

Children and Youth in the Labour Process in Africa

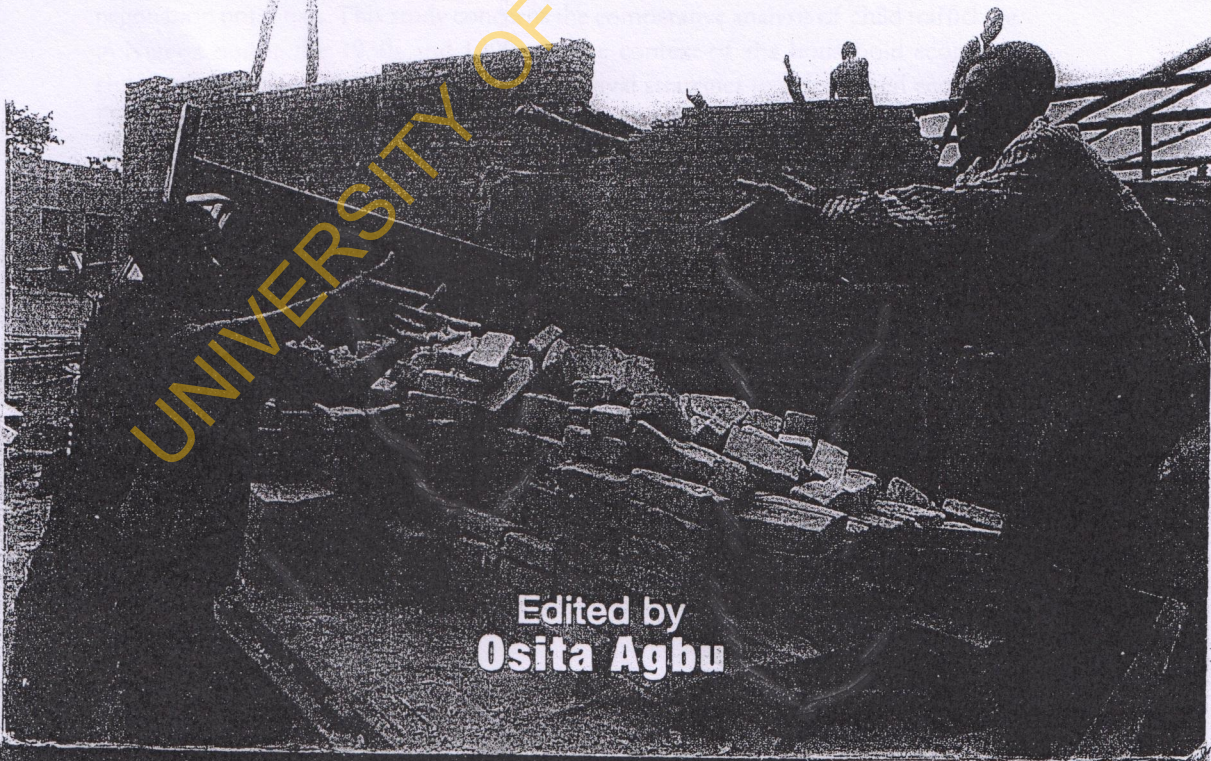
Economic Crisis and Child Labour

Report Draft

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Economic Crises and Child Trafficking in Nigeria: A Comparative Analysis of the 1930s and 1990s

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Introduction

Arising out of debates over child trafficking and economic crises, this study compares two experiences of child trafficking during economic crises in Nigeria in the 1930s and 1990s. Under pervasive economic regimes children of marginalized social groups became targets of traffickers. This study offers an empirical investigation and suggests that child trafficking was propelled by economic crises and poverty in historical periods and in different economic phases. In a depressed economy, child trafficking became crucial in the labour process because of the cheap nature and lack of negotiation potentials. This study concerns the comparative analysis of child trafficking in Nigeria during the 1930s and 1990s. In the context of the household economy, child trafficking and child labour became survival strategies in a depressed economy. During periods of economic crises, many people find it difficult to fulfil social obligations and sustain themselves and their families. Economic deterioration pushed children into the labour process as vulnerable groups struggled to survive. Child trafficking enjoys parental consent, which considerably contributed to the meagre income of the family. There existed huge a market for children in the labour process and an abundant supply was ensured by poor families who fell prey to traffickers seeking to make profit by exploiting their vulnerability.

How does economic crisis explain child trafficking? Are there differences or similarities in the pattern of child labour and trafficking in the 1930s and 1990s? What is the nature of the trafficking network? Are anti-trafficking and child labour laws sufficient to track the menace? This study aims to determine the linkage between economic crises and trafficking; ascertain if there are differences or similarities in the pattern of child trafficking in the 1930s and 1990s; examine the nature of trafficking network; and ascertain the relevance of the anti-trafficking and child

labour laws. The significance of the study lies in its focus, which brings a historical perspective to bear on the role of children in the labour process in Nigeria, through a parallel study of the linkages between economic crises and child trafficking in the 1930s and the 1990s. It is therefore significant to the extent that it takes a retroactive look at the genesis of the phenomenon prior to the post-colonial era in Nigeria. Secondly, its critical examination of this issue in the 1990s, especially in terms of the nature of the networks and the possible roles played by official institutions, serves as a source of critical information for the NGOs engaged in advocacy and intervention as well as for the formulation of anti-trafficking and child labour policies.

In terms of existing knowledge, child trafficking has become a major concern of human rights organizations, feminist activists and scholars researching its effects on the lives of women and youths. Many scholarly works and policy papers exist on the rising incidence of child trafficking in Nigeria, but none consider it as a historical continuity of exploitation experienced by marginalized families or communities during economic crises engendered by the capitalist mode of production. Ubah (1991, 1992) discusses the efforts of the colonial government in tracking child trafficking and resettling the victims. Lovejoy and Hogendorn (1993), provide an historical analysis of child trafficking within the context of the colonial legislation against slavery and the slave trade in northern Nigeria. But these works discuss only the problems of child labour within the colonial context, whereas the present study intends to bridge the lacuna by studying the contemporary patterns in comparison with the 1930s.

Dottridge (2002) argues that poverty is a central factor in the decision of parents to send their children away to work. He contends that children fleeing poverty or seeking better prospects are manipulated, deceived and bullied into working conditions that they would not choose. However, the causes of child labour are more complex than just poverty. The causes of child labour can be studied within the economic structure and production relations in which it occurs.

From a political economy perspective, it can be concluded that the trajectory of capitalist development has pushed young men and women into slavery and bonded labour. The driving forces in the commodification of women, for instance, were the advance of capital over labour and nation states, economic recession, neo-liberal political transition and corruption (Olaniyi 2003). This work focuses mainly on sex work and trafficking in the 1990s. The hope is that the present research will bridge the lacuna that exists in the literature.

Methodology

For this study, interviews and observation methods were utilized. Archival documents and content analysis of newspapers as well as magazines constituted other sources of materials. In Kano, research visits and interviews were held at the Malam Aminu Kano International Airport, Kano; the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the Nigerian Immigration Service; and the Motherless Children Home, which served as a resettlement base for trafficked victims in order to decipher the magnitude of the trafficking and the statistics of deported victims. I interviewed officials of the Nigerian

Immigration Service, where I observed the handling of cases of child trafficking, deported children and young women and cases of missing children working as domestic servants or babysitters. I visited and interviewed NGOs that engaged in the campaign against child trafficking in Kano State, particularly the Kano State Branch of the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF). Interviews were conducted, albeit through deception, with child trafficking agents in order to know the source areas, social conditions of the children and working conditions and profits of the traffickers. I also observed within my neighbourhood how children in the labour process ran errands from morning till dawn, often appearing unkempt and sustaining injuries from episodic battering (see my interview with Abdullahi Oseni, a 10-year-old domestic servant in note 30). I interviewed some employers of the trafficked girls who informed me that some of the girls were often withdrawn by their parents after having accumulated enough for the purpose of early marriages. Data for child trafficking in the 1930s were obtained from the National Archives, Kaduna (NAK) and in a couple of published works. For the 1990s, I relied on oral interviews, personal observations and content analysis of newspapers, magazines and reports.

Child Trafficking in the 1930s: When Children were Sold for Food

Globally, the 1930s was a period of depression. The Great Depression was triggered by fiscal crisis, structural disequilibria and the collapse of stock prices at the New York Stock Exchange (Abdulkadir 2004:1). In Nigeria, the 1930s was a devastating period for the colonized, which witnessed economic exploitation under British rule. The depression marked a significant decrease in government revenue, as expenditure diminished and capital projects were halted. Nigeria's gross income in 1928 was 198 per cent higher than that of 1929, plummeting from £74 million to £25 million; while gross expenditure in 1932-3 decreased by 28 per cent from £6.9 million to £5 million (Abdulkadir 2004:1). The fiscal crises were further complicated by the policy of 'lending' and 'exporting' money from the already depressed Nigerian economy to other British colonies. Between 1930 and 1934, out of the Northern Nigeria Native Administration's surplus of £5,589,270 5s. 2d., about 44.87 per cent, amounting to £2,508,354 1s. 9d., was invested in Crown Colonies, Ceylon, Singapore, Trinidad, New Zealand and Australia. Indeed, the drastic fall in structural saving and foreign investments systematically reduced the velocity of money and triggered social misery and widespread poverty.

Between 1929 and 1934, prices of agricultural products plummeted. The Lagos price of palm kernel dropped from £21 per ton in 1929 to £14 in 1930 (a fall of 33.33 per cent); it continued to drop, reaching £7 in 1934 (a fall of 66.66 per cent); cotton prices also declined by 66.66 per cent, from 2.25d. per 1b in the 1928/9 buying season to 0.75d. in 1930/1; and the average price of groundnuts fell by a comparable 62.4 per cent, from £12 18s. per ton in the 1927/8 buying season to £4 17s. in 1930/1, and by 1933/4 it was only 54.63 per cent of the 1927/8 price, decreasing to £2 13s. (Abdulkadir 2004:2).

During the Great Dépression, the grave financial conditions lead to reduction of staff wages and salaries, and indeed massive unemployment. Certain allowances for bicycle and horses were reduced during the 1931–2 fiscal year. In the 1930s, forced labour was retained for the execution of public works. There was an imposition of additional taxation in the form of special 'fees', with the alternative of compulsory labour in default of payment. According to Shea and Abdulkadir,

... (T)he real incomes of agricultural producers declined sharply both because their cash incomes from the sale of the produce declined and because the prices of any imported goods which they were able to consume became relatively more expensive... (Shea and Abdulkadir 1987: 6).

In the 1930s in Nigeria, there were tax deficiencies, overestimation, embezzlements and increases in taxation despite the economic difficulties. Children, old people, the destitute and sick people were all taxed. The burden of taxation led to massive migration to areas of economic opportunities. Economic disparities between regions and provinces further led to huge migration flows. The migration of adult males owing to taxation gave rise to child labour and trafficking in the farming areas of Bida and Lapai. During the 1935–6 fiscal year, there was high taxation imposed on the people while on the part of the Native Authorities and District Heads there was an increase in embezzlement.

Survival strategies became polarized along class categories. Among the impoverished masses, trading and trafficking in children became accelerated as economic crises intensified. Embezzlement of public funds among district heads and tax collectors became endemic on an unprecedented scale. For example, there were 30 districts in Kano Emirate with 1205 Village Heads. Tax deficiencies occurred in only three districts, caused by defalcations of five Village Heads, of whom three were brought to trial, convicted and given sentences of one or two months' imprisonment, and two absconded. In the period 1927–30, a total of over £441 was embezzled in the Kano Emirate.

In the 1930s, child trafficking was the direct by-product of economic crises and the British policy to abolish the legal status of slavery. The trade continued for at least three decades despite steady pressure from the colonial regime and the League of Nations to end it. Children became slaves as a result of pawnship (the pledging of a third person for debt), kidnapping and slave raiding – the very methods of enslavement that had operated before the imposition of British rule. Among the Yorùbá in Western Nigeria, pawning was a credit as well as educational institution. Wealthy men pawned their unruly children for paltry sums of money in order that they might be properly trained on another man's farm and to give the impression that there was no money in their family. When a man was in dire need of money to defray the expenses of a funeral, marriage or chieftancy ceremony, he was customarily at liberty to pawn his son. Pawn children, *iwofa*, carried out domestic work such as tending horses, drawing water for housewives, chopping wood for cooking, but retained the liberty of sports and holidays like the children of their master.

Under British rule, more children were trafficked through pawnship than hitherto practised. Pawnship showed no signs of disappearing well into the depression of the 1930s. Children became slaves as a result of the debts of their parents or other kin, often during famines. Parents, and occasionally other kin when children were orphaned, used the children as pawns to secure food or money to buy food. The famines of 1903–4, 1907–8 and 1913–14 were particularly central, and there was a resurgence of pawning during the depression of the 1930s. For example, as Webster noted in 1916,

the recrudescence of slave dealing amongst the Mumuye ... may be attributed to the famine in 1914 which aggravated the natural tendency of these tribes to sell their children, whom they look on as their natural currency (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993:264).

Economic crises among the Mumuye in 1916 had forced them to pawn over 60 children through pledges by their relatives for a trifle of food or pittance of money in times when food was scarce. Child traffickers often made an initial payment of 5s. to the parents; thereafter the creditors had difficulty collecting more. In 1921, child trafficking was observed in the economically plagued Al-Kaleri district of south-west Bauchi as adoption on payment carried on between the parents and the neighbouring Fulani. Kidnapping of children with the intent to enslave or sell as slaves was also common. For example, the Mumuye not only pawned their children but also could not protect them from kidnappers (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993:265). It was observed that the smaller the children were the better, provided they had been weaned.

In 1924, officials of Yola in the Adamawa Province claimed that it was impossible to stamp out kidnapping of young girls and children as villages acted as child trafficking depots. During the period of economic distress, child traffickers promised to maintain the parents if they would permit them to 'adopt' and train their boys as servants and girls for 'marriage'.

In the 1930s, child stealing, slave dealing and sales of children were common phenomena. Among the Idoma of Benue, child stealing for purposes of sale to Southern Nigeria burgeoned at this time. In the Benue Province, 42 persons were convicted for trading in children and child labour. By 1934, there was extensive trafficking in children in the Nassarawa Emirate. There was equally extensive trafficking in children in Panchin Division of Plateau Province whereby parents sold their children to Fulani pastoralists and farmers.

The British considered child trafficking a gross contravention of the anti-slave trade and slavery laws. Traffickers faced sentences that ranged from two to fourteen years' imprisonment. Zang near Numan was a children trafficking centre. Through this route there was extensive child trafficking between German Cameroon and Nigeria from 1916 during the First World War. According to T.H. Haughton, in the Yola Province Annual Report, 1924,

the past year has shown a considerable improvement in respect to slavery in the Mandated Areas, and although it cannot be denied that a relatively mild form of trafficking in children slaves still continues to exist...

The outbreak of the First World War provided profitable avenue for child traffickers, particularly in the Adamawa Province. Many of the traffickers had small girls and a few boys, kidnapped for purchase. The slave children fetched as much as £15 a head in Kano and Lokoja.

Child trafficking flourished under the British rule as food shortages and economic distress persisted. Between 1931 and 1935, sales and trafficking of children became endemic in the Mandara region of French Cameroon inhabited by the Wula ethnic group. The famine conditions, shortage of food and the general level of economic crisis resulted in the recrudescence of child trafficking. Poor parents in dire need of food supplied their children to traffickers who readily took advantage of the victims' distress. The agents were chiefly Shuwa Arabs, Kanembu and Wula who sold children to the traffickers from the Lake Chad area, Wadai, Kanem and Tibesti. The child trafficking route was from Mandara northwards through the western part of Dikwa, the north-eastern corner of Borno Province and along the shores of Lake Chad.

The traffickers travelled by night, leaving trafficked children hidden in the bush in the daytime, thus making detection difficult. Although there were cases of children abducted by force, the majority of the trafficked children were sold by their parents for food in times of shortage. The unremitting vigilance of the Native Authorities in Borno and Dikwa, aided by close cooperation with the French authorities in Cameroon, drove the trafficking in children underground. Through the efforts of District and Village Headmen, special mounted patrols and private individuals, a total of 186 trafficking children were released while 20 traffickers were convicted.

In the Benue Province, child trafficking among the Idoma occurred in the form of child stealing. The children were sold in Western Nigeria where there was a steady demand in the cocoa plantations. During the economic depression, there was a resurgence of child stealing between the Western District of Idoma Division and Eha Amufu in the Nsukka Division of Southern Provinces. The two routes became notorious for child trafficking. Between 1931 and February 1933, after prolonged investigations and security patrols, 23 persons were convicted for child trafficking while 11 victims of trafficking were set free.

Among the Idoma, female children were regarded principally as financial assets and the 'bride prices' to be received from them on marriage constituted a source of income for the family. From 'bride price' to slave price was but a short step. Boys who had no marriageable value were sold to traffickers during the period of financial crisis. Cultural attitudes towards children and in particular girls reinforced the sale of children into slavery and children's social status made them vulnerable to trafficking. Among the Idoma, children were sold to traffickers as 'illegitimate' in the case of boys and for 'witchcraft' in the case of girls. In Igala Division of Kabba Province many children were sold as illegitimate and there was extensive trafficking in female children. In Igala Division, children without marks were sold owing to lack of money and food shortages (Abdulkadir 2004:9). Orphans became commodities for child traffickers in the 1930s.

In several instances, girls were acquired by means of purchase disguised as payment of dowry. Girl child marriage to 'stranger husbands' became a major method

of child trafficking and selling children into slavery among the Idoma. In order to curtail the trend, the following marriage rules were promulgated under the Native Authority Ordinance:

(i) That it should be illegal for any parent or guardian of the Idoma tribe to give his daughter or ward in marriage to any person who is not a native of, and living in the Idoma Division, without first informing and consulting all those of his relatives whom, by native law and custom, it is his duty in such circumstances to inform and consult.

(ii) That it should in any event be illegal for any parent or guardian of the Idoma tribe to give his daughter or ward in marriage to a person who is not a native of, and living in, the Idoma Division, until she has attained the age of puberty.

In Nasarawa Division, one Habu, a notorious trafficker, was tried in 1935 for three separate charges of selling three boys with the intent that they should be treated as slaves and also on a fourth charge of buying two boys. He was sentenced to one year's imprisonment with hard labour on each of the first two charges and to five years on each of the last two; all the sentences ran concurrently. Rozoma, another notorious child trafficker, was tried and convicted of buying a young boy with the intent that he should be treated as a slave. He was sentenced to four years' imprisonment with hard labour.

In 1934, there was dramatic rise in the incidence of child trafficking in the Nassarawa Emirate. Some of the cases of child trafficking were tried in the High Court in 1935 and led to the conviction of nine persons and the release of five children from traffickers. The trafficked children were intended for sale in the cocoa farms of Southern Nigeria. Cases of child stealing and trafficking were reported to the British authorities through direct complaints by mothers of children who had been sold. Between 1930 and 1935, a total of 42 persons were convicted of the offences connected with child trafficking and 19 children were freed. Sentences ranged from two to fourteen years' imprisonment and despite the unceasing campaign by touring Administrative Officers trafficking showed no sign of decrease, probably as a result of the continuing economic difficulties experienced by the masses.

Table 4.1 Child Trafficking in the Adamawa Province, 1930-1935

Year	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
Number of cases	8	1	7	3	3	-
Persons charged	8	1	7	4	4	-
Convictions	5	-	6	4	3	-
Persons liberated as a result of convictions	4	-	-	7	6	-

Source: NAK/SNP 17/1/20216 Vol. II: Slave Traffic in Adamawa Province, Annual Report 1935.

Child trafficking endured owing to the institution of concubinage whereby non-Muslim girls were trafficked into the Emirates for this purpose since concubinage was illegal unless with slave girls. In a patriarchal society, the social construction of gender relations made girls vulnerable to trafficking for the purpose of sex slavery.

Currency scarcity in the impoverished countryside equally enabled child trafficking to flourish. In Yola, children were used as currency during the depression to obtain horses, goats, cattle and salt. There was less difficulty in child trafficking, since children were not in a position to offer resistance to enslavement or to attempt escape from captivity (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993:263). The strategies of child traffickers included acculturation whereby trafficked children lived with the trafficker, adopted his language, fashion and facial marks before being placed in the market for sale. The trafficked children often looked up to their traffickers, mostly Yoruba and Hausa, which made it difficult to detect their cases. In the 1930s, there was an increasing supply of child trafficking to meet the soaring market for concubines and domestic slaves largely recruited from the non-Muslim girls' population who were then kept in seclusion.

Labour constraints among Fulani nomads spurred demand for young boys who were bought to tender cattle in remote bush away from the purview of the law. Mada children in Southern Zaria on the borders of Jos were bought by Fulani pastoralists. The boys were trained to tend cattle, while the girls were often kept until they were mature enough to become concubines (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993:269). In 1930, in Plateau Province, children were kidnapped by unemployed young men who sold them to Fulani pastoralists and, by 1932, 92 people were convicted for trafficking in children in two districts of Plateau Province (Abdulkadir 2004:9).

Child trafficking radiated from the hills of Adamawa and the Benue Valley in four directions (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993:269). Trafficked children went northwards through Dikwa and Borno to the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahara Desert. Pilgrims from Northern Nigeria to Mecca often took slave children with them for sale in North Africa. This phenomenon came to the attention of the British officials as early as the 1920s (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993:269). The export of children to Mecca was controlled through passport policy. Impending pilgrims had to apply for passports so that their movement could be monitored. Some pilgrims often financed their journey through the sale of children of 'pagan' origin (Lovejoy and Hogendorn, 1993:275). In Yola, several men applying for passports to Mecca were denied because each of them allegedly had between four to eight trafficked children.

Many other trafficked children went southwards through River Benue. They were often trafficked by the night to the child slave market on the banks of the River Niger and sold to Nupe, Kakanda, Igala, Ebira fish and salt traders. The children were further trafficked southwards to Lokoja, Ida, Onitsha and the Niger Delta. A wealthy woman trader was noted to have purchased 200 of such trafficked children within a decade (Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993:269). In the Igala Division, there was a boom in child trafficking partly because wealthy women who had no children of their own bought them (Abdulkadir 2004:9). In 1932, the Native Authority Police in the Idoma Division of Benue Province intercepted three truckloads of trafficked children on their way to the cocoa plantations of Western Nigeria to work as farm labourers (Abdulkadir 2004:9).

In Kano, there was a ready market for trafficked girls who were bought by rich men for the purpose of using them as concubines. They were trafficked from Adamawa by Fulani pastoralists through overland routes of Bauchi and Nafada (Lovejoy and Hogendorn, 1993:270). Traffickers used the commercial code for children by referring to them as cattle while discussing them in public. In 1933, extensive child trafficking was carried out in the Pankshin Division of Plateau Province. Children were sold by their parents to Fulani pastoralists as a result of the economic depression. Many traffickers were tried and sentenced in the Provincial Court and 15 children were released from slavery.

In the Bida Division of Niger Province, there were large-scale practices of pawnship-pledging of a third person or debtor himself/herself among the Nupe. There was a resurgence of pawning of children by parents to their debtors. By 1934, it was discovered that pawning was still prevalent in the Pategi and Lafiagi Emirates of Ilorin Province. Native Courts treated cases involving servitude as criminal cases, and instances of pawning or pledging of children were presumed to be an element of servitude since a child was not a willing pawn.

Umaisha District of the Nasarawa Emirate served as the dumping ground or depot for trafficked children to Southern Province. Children were sold at the rate of £13. Traffickers were convicted under Section 369 of the Criminal Code with sentence of two to six months' imprisonment. Notorious child traffickers in Umaisha established their trafficking depot in the town with a channel of communication in the northern bank of River Benue and the riverine districts of the Nasarawa Emirate to replace their lost markets in the Southern Province where their activities had been checked. The traffickers organized a large-scale syndicate for child trafficking and no expense was spared to obtain the goodwill of the local inhabitants. Female children between the ages of 7 and 12 were also trafficked.

In the Muri Emirate, acute food shortages and famine forced parents to negotiate their children for cash. Hausa groundnuts traders took advantage of the appalling social conditions by adding children as articles of trade (Ubah 1991:466). In most of the 1930s, famine largely arose from food shortages and insufficient income with which to buy food, which gave impetus to trafficking in children. Many poor people could not afford to buy food for their subsistence. While the poor communities sold their children to obtain food the seemingly rich procured them to reinforce their process of accumulation.

Indeed, under British rule, child trafficking occurred fundamentally in terms of structural imbalances in the access to resources among the colonized. The economic depression spurred death, diseases, starvation and massive migration. Whenever famine struck, the corollary was that people were bought and sold. In the Muslim Emirates, slave owners who ran out of money sold their slaves to generate income to maintain their household (Ubah 1991:465). Among the non-Muslims, who were largely impoverished, parents sold their children in order to save other members of the family from starvation and death (Ubah 1991:466). In 1932, starvation among the Wula hill people led to their migration to the plains in the British sphere of influence in search of food. Many sold their women and children in order to survive.

Rescued trafficked children were cared for by the Primitive Methodist Mission at Igumale and the Lucy Memorial Freed Slaves Home. Table 4.2 shows tariffs for the maintenance of such children between 1926 and 1943.

Table 4.2 Maintenance of Rescued Children, 1926–1943

Age	Rate per annum	Note
1–10	£5 each	Includes all teaching and school fees
10–13	£7	
13–16	£10	
16 and above	£13	
	II	
1–12	£6	School fees etc. To be paid extra cost 5–18 £89 plus school fees

Source: NAK/SNP 17/1/ 11834: Freed Slaves – Disposal and Subsistence of 1926–1943.

Rescued trafficked children were placed under government institutions or persons entrusted with custody. The Lucy Memorial Home was established for children who were sold by their parents or kidnappers. The home, at Wukari, was intended to liberate and train the inmates who were from different parts of Northern Nigeria. Most of these children were arrested on transit alongside their captors in the process of selling them or were arrested from those who purchased them following information given to the Native Authority Police by those who were against the use of children as slaves. Some of the lucky children got back to their parents through the help of European police while others who could not trace their ancestral homes were sent to the freed slaves' home either to engage in schooling or learning a trade to enable them earn a living.

Under the British rule, Government Freed Slaves Homes programme was short-lived. At first, a home was opened at Lokoja to take care of children rescued from traffickers, but in October 1903 it was transferred to Zungeru. In the same year another home was opened in Borno. Under the auspices of Charity of Rebecca Hussey: African Fund of Redemption of Slave Branch, schools were established for the rescued trafficked children. A sum of £270 per annum was granted as the Lagos Fund for the establishment and maintenance of schools for the liberated African children. Table 4.3 shows the expenses of the Wushishi School in the Northern Province between 1927 and 1931.

Table 4.3 Expenses at Wushishi School, 1927–1931

Name of child	Period	Number of days in the period	Maintenance grant per day	Total
Nausha	June 1927–Dec. 1931	214	3d	£213.6
Laraba	"	"	"	"
Lami	"	"	"	"
				£8.0.6

Source: NAK/SNP 17/1/10028 Vol. II: Lucy Memorial Freed Slaves Home, Wukari Proposal.

Other rescued trafficked children were placed under the custody of private individuals and families (Europeans and Africans) under the supervision of the Sudan United Mission and Lucy Memorial Freed Slaves Home. While the British government was wary of subsidizing the missionary enterprise, it was responsible for the upkeep of the children it transferred to the 'Freed Slaves' Homes for their moral and educational welfare until they reached the age of maturity. The boys went through apprenticeship schemes in printing, agriculture and government cart work while the girls were groomed for 'marriage'. Indeed, the cost of marriage of £4 paid by suitors was similar to the cost of redemption.

Child trafficking, slave dealing, kidnapping and other offences against liberty were punished under the Criminal Code, which applied throughout Nigeria and the Mandated Territory. However, child trafficking persisted arising partly from the inconsistency of the British in eradicating slavery and slave trade. Slavery in Northern Nigeria became politically expedient for the British to prevent the dislocation of the social framework and pauperization of the ruling classes, which the government aimed to preserve and strengthen.

The British Government, in a response to an enquiry from the Council of the League of Nations on the question of slavery, stated:

In the Northern Provinces the intention and policy of the Government is not to interfere with the relation of masters and slaves (i.e., persons born in or brought into that part of Nigeria before April 1st 1901), so long as the relation is voluntarily maintained by both parties, in districts which recognise Moslem law and are under the jurisdiction of Moslem Courts.

Until the intervention of the League of Nations in the 1930s, the British were reluctant to abolish the slave trade and slavery institutions in many parts of Nigeria. According to the League of Nations Report, slavery persisted in Nigeria and indeed, in many parts of the British Africa, under the ambiguous policy of 'voluntary slavery'. The slavery abolition law was more or less ineffective in taming slavery and child trafficking. In the Southern Provinces, there were 'voluntary slaves' and the Northern Provinces, where only slaves born after 31 March 1901 were 'free'. As early as January 1902, Lord Lugard had exercised restraint in abolishing the institution of slavery. According to him, slavery should be gradually abolished in order to prevent the 'disastrous consequences' of producing

a mass of unemployed vagrants and increase the criminal classes: in the case of women it would tend to increase prostitution: while both classes would beyond doubt bring upon themselves unforeseen misery by cancelling the obligation under which their masters lie of providing for them in sickness, or caring for their wives and children during their absence from their homes ... The upper classes would be reduced to misery and starvation, and as a consequence to hostility against the Europeans who had brought this chaos about (quoted in Lovejoy and Hogendorn 1993:81-2).

The League of Nations Slavery Committee discovered that slaves born before the 31 March 1901, were expected by local custom, as administered by the Native Courts, to purchase their freedom by a system of ransom-payment of court fees. Court fees or ransom, were paid into the colonial government treasury, which meant the government derived revenue out of the slavery transactions. In Yola, in 1936, young male or female slaves, mostly trafficked children, paid £5 as ransom and court fees to secure their redemption. Slaves were mandated to pay fees that guaranteed them the right to work independent of their masters and to enable them to pay taxes and ransom for their freedom.

The British policy of non-interference equally reinforced the tax and economic base of the slave-owning ruling elites. Forced labour, otherwise known as Political Labour, was used by the local chiefs and the British in the public works and farms of the chiefs. In particular, Lord Lugard had a liberal interpretation of the Slavery Proclamation and gave concessions to slave owners. In practical terms child slaves were allowed to be sold and bought provided that the transactions were conducted within the same province (Ubah 1991:450). Child trafficking and indeed, slave trading, meant wealth to the rulers and the merchant class but the impoverished masses accepted it as a legitimate means of earning a living (Ubah 1991:452). In the Muslim Emirates of Northern Nigeria, the League of Nations discovered that the British adopted a policy of non-interference with slavery, which compromised the trafficking of young girls as concubines. The policy of non-interference was also intended to prevent economic and political instability for the British administration.

Despite the Slavery Ordinance of the League of Nations in 1936, child trafficking, particularly girls for sex-slavery or concubinage, showed no signs of diminishing. Children were exploited under the guise of adoption. In the Northern Cameroons and among the Bamileke, children were ostensibly adopted by the Emirates of Northern Nigeria and were taken away against payment of a certain amount to their families. Children were made to perform arduous tasks at a very early age. Girls and boys of 5 or 6 years carried water, wood and other children that often weighed more than themselves. Up to the late 1930s, trafficked children were still engaged in plantation agriculture owned by the aristocrats. Nevertheless, the French and the British jointly monitored the movement of traffickers along the borders through policing and patrols. Native authorities were involved in this process and many concerned individuals intercepted child traffickers and liberated the children without resort to the colonial authority.

Trafficking in the 1990s: Children in the Labour Process

In the 1990s, there was a resurgence of child trafficking in conditions of political instability under military rule and imposed neo-liberal economic reforms. These led to the greater expansion of the informal sector of the local economy and plantation agriculture, especially cocoa producing for the global economy. In both the informal sector and cocoa plantations, there was unprecedented demand for the cheap labour of children. Children were bought from their poor parents in the rural areas

and in neighbouring countries while some were kidnapped or enslaved under the guise of fostering. Organized criminal networks recruited children and enslaved them with little or no remittance to the children or their parents.

In Nigeria, structural imbalances and distortions occurred in the economy in the wake of the oil boom of the 1970s. Against the background of excessive dependence on oil exports, there was a resurgence in the Nigerian economic crisis in the early 1980s owing to the devastating impact of global economic recession, collapse of crude oil prices and declining capital inflow (Obadan and Edo 2004:16). The decline of oil prices in the world market grossly affected the nation's revenue and thereby gave rise to fiscal deficits and rapid depletion of foreign exchange reserves (Obadan and Edo 2004:16). Economic crisis also manifested in galloping inflation, rising unemployment, abandoned projects, factory closures and an increasing burden of external debt. Between 1995 and 1999, the economy was characterized by sluggish growth, indicated by the GDP growth rates of 2.2 per cent in 1995; 3.4 per cent in 1996; 3.8 per cent in 1997; 2.3 per cent in 1998; and 2.8 per cent in 1999 (Obadan and Edo 2004:26–7).

The growth rate was too low for the desired improvement in living conditions of the people. Poverty remained widespread, with the incidence rising from 40% of the population in the early 1990s to 66 per cent in 1999. The sliding GDP growth rate was incapable of stemming the poverty trend. Nigeria's external reserves declined from \$7.7 billion in 1997 to \$7.2 billion in 1998 and \$5.5 billion in 1999, tracing the sharp decline in oil. Agriculture production experienced steady growth from 3.6 per cent in 1995 to 5.5 per cent in 1998 but plummeted to 2.8 per cent in 1999.

At the end of the 1990s, Nigeria had the fifteenth lowest purchasing power in the world; per capita income was less than \$1; its 10 per cent inflation rate was the 44th highest in the world; and it was the 21st highest foreign debtor. The economic crisis was characterized by weak growth, interest rate instability, diminishing capacity utilization and an unbridled rise in unsold inventory among manufacturing firms. From 60Kobo per litre in 1986 for both private and commercial vehicles the fuel price increased to N20.00 in 1999.

As the fuel price jumped and the value of the Naira collapsed, the cost of living rose and poverty spread. Governance was executed with unbridled corruption, prebendalism and predation. As the government monopoly of oil revenues shifted from a phase of control and redistribution to sheer hiding and hoarding, capital was systematically withdrawn from the economy and government officials invested abroad to finance new business enterprises or political ambition (Guyer, Denzer and Agbaje 2003:xxi). The predatory accumulation created a group of the new rich who live in 'islands' – sprawling walled fortresses, mansions and palaces with personalized social services including water, security and electricity supplies while most of the people were extremely poor and isolated. There was mass poverty and destitution.

According to Moeletsi Mbeki, head of the South African Institute of International Affairs, 'while China has lifted some 400,000 people out of poverty in the past twenty years, Nigeria has pushed 71 million people further down the poverty line'.

Nigeria is the third least developed oil exporting country, with a low human development index. The precarious economic situation forced desperate parents to send their children to work (Kar 2002:125). Parents were also seen to withdraw their children from the labour process as soon as they could afford to maintain the family or pay the children's school fees. According to Goldin, 'the higher the father's wage, the lower the probability of the child participating in the labour force, the father's unemployment sent both boys and girls into the labour force with a stronger impact on the former' (Goldin 1979:111-31).

Indeed, the supply of child labour was predicated by the living standards of a family, and children were sent to work in order to meet the subsistence needs of the family (Kar 2002:125). Poor families added children to the family labour force to generate income to meet their subsistence and school fees. Parents who were beneficiaries of the economic activities of their children had little or no impulse to discourage them from dropping out of school and entering the labour process (Isamah & Okunola 2003:64 and.71). In the 1990s, the contraction in the formal sector of the economy fuelled the dramatic expansion of the informal economy characterized by micro-enterprises, hawking and street trading. In most of urban centres in Nigeria, however, the government outlawed hawking and street trading in which police patrols and high-handedness have driven child trafficking and child labour underground. Trafficked children worked under economic spheres without labour legislation and social protection.

According to the National Human Rights Commission, Abuja, 22 million Nigerian children under the age of 15 years were part of the workforce. About 45 per cent of children hawking in Nigerian cities were products of child trafficking, especially from rural areas, poor urban neighbourhoods and neighbouring countries. The forms of recruitment used by child traffickers ranged from complete coercion through abduction and kidnapping to deception by promises of legitimate employment. In some cases children were trafficked through family networks at a time of weakening of traditional values and the unbridled quest for money.

The roll-back of the state in funding education had thrown many children out of school. By the end of the 1990s, the Federal Ministry of Education reported that 12 million Nigerian children were drop-outs. Many of them became victims of trafficking. In the early 1990s, the deepening economic crisis and widespread poverty led to a resurgence of child trafficking. Like commodities, children were bought and sold through a subterranean network of organized syndicates. Mrs Rita Akpan, the Minister of State of Women Affairs, estimated that trading in children and young women was worth N1 billion per year.

Table 4.4 gives some data for the status of primary education in Nigeria in the year 2000. Under the Basic Primary Education (BPE) scheme, states and local governments passed laws for compulsory education that were not unfortunately enforced.

Table 4.4 Primary Education in Nigeria: A Fact File, c. 2000

No. of pupils	20,900,451
No. of teachers	448,414
No. of classrooms	332,408
No. of classrooms in good condition	140,134
No. of classrooms in bad condition	192,274
Annual teachers' wage bill	N100 million

Source: *Crystal Magazine*, December 2000, p. 18.

The situation was exacerbated in the south-west where states hitherto offering free education now charged fees, which many parents, faced with diminishing purchasing power, found difficult to pay. Among females aged 15–24 who had left school 29 per cent of them dropped out because they could not pay school fees. In 1998, it was indicated that in Lagos State the annual average cost borne by families to send their children to school was N16,500 for public schools in urban centres; N9,250 for rural public schools; N43,200 for private urban schools and N28,000 for private rural schools. The number of children out of school increased: 45 per cent for females between the ages of 6 and 10 years; and 45 per cent for males of the same age. For the 10–15 year categories the figures were 35 per cent for females and 31 per cent for males.

Children were pushed out of the school into the labour process. Many parents regarded these children as income-earners and assigned them to street trading in order to fend for the family and themselves. In search of financial relief from the avalanche of economic and social distress, some parents depended on the labour of their children. Indeed, the greater majority of child hawkers, conditioned by the privation of the street, veered into crime and sex work to supplement what they made from hawking. About one per cent of GDP was spent on funding education. A large chunk of this meagre amount often went into private pockets. The assessment and collection of Education Tax was marked by massive fraud by the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), which mismanaged over N50 billion through fraudulent practices. In Kogi State, the Commissioner for Education, Chief James Akor and three other principal officers of the Ministry of Education, were indicted for embezzling N45 million out of the N136 million meant for bursary grants to students. In Kano State, the former Governor, Rabiu Musa Kwakwanso and his Commissioner for Finance, Dr Hafizu Abubakar, were indicted for misappropriating the sum of N62,689,700.00 meant for student scholarship allowances. The fraud threatened the education opportunities of Nigerian children in the state and compromised them for trafficking.

Lack of educational, vocational and economic opportunities for the youth in the rural areas made children vulnerable in the labour process, especially in the informal sector of the economy. The erosion of living standards gave impetus to many households to seek additional income by engaging in multiple modes of livelihood in the informal sector (Mustapha 1992:188). The out-of-school children were readily employed by their market women mothers as an additional workforce to generate income through hawking to supplement their sales in the competitive informal sector.

Children joined their parents in petty trading and city street hawking; participation in agricultural production, cattle grazing, marketing of fresh produce, housing construction and in the transport sector (Howard 2002:7; Araoye 2002:5). Nevertheless, some parents often withdrew their children from the labour process as soon as they could sustain the family.

Nigeria's global trafficking in children could be seen as an extension of internal trafficking, which was rife, as poor families traditionally sent boys and girls to work in wealthier homes. This often began as a form of child fostering, but sometimes it was slavery. Indeed, cultural philanthropy often ended in endemic exploitation as guardians turned the misery of the poor children to their own fortune. Hidden from the sight of the law, these children were often confined to the four walls of the home; used and denied western education, basic healthcare, adequate nutrition, leisure time and security. The children provided cheap labour and slipped into abusive conditions. They were treated like slaves and often ended up as domestic servants. The Lagos middle class has a bountiful supply of houseboys and girls brought from villages across the country by 'helpful aunts and uncles' who pocket the cash and disappear. Their parents are involved. They say to the girls, 'why don't you go with this man and work? We have no money, we have nothin to eat. You can send us money.' And so the girls go.

In 1990, Fulani pastoralists were involved in the clandestine buying of children between the ages of 7 and 11 years in Enugu (Effah 1996:14). The children were engaged in cattle rearing. Hausa traders bought children at the rates as low as N100,000 and as high as N1 million. By December 1991, the increasing menace of trafficking came to public view when 26 children of Imo State origin were deported from Libreville, Gabon. In February 1992, 250 children of Rivers State origin were deported from Gabon. In May 1995, 330 children were deported from Gabon and were kept in a camp in Calabar. The arrest of Adebisi Dan-Musa (Bisket), a seemingly notorious trafficker, for allegedly stealing 15 children for the purpose of selling them into slavery, further exposed the practice of child trafficking to the national consciousness.

Some traffickers established corporate structures for the recruitment and placement of children in the labour process. For example, Ms Sola Aderogba established Executive Maids as a child employment agency in Surulere, Lagos. According to her, children between the ages of 11 and 14 were brought to her from Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and the Republics of Benin and Cameroon. While the traffickers escaped justice, child labour was very visible in Nigerian city streets. Children worked as feet washers, househelps and hawkers as well as porters in major markets. A UNICEF survey in 1992 estimated that 54 per cent of child domestic workers were employed by civil servants and professionals while 46 per cent of employers were self-employed in urban centres. Working-class professional women constituted a major segment of users of child domestic services in urban centres.

In Kano, mainly female traffickers travelled on a weekly basis to recruit children from the area's impoverished villages. Trafficking involved female children who

were engaged as domestic servants, babysitters and as hawkers of kola nuts, groundnuts and other food items. They were offered between N500 and N1,000 per month depending on their age and experience. Traffickers collected a commission of N300 to N500 per child and sometimes received gifts of foodstuffs from both parents and employers of the children. Poor parents often engaged their daughters in the labour process to supplement the family sustenance, and most importantly to save money in order to procure marriage items such as beds, utensils, wrappers and so on. Domestic work was also considered a grooming ground for the girls in terms of cooking, house tidying and trading or ultimately finding a 'rich' suitor. Some of the children absconded following exploitation by their employers and in most cases they would not return to their parents until they got married. Many of them ended up as commercial sex workers. In some states of Northern Nigeria, girls were withdrawn from schools for marriage purposes. Every year, young girls were trafficked from Ilorin to Kano to serve as domestic servants and hawkers of concoctions. Some of these girls were often further trafficked to Saudi Arabia for sex work.

In Oyo State, children trafficked from rural areas and surrounding states were put 'on hire' in Ibadan (Isamah and Okunola 2003:67). Such children were put up for recruitment by their parents or guardians, who contracted them out for wages of between N2,000 and N3,000 per year. An agreed fee was paid in advance to the parents or guardians, on the agreement that the amount would be deducted from the wages paid to the child over a period of time. In Ibadan, they were deployed to clients who used them as domestic servants or traders. Parents often put pressure on the trafficked children to remain on the job even though they were ignorant of the nature of the work children carried out or the social conditions under which they worked. In south-west Nigeria, as elsewhere in the country, child trafficking remained a highly subterranean business. In the tobacco-growing community of Elewure in Kajola Local Government of Oyo State, women and children of school age, most of them trafficked, were engaged in barns picking tobacco leaves for curing. They were offered a pittance of N100 per day for the women and less for the children, who were denied any education.

Despite the growing unemployment for highly qualified adults, there was high demand for cheap and submissive child labour in the informal sector, street hawking, hackney business (conductorship), scavenging and in cocoa plantations producing for the global market. Child scavengers, otherwise called '*kombis*', collecting scraps of iron, plastic, rubber, tin and polythene bags, earned between N3,500 and N4,000 per week. Indeed, the scavengers constituted an emerging 'special breed' of children in the labour process because of the health and social hazards they were exposed to.

In a particular case, 64 children were rescued by the police along the Onitsha-Benin expressway. The bus driver claimed he was conveying the children, who were between the ages of 5 and 16 years, from Omor village in Anambra State to spend their holidays with their parents at Ughoha town in Edo State. But the children had not a stick of luggage!

Children were being trafficked to Edo State either for forced labour or ritual purposes, as claimed by the media. In 2000, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that 4,000 children were trafficked per year from Cross River State alone. Ahiazu Mbaise local government area of Imo State became one of the most notorious child trafficking and child labour zones in Nigeria. Every year children were trafficked abroad by traffickers who deceived their parents with monetary and material gifts.

About 54 per cent of those trafficked were street hawkers, while 29 per cent stayed at home and 3.5 per cent were found to be sexually abused. Many of the girls were lured into sex at a tender age, leading to an increase in the number of unwanted pregnancies and teenage mothers. Traffickers often engaged trafficked girls in illicit baby-making factories. In Enugu, Onitsha and Owerri, syndicates hoarded trafficked girls for 'mating' purposes. At Abakpa Nike, on the outskirts of Enugu, thirteen girls, mainly teenagers at different stages of pregnancy, were found by the police, quarantined in a small, dark, poorly ventilated, makeshift clinic. In 1995, police discovered the hideout of a sex syndicate called *Oju Ina* sandwiched between Oke-Arin/Idumagbo and Enu Owa in Lagos where teenage girls between the ages of 11 and 18 were camped for sex work (Effah 1996:40-1). Some of them were kidnapped or abducted and were placed under the custody of middle-aged women, who groomed them to patronize men sexually. In Kaduna, child prostitution flourished in drinking joints and dancing halls. In Kano, trafficked children aged between 8 and 10 were recruited yearly from neighbouring countries such as Niger, Mali, Senegal, Cameroon and Sierra Leone and neighbouring states like Kogi, Plateau, Katsina, Kaduna and Bauchi states in Nigeria for sex and domestic work (Muazzam 2003:43).

In a similar fashion, young children and teenagers were co-opted into street begging by old professional beggars who lured them with fabulous stories of the money-spinning advantages of street begging. The children were often subsequently recruited by robbery gangs or became victims of ritual killings and road traffic accidents. Some were used as political thugs or became 'child soldiers' in ethnic and religious conflicts. The *Almajiri* (Quranic students) were both actors and victims of the spate of ethno-religious conflicts in Northern Nigeria such as the Maitatsine religious riots in Kano; the Bulunkutu riot in Maiduguri; Yola and Gombe riots. The increase in the number of street children in Nigerian cities has worsened the crime and violence situation. According to one of the street children, '...we no dey do anything again – we dey beg and we carry load for people'. In this process, what was referred to in local parlance as 'jet age begging', using children to solicit for alms, has emerged. Such children were 'displayed' carried by women who often hired them to attract public sympathy and financial assistance. In order to prick the conscience of alms-givers, some beggars hired babies from nannies and day care centres. In Lagos, with a token of N500, some owners of day care centres 'rent out' children for at least four hours to women who disguise them as beggars in the streets. City streets have been littered with destitute and colonies of child beggars have emerged. Con-men and child traffickers have transformed street begging in Nigeria into a lucrative 'export commodity'.

Child killing and child stealing for trafficking in human parts have increased. A syndicate kidnapping children was on the prowl in Abuja suburbs at Karinwo, Gwa-Gwa satellite town and in Lagos. The 'Otokoto Seven' uprising following the ritual murder of an 11-year-old, Ikechukwu Okonkwo, a groundnut hawker in September 1996, consummated a process that had endangered Owerri for almost a decade. The rate of trafficking increased partly because of a highly organized trade in human parts business with a ready market. Traffickers often sold children to those in need of human parts for rituals. The value of a human head ranged between N3,000 and N10,000.

Across the west coast of Africa, porous borders have served as distribution points for trafficked children who were exchanged across countries in the form of imports and exports. The social dislocation of children in the West Africa sub-region through trafficking has ensured their perpetual exploitation in the labour process and perpetuated the vicious circle of the menace. Traffickers often operate with impunity and exorbitant profit at the expense of the trafficked children.

Surveys in four West African countries (Cameroun, Côte D'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria) revealed that of an estimated number of 284,000 engaged in cocoa farming, including the clearing of fields in cocoa farms, a total of 153,000 were involved in the application of dangerous pesticides. In Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria, an approximate number of 2,500 working children were recruited through intermediaries for cocoa farming. The children were working in the cocoa farms and plantations under strenuous and exploitative conditions. Working conditions were worse in commercial agriculture when the children were bonded. It was not unusual to mortgage children for the debt of their parents, sometimes for life. Bonded children in the cocoa plantations were denied basic human rights and education. Cocoa production is labour-intensive and its global market of fluctuating prices led to farmers demanding the cheap labour of children. In the cocoa belt of western Nigeria, the use of migrant labour became prominent. Most of the migrant labourers were trafficked from central Nigeria to the cocoa farms by middlemen. The trend became phenomenal in the 1930s and continued into the 1990s. Child labour increased in the cocoa sector owing to the expansion in the global chocolate industry. According to Anti-Slavery International:

The majority of cocoa farmers in West Africa are smallholders, with 22 per cent of cocoa produced on farms of less than two hectares, 65 per cent on farms of between two and ten hectares and only 12 per cent on plantations of more than ten hectares. It is difficult to be clear about labour requirements, but farms of less than two hectares will be almost entirely family run. As a result of the significant movement in the 1980s and 1990s from rural to urban areas in the region, of mainly young people, the average age of most growers is quite old. This may have led to an increasing use of paid labour on the farms and increased use of share cropping arrangements.

In Western Nigeria, labour constraints led to the continued demand for the cheap labour of young Agatu boys from Benue State of Nigeria; the Republics of Benin, Togo and Cameroon; and Burkina Faso, most of whom had no negotiating power

for their income. This trend was boosted by the cocoa 'boom' of the 1990s. According to Anti-Slavery International:

In Nigeria, exchange rate fixing complicated the effect of liberalisation in 1986, because exporting cocoa allowed the naira to be converted into a hard currency. Many companies previously uninvolved in the cocoa industry rushed to take advantage of this and it led to higher prices for farmers in the short term. In the long term, it led to problems such as defaults on forward contracts and falling quality. With foreign exchange liberalisation producer prices fell, but when access to foreign exchange was restricted once more in 1991/92 they rose again. Now that this problem has been dealt with and the system is completely liberated, farmers are receiving around 85 per cent of the FOB price.

The bulk of child labourers in the cocoa plantations of Ondo State were trafficked from Benue, Akwa-Ibom and Cross River States. In Cross River State, trafficking was often carried out during festive periods and cultural activities, especially in the months of March, April and December. In some parts of Cross River State, buses line up during these periods to convey trafficked girls and boys to Ondo State. Some of them who attended schools refused to bear their fathers' names but the traffickers' name. Twenty-four children from Ago village in Akwa-Ibom States, comprising eleven girls and thirteen boys, aged between 9 and 21 were rescued by the police from a trafficking syndicate. For each child, the trafficker was paid N3,000 as a handling charge on delivery to the cocoa plantation owners. Each child was paid N2,000 per month collected in bulk at the end of the year by the trafficker. Some traffickers do not remit the money to parents or the children. Some parents/guardians would ensure that children go to the cocoa plantations and return on a yearly basis. Trafficked girls to the cocoa plantations often served as sex slaves and many never returned. Some died in conditions of immense cruelty and their parents are told they have gone overseas.

Child labourers in cocoa plantations suffered from snake bites, pesticides and tuberculosis. Most parents remained little concerned once the traffickers unflinchingly make the annual returns. Children from Cross River State were often trafficked to Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. Twenty children were rescued by the National Drug Law and Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) in Cross-River State. The victims, between the ages of 1 and 21 years, including six boys and fourteen girls, were rescued at Calabar-Itu Road with two men and three women traffickers. At the Ikom border, groups of children accompanied by adults often passed through to Cameroon during the farming season to work with plantation owners.

The most active trafficking route in south-eastern Nigeria is the Oron boundary (a sea route) and from private beaches in Calabar town. Usually, ships berth in the private beaches and move scores of children to Malabo in Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, where they are used as bonded labour on farm plantations. The Federal Ministry of Aviation discovered 193 unlicensed and illegal aerodromes operated by multinational oil companies. They operated uncontrolled flights that rendered Nigerian roads as trafficking routes. In Malabo and Libreville markets,

trafficked children worked as shop assistants and hawked goods rather than attend schools as traffickers had promised them. Some trafficked boys worked in agricultural plantations and the timber industry.

Children from poor families in Saki in Oyo State and Ilorin Kwara State were trafficked to Guinea, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire to work as hawkers and domestic servants. Children from Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara were also trafficked to Benin Republic, Togo and Mali through the Dole Kaina and Bagudo borders of Kebbi State. Children from Borno and Yobe were trafficked to Chad and Cameroon through the Baga and Doron Baga borders of Borno State, which linked with Chad, Niger and Cameroon.

In 2003, the Nigerian police estimated that between 6,000 and 15,000 children trafficked from Benin Republic were used mainly in the cocoa belt and granite quarries of Western Nigeria. The Nigerian police carried out several raids and released children working in the stone quarries and returned them to Benin Republic. Since 1991, child trafficking continued to flourish in supplying children in slave colonies at granite quarries. The slave colonies were located in Ogun, Oyo and Osun States of Nigeria. Children were trafficked to Nigeria in sacks, which were often declared as containing foodstuffs at the border.

The child slave owners had over 250 illegal routes for smuggling children into Nigeria from Benin Republic. The child slaves aged between 4 and 13 years lived and worked in appalling conditions. They were often fed once a day, lived and slept completely exposed to nature since they resided in the bush and had no shelter. The children, who earned N50 (\$0.38) a week, each worked 12–16 hours, crushing enough gravel to generate N35,000 (\$269). Every evening lorries delivered the gravel to construction sites in Western Nigeria. 194 of the children were liberated by the Nigerian police from the various work sites in Ogun State and deported to Benin Republic. The Nigerian Immigration Service confirmed that in March 1994, 51 prospective child slaves were liberated in Akwa Ibom State before they could be trafficked abroad. Another set of 77 children were freed between March and July; 236 others, among them 38 Beninoise and 23 Togoese, were rescued within the first two months of 1997.

Despite police surveillance and patrols, trafficking in Beninoise children continued unabated in Nigeria. One Iyabo Olasope was arrested by the police at Ojuwoye market in Mushin Lagos with twelve Sabe Beninoise children used for child labour. According to her,

I didn't steal them neither did I kidnap any of them. They were brought to me by somebody (trafficker) to learn trade. And on each of them I paid between N500 and N600 for their services even though they're trainees. I am into direct marketing of some confectioneries, pepper, tomatoes and seasonings. And they were learning how to do this business. Beninoise children are easier to keep than Nigerian ones who are found of unruly behaviours particularly stealing.

The Sabe children were given Yoruba names by their employer and considered her as their 'biological' mother. Contrary to her claims, the stereotypes that Beninoise

children are trustworthy, trafficked children particularly from neighbouring countries were often coerced into submission. Most of the trafficked children often became stranded and trapped and therefore had to rely on their traffickers and employers. A children's market or 'child labour camp' was tracked down in a five-storey building at Ojuelegba Lagos, where residents used to go and choose the children they needed for domestic work. In April 1996, this illegal market was discovered full of malnourished children, aged between 7 and 17 years old, waiting for buyers. Most of the children were employed as house-helpers, shop assistants, car washers, bus conductors and scavengers collecting scraps from refuse or dump sites.

According to traffickers, girls from Benin and Togo were particularly in high demand in Lagos. More than thirty children crossed the Benin-Nigeria border every two months while twenty children were trafficked monthly through the Calabar, Sokoto and Maiduguri borders. Some aged between 8 and 15 years were bought from families for the equivalent of \$30. In April 1996, a trafficker was arrested in Lagos with ten Beninese girls aged between 10 and 12. Two suspected human traffickers were arrested by the police in Ogun State while attempting to ferry twenty-four teenagers across the border to Cotonou in Benin Republic. They included eight males and sixteen females caught in a chartered commercial bus at Owode Egbado a border town of Ogun State. The children were between the ages of 9 and 20. Traffickers were returning them to their parents at Cotonou for the Christmas break after serving as house-helpers in Nigeria.

Over one million children are trafficked in several African countries annually, while traffickers generate between £100 and £150 million. Out of this number, about 60 per cent are Nigerians whose ages range between 10 and 16 years, and a majority were girls. Some of the girls were trafficked to Saudi Arabia while under the age of 18 years. The children were trafficked for the purpose of begging and sex work in Saudi Arabia. A total of 7,429 Nigerians were deported from Saudi Arabia through the Malam Aminu Kano International Airport out of which 3,032 were men, 3,823 women, 297 children and 130 destitutes. Out of the 9,952 women and 1,231 underage children deported from Saudi Arabia, the majority were from the northern states of Kano, Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Nassarawa, Plateau, Niger, Kebbi, Kwara, Sokoto, Katsina, Gombe, Kaduna, Bauchi, Taraba and Jigawa. Three of the deported girls aged between 7 and 12 are currently under the care of the WOTCLEF coordinator, Kano State. They were deported from Saudi Arabia and could not trace their origin in Nigeria.

Again about 60 per cent of the trafficked children from Africa to Italy were Nigerians, mostly from the south-eastern states of Imo, Abia and Akwa Ibom. According to Prof. Olu Agbi, Nigerian Ambassador to Greece, most Nigerians get trapped in the intricate web of human trafficking because of their desire to seek greener pastures abroad. Every year, thousands of children are sold as slaves in Europe. Girls were sold for between Euro 70,000 to 90,000 to engage in sex work. A particular man in Akure collected as much as N400,000 to transport young boys to Turkey in order to cross the mainland Europe through Greece. But unfortunately,

the young boys spent 21 days to get to Greece and most perished during the journey because they passed through landmines. Those who got to Greece engaged in hawking counterfeit compact disks (CDs). The boys had no money to reproduce the counterfeit CDs, but the Greeks and Bulgarians could do it, whereas Nigerian hawkers suffered sentences and imprisonments.

Government and NGO Intervention against Child Trafficking in Nigeria

Despite the fact that the incidence of child trafficking has been going on since the 1930s, public awareness on the issue was heightened in the 1990s with the increase in the number of deportees from Europe, Saudi Arabia and other African countries. In 1994, the late Mrs Julie Useni founded the Daughters of Abraham Foundation (DOAF) to rehabilitate trafficked girls who were engaged in sex work in Abuja. Strategic hide-outs for sex work in Abuja, which were discovered by DOAF, included Nyanya, where most sex workers lived in local hotels in search of customers; Mabushi, where they were found in crowded huts; Area I Garki, which harboured call girls who roam the streets at night, and Kado Estate, where, unlike the other three places, sex workers who dealt with foreigners and usually charged very high fees lived. During the first quarter of the DOAF campaign, over 500 sex workers were counselled at both their business places and residencies. About 150 converts were registered for rehabilitation, but only 28 of them were trained in sewing and hair dressing skills while the others ran away.

In 1996, the Women Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) formed by Mrs Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi, assisted by the ILO's International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO/IPEC) project, withdrew many teenagers from child labour along city streets. The Women Trafficking and Child Labour Elimination Foundation (WOTCLEF), founded by the wife of the Vice-President, Chief Mrs Amina Titi Atiku Abubakar, sponsored public enlightenment campaigns against trafficked women and children and set up a skill acquisition/education programme for the victims. WOTCLEF sponsored a soap opera on national television, *izozo*, to raise public awareness against trafficking. Under WOTCLEF's Opportunity School Project many girl children of poor background benefited from free education. Through WOTCLEF, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) was established to enforce laws against trafficking in persons, to investigate and prosecute those suspected of being engaged in trafficking including child trafficking.

The West Africa Cocoa/Commercial Agricultural Project (WACAP) is part of the ILO/IPEC project aimed at withdrawing children from cocoa farms in Nigeria. The project was supported by the Labor Department of the USA and the International Cocoa Initiative based in Geneva, Switzerland. With a budget of \$600,000 from the US Department of Labor and the chocolate industry, WACAP planned to withdraw and socially protect 1,000 children; assist 150 adult members of concerned families and sensitize more than 30,000 stakeholders. The project worked in the cocoa-growing communities in which the Sustainable Tree Crop Programme operates.

In Lagos State, the government established welfare schemes for trafficked and missing children from various parts of Nigeria, and the Republics of Benin and Chad. Eighteen of the sixty-nine children whose ages were below 14 years were housed in the Lagos State Boys Remand Home, Oregun. Eighteen of them aged between 4 and 8 years were in the Lagos State Children Transit Home, Idi-Araba. Four of them within the age bracket of 9 and 16 years were in the Boys Approved School, Bierrel Street, Yaba. Four others aged below 16 years were at the Girls Approved School, Idi Araba while 25 others also below 16 years were at the Girls Remand Home, Idi Araba.

In Jigawa State, the new education law provided for the abolition of street begging and ensured compulsory child education with a budget of N1.5 billion. The law made education compulsory for the girl child and included the *Almajiri* system of education as part of the new education policy. In Abia State, the government launched the Child Advancement Programme (ASCAP), an enlightenment campaign aimed at keeping children off the streets and reducing teenage pregnancies, drug abuse and sex work. A rehabilitation and skill acquisition centre was established by the Akwa Ibom State Government for the trafficked children.

Having established that child trafficking existed in Nigeria, UNICEF in collaboration with the ILO embarked on programmes to combat child labour, trafficking and exploitation. The partnership among other things determined to improve access to basic services, including health/nutrition, education and income-generating activities by at least 5 per cent in six selected cities (Lagos, Ibadan, Kaduna, Kano, Onitsha and Port Harcourt). The project aimed at improving the policy environment for Children in Need of Special Protection Measures (CNSPM) and reduce the incidence of child abuse in the selected cities. UNICEF strategies included advocacy, sensitization, capacity-building of officers and FGN/NGO partners, empowerment and service delivery; and the review of existing data on child labour in Nigeria and production of a detailed compendium (1986–1996) on child labour. Between 1997 and 1999 UNICEF Nigeria funding on these activities increased from \$288,748 to \$389,160.

In October 1999, the ILO began work on the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) with the support of the United States Department of Labor. The sub-regional project was entitled 'Combating Trafficking in Children for Labour Exploitation in West and Central Africa'. The project commissioned studies on child trafficking in nine African countries including Nigeria. The ILO-IPEC supported various NGOs to remove 1,000 domestic child labourers from severe exploitative situations within one year.

Conclusion

During the last seven decades, child trafficking in the labour process was marked by changes in the different economic regimes. The Great Depression, excessive taxation and forced labour impoverished many families and led to the selling of children to traffickers at a time of economic adversity. In the 1930s, many of the trafficked children became slaves on cocoa farms, cattle-rearers and concubines. Beginning

from the mid-1980s and more markedly in the 1990s, the pressure of the Structural Adjustment Programme and globalization process weakened the Nigerian economy by increasing the number of people with low incomes, led to currency devaluation, inflation, unemployment and a general incidence of poverty. In the 1990s, the increasing economic distress arising from neo-liberal reforms gave impetus to child trafficking. Unlike the 1930s outright sale of children for food, poor parents now ensured that children participated in the informal sector of the economy by periodically remitting money for the survival of the household. The mechanism of trafficking in the 1990s differed dramatically from that in the 1930s. In the 1990s, trafficking has assumed a more global dimension with organized syndicates operating across international borders. Even though, some skirmishes of transborder child trafficking occurred in the 1930s, for example, child trafficking between Nigeria and Cameroon, and between Nigeria and North Africa, the apparatus of globalization has quickened the pace. In the 1990s, children were trafficked for the purposes of working in agricultural plantations, sex work, hawking in the informal sector, domestic work, begging, crime and ritual purposes. Trafficking has shown no sign of decrease partly because both parents and traffickers considered it as 'good' business and, indeed, as a 'poverty alleviation strategy'.

During both the 1930s and 1990s, governments imposed legislation that outlawed child trafficking rather than structurally addressing economic problems that gave rise to it. Despite patrols, anti-trafficking was rarely enforced both internally and across borders in conditions of deepening poverty. The rivalry between security officials, especially police and immigration over who has the mandate to prosecute traffickers or handle trafficking cases, has undermined efforts to curb the menace. Amid this controversy of inefficiency and corruption traffickers often escape justice. The persistent political instability, armed banditry, civil wars, cross-border smuggling and official corruption have rendered joint border patrolling in the west coast of Africa ineffective.

Trafficking in children transcended the Nigerian borders to countries within the West African region and beyond. Nigeria was a source country and served as transit and destination for other children. Nigeria was an exporter of children; it served as a depot and destination for others. In the course of the 1990s, following the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989, there was a rekindled global effort and awareness to stamp out child labour and trafficking. Despite the improved policy environment outlawing child trafficking and child labour, the effort at domestication of CRC as a Child Rights Bill, and proliferation of NGOs and government programmes, child trafficking continued to assume a soaring proportion as poverty, unemployment and corruption remained unbridled. Governments still imposed bans on child labour, street begging and imposed compulsory schooling but there was a surge in child trafficking owing to economic distress in the land. The result of this trend was that of a vicious circle in which children of the poor sold their labour cheaply instead of redressing their social condition through education and highly paid work.

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