/V Naomi Princess, a sophisticated marine tug boat was acquired by Melka West Africa in 2015.

The M/V Naomi Princess provides for easy line handling, crude oil tanker services and offshore stop gap work site.

Melka West Africa Limited

No 1A Wole Ariyo Street, Off Admiralty Way, Lekki Phase 1, Victoria Island, Lagos-Nigeria
Tel: +234-01 2710730, +234 8034022472 Fax: +234-01-2710731
www.melka-wa.com

SPORT and the CHILD

SPORT... it has been my lifeblood for as long as I can remember!

To explain what it has truly meant and the opportunities it has given me would occupy much more space than I have been allowed. I am however honoured to be able to write these few words in aid of a very worthy cause.

The sense of belonging, achievement and satisfaction coupled with a physical empowerment which I believe every human being needs whether child or adult has been made available to me through involvement with sport and in particular football. For those privileged to have had the choices and chances, they are the fortunate ones. The ones denied through neglect in many forms should be given the avenue wherever possible to partake in order if they wish to fulfil their own dreams. With 21st century 24 hour media the exposure is huge and must be ever more frustrating for those who see but cannot do!! A 10 year old boy in Agbor or 6 year old girl in Lagos surely has the right as much as any other child from any country to live the dream! With the help of the "Obi Ikenchukwu Foundation" (OIF) we can make this come true.

Being social creatures, humans crave interaction and the sense of bonding is the ultimate goal for all of us. Sport builds character, allows us to care, share and be dependent on one another in

extreme physical circumstances whilst enjoying at the same time. One has only to see the joy and laughter on the faces of the world's best performers to see what it can bring. As a Continent and a Nation we are still playing 'catch up' in many areas with other parts of the world. Sport can be and is the great 'equaliser' individually and collectively and can fast track a nation as a whole!

Travelling to parts of the world that otherwise would have been just a dream has been achievable for me, through playing and now broadcasting which is something I never thought of as a child. There was nothing special about my circumstances as a young boy, I was just given the chance. Give our children the same and they too will take it.

I have never lost the passion for engaging and assisting especially children for sporting activities. With the help of OIF and their initiatives, they too can dare to believe that anything is possible. With perseverance and encouragement, social and sporting assistance can produce better lives.

This is why I fully support OIF and hope that you will too!

Regards

EFAN EKOKU - Footballer & BBC International Football Commentator/anchorman





MULTI-TREASURE COLLEGE

Multi-Treasure College is committed to providing an education of excellence that will bring out the best in every student to become a responsible and productive citizen. We are skilled at helping to develop the potential in your child and bringing out the best.



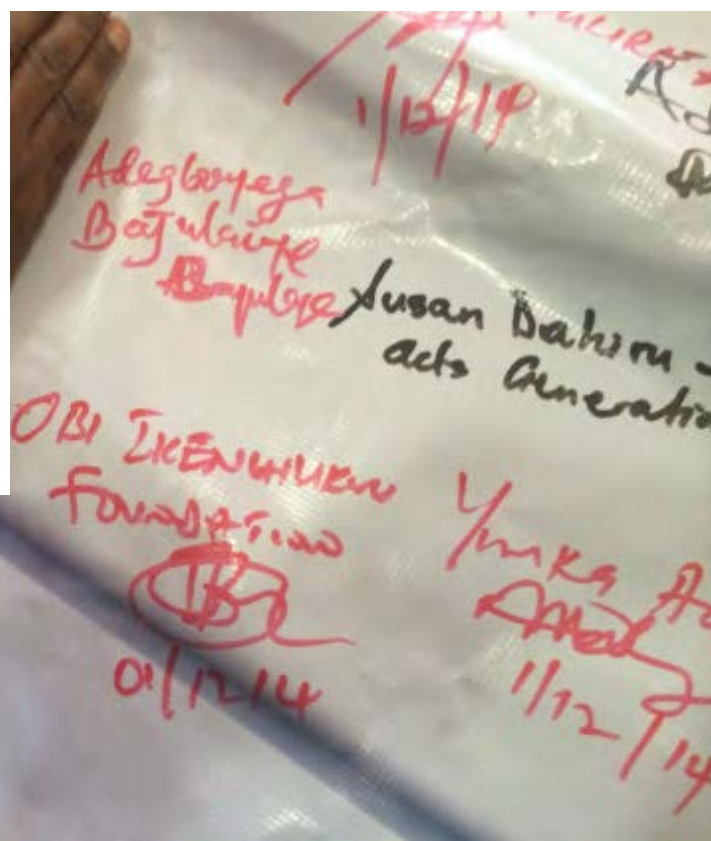
MULTI-TREASURE COLLEGE

**IS FAMOUS FOR THE PROVISION OF
HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION.**

For enquiries, please call:

07025337881, 08034345245 or Mail: jiniabulele@yahoo.com

Saliu Obodo St, Lekki, Victoria Island - Lagos State.



● The Obi Ikenchukwu Foundation (OIF) being a signatory to the Sex Offender Register in Lagos State (December 2014)



● The Sex Offender Register being signed by the former Deputy Governor of Lagos State Mrs. Sarah Adebisi Sosan while the Former Governor, Mr. Babatunde Fashola (SAN) looks on

Passion nurtured by social justice

I would like to seize this opportunity to congratulate the OIF management team and our sponsors for launching this maiden issue of MINDS journal. Thank you once more for your generous sponsorship. Your support is very much appreciated by everyone connected to the MINDS journal and indeed the entire OIF family.

This journal examines issues such as Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Child Abuse in general, *inter alia*. It exposes major human rights violation against these groups of individuals within our society and beyond. This fact is evident in our slogan "*Our voice, the change*". It also assesses the legal regimes in England and Wales and Nigeria as they relate to these areas of law.

Regrettably, whilst the English regime has been able to address most of the issues, the same cannot be said for the Nigerian regime on the other hand. One of the main reasons being the unequal power relations between men and women hinged on patriarchal leanings of society. Take for instance the issue of early marriage or sex

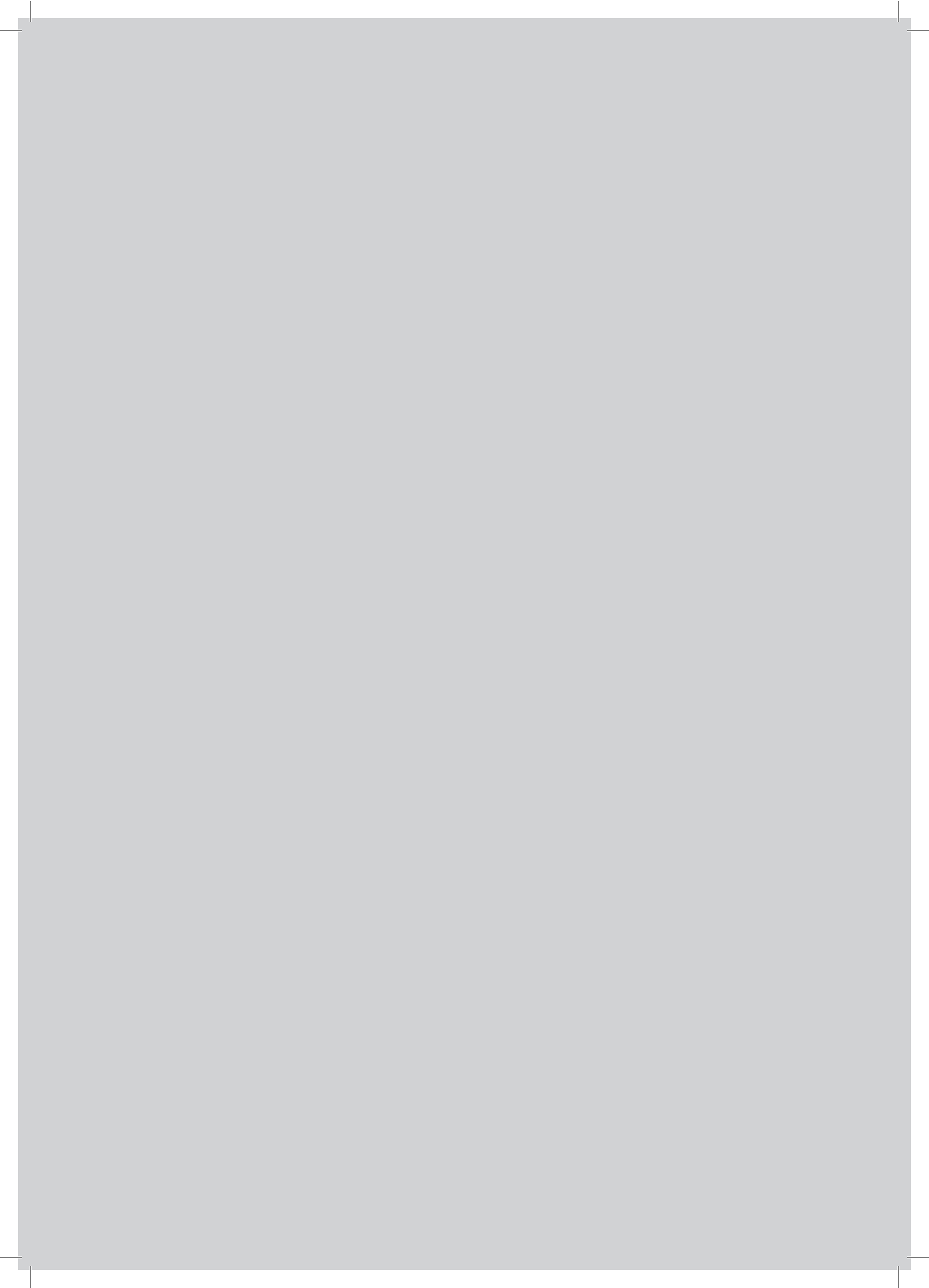
selection which are now major epidemics plaguing Nigeria as a nation. Of a major concern for instance is the provision of Section 29(4)(b) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (As amended) which provides the age of maturity for women for the purpose of marriage to be 18 and above. Despite this provision, the evidence remains that some of our lawmakers have taken for themselves "*children*" as young as 13 years old as wives.

I will rest my case on this issue just for the moment as I intend to develop this story in the next issue of MINDS and I invite you to come along with me!

We hope you enjoyed reading the articles contained herein. We promise that subsequent issues will cover a lot more challenging and exciting topics and we look forward to *seeing* you again.

Safiya Ahmed

Lawyer/OIF Event Coordinator



OBI IKENCHUKWU FOUNDATION®



Beautiful minds... realised dreams.