A Comparative Study of Globalisation and Democratic Consolidation in Ghana and Nigeria (1990-2008)

David Omeiza Moveh

Abstract

The implications of globalisation for the developing world continue to attract the attention of scholars across the globe; yet, scant attention is paid to the dynamics of its political consequences. This paper is a comparative study of the external linkages and regime trajectories of Ghana and Nigeria; within the period 1990-2008. Evidence gathered on both countries substantiates the proposition that: the more a peripheral state derives huge revenues from commodity export, the more it will be able to exercise a significant degree of independence by resisting external pressure to imbibe liberal democratic values and vice versa. Similarly, the higher a peripheral country's aid per capita from the core, the more such a country is likely to consolidate its transition to democracy. Thus, while the low level of democratic consolidation in Nigeria can partly be explained by the huge revenues from oil and very little aid dependency, the comparatively higher level of democratic consolidation in Ghana is partly explained by the relatively lower revenue from cocoa and timber exports and the higher aid dependency.
Keywords: Globalisation, Democratic Consolidation, Ghana, Nigeria, Comparative Study

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Introduction

Ghana and Nigeria are two countries in the West African sub-region that were colonised by the British. Both countries are culturally diverse societies that experienced political and economic crisis from the 1970's through the 1980s. With the global democratisation process, particularly, in the post cold war era, Ghana and Nigeria successfully made the transition to civil rule in 1992 and 1999 respectively. However, with almost twenty years of uninterrupted civil rule and the successful transfer of power from the ruling party to the opposition party in 2000 and 2008; Ghana's democracy, unlike in the Nigerian situation, is largely seen to be consolidated. While internal factors; such as corruption, the nature of election administration, lack of political will and even the Rawlings factor have been employed in explaining the differences in democratic consolidation in Ghana and Nigeria, the external factors determining democratic consolidation in these two countries is very often taken for granted. Yet, given the fact that the process of transition to civil rule in most of the developing world, was in part a response to the globalisation process, the fact that consolidating these new regimes may also be connected to such external forces cannot be ruled out.

This paper compares the nexus between the external linkages and the regime trajectories of Ghana and Nigeria. It is an attempt to find - within the context of contemporary globalisation, the factors that may account for the reason why Ghana has been able to consolidate its democracy and Nigeria has not.

The paper is divided into six parts. Following this introduction is an examination of the linkages between globalisation and democratic consolidation. The third and fourth parts present an overview of the regime trajectories of Ghana and Nigeria respectively. The fifth part compares data on the external linkages of the Ghanaian and Nigerian economies and, finally, the sixth part is the summary and conclusion.

The Linkage between Globalisation and Democratic Consolidation

Originally, the idea of globalisation resulted from the rapid integration of the world through the ascendancy of international capitalism. According to Barber (2001), globalisation has three overlapping dimensions: ethical,

political-economic and cultural. The ethical dimension is concerned with the question of citizenship in the international laws. The political-economic deals with trans-nationalisation of capitalist market forces; in which there is a global interconnectedness in trade and commerce and culturally, globalisation has largely been embodied in the promotion of western values. In another submission, Beck (2000) refers to globalisation as the multiplicity of linkages and interconnectedness between states and societies which make up the modern world system. It describes the process by which events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe. Held (1996) observes that globalisation entails two phenomenal issues: firstly, it entails networks of political, economic and social activities that are becoming inter-regional and inter- continental in scope. Secondly, it entails a more intensification of the degree of interaction between states and societies. Indeed, the process of democratisation which reached an unprecedented level by the "third wave" is in itself globalisation, because it accentuated the transformation of a global political economy in which hitherto closed economies dictated by authoritarian regimes were brought into a mutual interdependence through economic and political interconnectedness.

The intensification and interconnectedness of states and societies especially from the early 1990s have been conditioned by the sophistication of international capitalism and the rapid development of communication technologies. The globalisation of capitalist forces through the activities of Multi-National Corporations (MNCs), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, World Trade Organisation (WTO), the United Nations (UN), and other international organisations (bilateral and multi -lateral) have invariably made it relatively easier for the spread of democracy. Indeed, democracy is the system of governance through which smooth, effective, efficient and harmonious global interaction is possible. Hence, the emphasis on democratisation as one crucial element in the interactions of states (core/periphery) within the globalisation process.
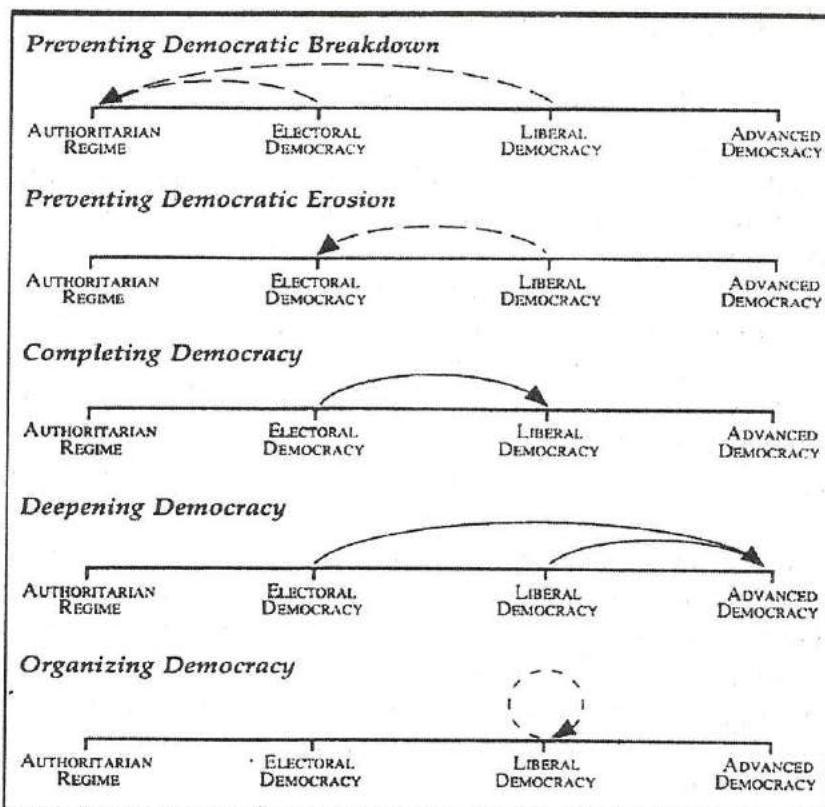
With the political manifestation of globalisation (i.e. transition to civil rule) completed in most parts of the world, political scientists in the new democracies have been increasingly focusing on what has come to be

known as democratic consolidation. Originally, the term democratic consolidation was meant to describe the "challenge of making new democracies secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term, of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression, of building dams against eventual reverse waves (Schedler 1998). To this original mission of rendering democracy "the only game in town", countless other tasks have been added. Democratic consolidation has come to include such divergent issues as popular legitimation, the diffusion of democratic values, the neutralisation of anti- system actors, civilian supremacy over the military e.t.c.. Indeed, while democratic consolidation may have been a nebulous concept since its very inception, the conceptual fog that veils the term has only become thicker and thicker the more it has spread through the academic and political world (Schedler, 1998).

In the light of the bewildering range of issues that complicates the study of democratic consolidation, Schedler (1998) has ordered the multiple usages and meanings of the term. From a four-fold classification of regime types – authoritarianism, electoral democracy, liberal democracy and advanced democracy – along a one-dimensional continuum of "democraticness", Schedler (1998) demonstrates how the conceptual confusion that surrounds the term democratic consolidation can be overcome by looking at the concrete realities as well as the practical tasks the term is meant to address. Thus, the meaning ascribed to the "notion of democratic consolidation depends on where we stand - our empirical viewpoints- and where we aim to reach - our normative horizons" (Schedler, 1998).

From the classification of regime types, as in fig. 1, the consolidation of democracy may therefore involve the positive task of deepening a full liberal democracy or completing a semi-democracy (electoral democracy). Or it may respond to the negative challenges of impeding the erosion of a liberal democracy or avoiding the breakdown of whatever minimal kind of democracy a country has in place (Schedler, 1998). For the purposes of this paper, democratic consolidation is seen in its original context- i.e. as the avoidance of authoritarian regression; particularly, through the institutionalisation of a credible electoral administration process.

In sum, central to the notion of globalisation – as in the world system theory- is the idea that developments within individual societies can be understood within the context of the entire world system. Consequently, realities in the larger modern world system in itself have significant consequences for the internal structures of areas incorporated within it. Thus, in order to make the argument about the divergent trajectories of democracy in Ghana and Nigeria, one has to look not only from within; but also from the nature of these countries incorporation in the modern world system; which can be determined by measuring their economic characteristics.

Fig 1: *A Graphic Representation of The Empirical Contexts and Normative Horizons of Democratic Consolidation.*
Source: *Schedler (1998)*

An Overview of Regime Trajectory in Ghana

Ghana's post independence history began in March 1957 with a civilian regime which soon degenerated into a quasi dictatorship; and as a result, the first military coup of 1966 (Gyimah, 2000:2). In the subsequent one and a half decades, Ghana made two other brief attempts at liberal democracy between 1969 -1972 and 1979-1981, but each was overthrown after twenty seven months. In the later instance, Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings, who assumed the reins of power for a hundred and twelve days in 1979 and handed over to the civilian administration of President Hilla Liman and his People's National Party (PNP) staged a comeback on the Christmas eve of 1981. The new ruling group- the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) also under Rawlings Chairmanship; in spite of its name, stuck to power for eleven years until 7th January 1993 when the country embarked on the current democratic experiment.

Indeed by 1993, the pro -democratic trend of the post cold war – globalisation era had begun to have contagious effects across Africa (Ninsin, 1998: 14). The leader of the outgoing military regime - Rawlings contested the Presidential election with the ruling junta- the PNDC metamorphosing into a political party- the National Democratic Congress (NDC) to provide him with the means for the contest (Frempong, 2006). With the victory of the NDC in the Presidential poll of 1992, the opposition parties insisted the elections had been rigged and as a result boycotted the subsequent parliamentary elections. The sources of acrimony in the elections of 1992 included a perceived bloated electoral register and the PNDC's deliberate and systematic appropriation of state resources in favor of the NDC (Ninsim, 2006:64). The general impression was that the military government plotted to entrench its rule through the backdoor provided by the new democratic set up (Boafo, 2006: 36). It was from such shaky foundation that Ghana's current dispensation blossomed. The subsequent elections of 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008 were largely described as peaceful and generally free and fair. In 2000 there was a peaceful alternation of power from the ruling NDC to the opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP). By 2008 the NPP also successfully handed over power in a peaceful election to the opposition- NDC.

With over fifteen years of uninterrupted democratic rule and the peaceful transfer of power to the opposition on two occasions, Ghana's electoral successes have since been described as a "paragon of good governance and peaceful co-existence in the West African sub-region" (Frempong, 2006:157). Indeed, as indicated in the categorisation of democratic regimes in Africa, in table 1, Ghana's democracy is seen to have been consolidated.

Table 1: *Categories of Democratic Regimes in Africa as at the end of 2003*

Old Democracies	Consolidators	Setbacks	Stillbirths	Others
Botswana Mauritius Senegal	Benin Cape Verde Ghana Madagascar Malawi Mali Mozambique Namibia Sao Tome Seychelles South Africa	CAR Comoros Rep of Congo Gabon Gambia Guinea-Bissau Niger Zambia	Angola Burkina-Faso Burundi Cameroon Chad DRC Cote d ivoire Djibouti Eq guinea Eritrea Ethiopia Guinea Liberia Mauritania Nigeria Rwanda Somalia Sudan Swaziland Tanzania Togo Uganda Zimbabwe	Kenya Lesotho Sierra- Leone

Note: *Old democracies are countries which were democratic before 1990; Consolidators are formerly non- democratic countries with an increase of at least two points in the 1990s and a subsequent sustained performance above a score of 4 on the political right index of freedom house; Setbacks are*

formerly non- democratic countries with an increase of at least two points in the 1990 in the political right index, but subsequent return to values below 4; Still births are countries that never sustainably reached past a score of 4. Others are countries difficult to categorize because of high volatility in the data (Lesotho, Sierra Leone), or recent dramatic change over previous pattern (Kenya).

Source: *Adapted from Englebert and Boduszynski (2005)*

An Overview of Regime Trajectory in Nigeria

Unlike in the Ghanaian situation; and as captured in table 1, Nigeria's democratic experience since the enthronement of a civilian regime in 1999 has been shrouded in controversy. Having gained political independence on the 1st of October 1960, Nigeria's first republic lasted only till January 1966 when the first military coup took place. From 1966, the military remained in power until 1979 when the second republic came into being. However, the second republic was short lived. By 1983, following a highly contested general election, another military coup ousted the Shagari administration and the military remained in power until 1999.

Since the end of military rule in 1999, Nigeria according to many observers, has only added to its history of fraudulent elections; as opposed to making any significant progress towards the consolidation of democracy. The 1999 elections that brought Olusegun Obasanjo to power were said to have been marred by such widespread fraud that observers from the US-based Carter Center concluded that "it is not possible for us to make an accurate judgment about the Presidential elections" (Carter Center & National Democratic Institute, 1999: 12). Nigeria's next round of general elections in 2003 were also widely seen as a test of Nigeria's progress towards more open and accountable governance after four years of civilian rule under Obasanjo. However, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) described the 2003 elections thus:

> *While the voters waited and persevered in the polling stations to cast their votes, the political class and the political parties had different ideas. The voters wanted their*

votes to determine the winner of the elections, while the political class wanted to corrupt the process and rig their way into elective office…on the whole, the result can be said to marginally reflect the choice and will of the Nigerian people (TMG 2003, in Agbaje & Adejumobi, 2006:39).

In the same light, Nigerian's 2007 general elections were widely regarded as a crucial barometer of the federal governments' commitment to the notion of democratic consolidation, but according to Human Rights Watch:

The polls marked a dramatic step backwards, even when measured against the dismal standard set by the 2003 election. Electoral officials alongside the very government agencies charged with ensuring the credibility of the polls were accused of reducing the elections to a violent and fraud ridden farce (Human Rights Watch: 2007).

Indeed, the view "that the history of election administration in Nigeria is a history of electoral fraud and violence" (Ajayi, 2007) is widespread. Suffice it to say that given the historicity of problematic and controversial election administration; Nigeria's democracy is yet to be consolidated. What differences therefore account for Ghana's ability to consolidate its democracy and Nigeria inability to do the same?

The External Linkages of Ghana and Nigeria: Implications for Democratic Consolidation

From table 2 it is evident that while Ghana's average revenue from export trade in the period: 1987 to 2007 is 2,611 million dollars, Nigeria's average revenue from exports in the same period was 36, 557.8 million dollars. With an increase of over one thousand four hundred percent in export revenues, Nigeria is more likely than Ghana to resist external pressure to consolidate.

Table 2: *Total Revenue Accruing from Export in Ghana and Nigeria (1987-2007)*

	Ghana				Nigeria			
Year	Cocoa	Timber	Manu-facturers	Total Exports US$ Millions (Feb)	Fuel	LNG	Manu-facturers	Total Exports US$ Millions (Feb)
1987	495	90	77	824	6,994	–	–	7,532
1997	470	172	129	1,810	14,850	–	40	15,539
2006	1002	207	323	3,685	53,113	4,602	–	59,113
2007	1,000	255	405	4,125	64,047	6,110	–	64,047

Source: *World Bank Indicators, 2008*

Similarly, from table 3, it is evident that the average aid per capita to Ghana in the period: 1990- 2008 is 37.474 million dollars while in the case of Nigeria, the average aid per capita for the same period is 8.947 million dollars. Thus, with a higher degree of dependency Ghana is more likely than Nigeria to yield to external pressure to consolidate.

Table 3: *Aid per Capita of Ghana and Nigeria (1990-2008)*

CONUTRY	GHANA	NIGERIA
Year	Aid per capita US $	Aid per capita US $
1990	36	3
1991	55	3
1992	37	3
1993	37	3
1994	31	2
1995	36	2
1996	35	2
1997	26	2
1998	36	2
1999	31	1
2000	30	1
2001	31	1
2002	31	1
2003	45	2
2004	64	4
2005	51	45
2006	51	79
2007	49	14
2008	---	---

Source: *World Bank Indicators, 2008*

Summary and Conclusion

After about two decades when the global democratisation process broke on Africa's shores, there is ample evidence that the extent to which African states have imbibed democratic principles is mixed. Within the context of the intersection of contemporary globalisation and the "third wave of global democratisation", this paper has attempted to provide an alternative explanation to the reason why Ghana has been able to consolidate its democracy and Nigeria has not. Evidences depicted in this paper confirms the proposition that the more a peripheral state derives huge revenues from commodity export, the more it will be able to exercise a significant degree of independence by resisting external pressure to imbibe liberal democratic values and vice versa. Similarly, the higher a peripheral country's aid per capita from the core, the more it will be able to consolidate its transition to democracy. Hence, just as the transition to civil rule was engendered significantly by external stimuli, democratic consolidation is also not unconnected to external factors.

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The *Almajiri* Phenomenon: A Study of The Youths in Qur'anic Schools in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

In the wave of the rapid deteriorating conditions of the Nigerian children within the context of the deepening character of the Nigerian economic crisis, the plights of the Almajirai *has attracted an intense debate amongst academics and policy makers. This is very significant, because it is increasingly becoming clear that the problems of* Almajirai *can no longer be understood as the outcome of short-term episodic events such as seasonal migrations of Mallams and pupils into urban centres, or street loitering by the* Almajirai. *Instead, the situation must be seen as the consequence of fundamental historical, dialectical and structural relationships of social forces, and inappropriate social and general economic policies of the Nigerian state.*
Keywords: Almajari, Qur'anic Schools, Northern Nigeria, Youths, Socio-Economic Crisis

Introduction

Almajirai (singular, *Almajiri*), are popularly known to many people as beggars, more especially teenage beggars, street kids and wanderers. The term also refers to the pupils and students of the Qur'anic schools. Some Islamic scholars, out of humility and respect, do also refer to

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themselves as *almajirai*, particularly when they are among their senior colleagues. Begging was not and is still not part of the curriculum of such schools, it rather emerged out of necessity. Begging became associated with the Qur'anic education system only in recent times (Mustapha, 1997). The situation surfaced out of the poor conditions of the schools and the poor economic levels of most the parents that send their children to such schools. The parents could neither provide financial support to their children nor pay fees in whatever form to their teachers. The children are therefore usually left completely in the hands of their teachers decide how they survive. When the teachers are unable to feed them properly, they resort to begging.

In Northern Nigeria, the Qur'anic Schools (QS) system predates western system of education. In fact, in most parts of Northern Nigeria, QS system predates even the Usmanu Danfodiyo Jihad (Kanawa, 1996). In practice, the QS system was an integrated educational set-up meant to provide training for children from kindergarten, through the basic, to graduate levels. The school system had for centuries provided training and produced scholars, teachers, Khadis, Imams, preachers, and reformers like Usmanu Danfodiyo, the leader of the famous Sokoto Jihad. It is a fact that the socio-economic and political base of the QS has collapsed irrespective of the powerful cultural and religious influence of the system on Muslim communities in Northern Nigeria. The challenge is how to comprehend what is happening to the Northern Nigerian Muslim children as a result of this collapse.

In the wave of the rapid deteriorating conditions of the Nigerian children within the context of the deepening Nigerian economic crisis, the plights of the *Almajirai* (the act of begging) had attracted serious debate amongst academics and policy makers. This is very significant because it is increasingly becoming clear that the problems of *Almajirai* can no longer be understood as the outcome of short-term episodic events such as seasonal migrations of Mallams and pupils into urban centres. Instead, the situation must be analysed as the consequence of fundamental historical, dialectical and structural relationships of social forces, and inappropriate social and general economic policies of the Nigerian state.

The QS system in Northern Nigeria, over the past decade, has experienced a massive and unprecedented transformation (Brenner, 1993.

This situation, which has direct bearing on the deepening national economic crisis, has not only led to the general collapse of living standard in the majority of the Qur'anic schools, but also led to the deteriorating condition of life of the *Almajirai*. With majority of the *Almajirai* coming from poverty-stricken large households, they were exposed at the very early stage of their lives, to the hazards and tribulations of the under-privilege population of the Nigerian urban centres.

The rapid degeneration of socio-cultural and economic support from the communities, coupled with the impact of structural adjustment programme (SAP), which brought with it the general withdrawal of government subsidies from the social services sector, compounded the problems of the Qur'anic schools. Demographic issues, such as family care, health care, reproductive health, primary education and traditional processes of human resource development, were grappled with difficulties. The explosion in the number of pupils that were taken into the Qur'anic schools, which was due to the unrestrained wave of population growth, and lack of capacity of some parents to take care of their offspring, did not help the situation. Instead of the average of thirty to forty pupils per school, as it used to be in the 1940s and 1950s, now the average is more than 180 per school (Skinner, 1977). The worst victims of this phenomenal transformation were the children. Some of them were taken to these schools at the age of three years; with a considerable number taken far away from their parents at such a very tender age.

In most Qur'anic schools, these children seat on bare floors, since most of the schools cannot afford even mats for their pupils and students. Most of them are in a terribly poor health condition, with very little or no parental care at a very crucial stage of life. With the poor attitude of adults toward adolescent welfare and sexuality, as well as the lack of information and services addressing their reproductive health concerns, the dangers of exposing the *Almajirai* to unnecessary risks abound.

This study essentially examined the conditions of the *Almajirai*, most of who happen to be kid-beggars, hawkers and wanderers. It analysed the impact of socio-economic transformation taking place in Nigeria, as it affects the lives of these kids and the problems of development in Nigeria. It examined the consequences and implications of the phenomenon as it

affects the life of the male child and the female child in society. And finally, we attempt to provide some suggestions on practical measures for remediating the situation.

Historical Background

In Northern Nigeria, with the Qur'anic school system predating the western education system, the majority of the population still looks upon the QS system to provide training for their offspring. In fact, most families view the QS as an integrated educational set up, capable of providing training for children. But unfortunately the realities of the QS has changed, the system is not in a position to carry on with its traditional task as before.

The degeneration of the Qur'anic school system into the present state of not being able to provide adequate care for its pupils and students had its roots in the history of the socio-economic, political, and cultural transformation of the society in this part of Africa. The colonial experience was the turning point in the history of this transformation (Bako & Sule-Kano, 1994). The acute crisis which gripped the Nigerian economy from the 1970s, and the structural adjustment programme (SAP) of the mid 1980s have generally been accompanied by an intensely severe and correspondingly deep social crisis. Most Nigerian families were faced with acute socio-economic deprivations and poverty. Rates of crime and delinquency especially among the youths, have been on the increase, and reached a frightening level by the mid 1990s. The deplorable moral bankruptcy and degeneration in terms of open prostitution, marital and family turmoil, coupled with the fast deteriorating condition of both formal and traditional educational systems have placed the society at its lowest ebb in terms of conduct. SAP policies, for instance, have led to the collapse of health care and social welfare infrastructure and services. This has exposed the populace to the dangers of ravaging infectious diseases including sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). All these have compounded the problematic life of Nigerian children.

Nigerian children, like their parents, were confronted with rapid changes that negatively affected all facets of their lives, within the context of the existing socio-economic, political and cultural transformation. In Northern

Nigeria, these problems were manifested in various forms such as social explosions like the *Maitatsine* crisis, the *Yandaba* phenomenon, and the *Yandaukan Amarya* incidences. These were some of the consequences of the conditions of poverty in which the majority of these children have been placed, and the *Almajiri* phenomenon provided the grounds for the recruitment of the masses of these kids into all sorts of antisocial activities in society. Most often the *Almajirai* were turned into beggars, hawkers, and wanderers. They live in a terribly sorry state of learning, with little chances of learning anything serious. Most of them live in conditions of poor health, malnutrition, and squalor.

With the majority of the *Almajirai* coming from poor peasant and low-income working class families, the situation they found themselves can be attributed to the poverty of their parents. Thus, the circumstances which the majority of the *Almajirai* found themselves cannot be unconnected with the poor conditions of their parents. Most poor families were faced with attendant decline in family income, which was translated into poor nutrition status of the children. The withdrawal of government support from the social sectors has led to an increasing cost of social and economic burden on parents, as it relates to the bringing up of children.

Under this condition, *Almajirai* as it were, became a perfect excuse for some parents to reduce the burden of rearing children. Sometimes, this involves taking the children far away from their homes and, in most cases, these children, as the *Almajirai,* were left to fend for themselves. They were exposed to various forms of child abuse, from being chained in *Mari,* to being used as a source of cheap labour by some members of the host communities. A good number of these children have become delinquents and have turned to crimes. Some have caught various forms communicable and infectious diseases in the process of their training. In very difficult times, these children were brought up like refugees. They become squatters and live in terrible condition of penury under which learning was extremely difficult.

Transformation of the Qur'anic School System
Prior to this period of general crisis, Qur'anic scholarship was an integral part of the socio-economic, political and cultural way of life of the Muslim

communities of northern Nigeria. As far back as 15th century, there were formidable scholars and Islamic institutions in most commercial centres of Hausaland. The most prominent among these in the pre jihad period were Abdulrahaman al-Zagaiti and Muhammad Abd al-Karim al-Maghili, and the Salame School, which was a university established by Muhammad Bello under the leadership of one of the great scholars of the period (Bello, 1994, Suleiman, 1986:11). Al-Maghili, for example, was known to have established numerous schools, mosques, *shari-ah* courts and Islamic polity in Kano and Katsina in collaboration with traditional rulers of these areas. The legacy of the al-Maghili school is still evident in Kano and Katsina. The Qur'anic scholarship was at its peak under the authorities of the Caliphate.

The leadership of the Caliphate launched, beginning from 1804, a vigorous campaign to eradicate illiteracy. The fundamental reasoning was philosophical; they argued that "everything must have a support and foundation, and the support of this religion (Islam) is knowledge" (Bello, 1994:2). Hence qualified teachers were sent to urban and rural areas for what was then referred to as the intellectual up-liftment of the people. In a policy statement to his people, *the Amir* of the Caliphate, Muhammad Bello, was quoted saying:

> We will attach to him (village head) a tutor who will instruct their children, and a learned man who will lead them in their prayers and teach their students. (Bello, 1994:2)

Scholars were sent to all nooks and corners of the Caliphate. Most of them were experts in various fields of knowledge. In addition to their expertise in the field of religious studies, they learned and taught students in the fields of Hausa, Fulfulde, Kanuri, Zarma and Arabic languages, philosophy, arithmetic, history and theological sciences. Scholarship flourished. Parents were eager to send their children to school, both boys and girls. There was an emphasis on women education. Women's classes were organised, and Nana Asma'u, the daughter of Sheik Usmanu Danfodiyo, established movement for mass education for women.

The control of the state then was in the hands of the *Ulama* (scholars). In addition to the state taking care of the schools, teachers and students, a tradition of community support for the institutions of learning was

established. Teachers, who were in the move, were adequately taken care of together with their pupils and students by the communities they settled in. All that they had to do was to report to district or village head of host community, who would make arrangements for accommodation and feeding for the Mallam and his pupils/students. According to Mallam Abdu Na Altine, meals were provided for to the Mallam and his family from the compound of the district head or village head of the host community. Such services were continuous, until the Mallam departed that community, if he happened not to be with his wife in his entourage. In such cases where the Mallam was moving with his wife, they would be fed from the meals of the district or village head for at least three months. Thereafter, when he had settled, he would be provided with the basic things he needed for his family to provide meals for themselves. For the *Almajirai*, almost every household in the locality would provide dish from their meals. Most often they went around from one household to another to collect. In some cases children in such households had to be sent out, to look for *Almajirai* to collect food kept aside for them. By and large, the community support was provided in whatever form the school required, in addition to what the school could provide to make life easier and learning conducive for the *Almajirai*.

The Mallam in return would admit pupils/students in the host community into his school. And he would provide whatever assistance necessary, (intellectual and spiritual) for the development of the community. Some times when departing from such community, he took along some of the children of the host community for further training under him. On the whole, the Qur'anic school system flourished until the turn of the century when it was confronted by so many new historical realities. The colonial conquest, for example, was a turning point in the history of the Qur'anic school system.

The Period of General Socio-economic Crisis
Both colonial and post-colonial states in Nigeria have engineered policies that transformed the Qur'anic School system into the conditions of stagnation and underdevelopment. In the first place, colonial conquest not only destroyed the traditional state and political control, it devastated the traditional educational set up.

The colonial wars, for instance, led to the massacre of the vast majority of the scholars who, by nature of their commitment, were also warriors in the army. A reasonable number of those intellectuals that survived the colonial conquest, could not remain under the colonial state, they fled on exile to the East. The situation actually not only disrupted the traditional education set up but also destroyed higher institutions of learning that existed before the conquest. The University of Salame, for example, was destroyed and virtually all important literature in the institution were taken away to Europe by the colonial masters (Bello, 1994). Those scholars who remained immediately after the conquest, were paraded and ordered to submit all literature at their disposal to the colonial authorities. Not all that was submitted to the authorities were actually returned to the Mallams. On the whole, a situation was created in which the system was not able to recover ever since.

Secondly, the colonial education policy in northern Nigeria was designed to directly undermine the traditional education set up. Prior to the conquest, languages of instruction in the Qur'anic school system were Hausa, Fulfulde, Zarma, and Kanuri which were written in Arabic alphabets, known as *Ajami*. Even after the declaration of Northern Nigeria as a protectorate in 1903, the use of *Ajami* was reported to be widespread in the running of the affairs of Native Authority, the Christian missionaries, and some colonial administrators (NAK SNP-7-1907-Wallace, 1907). But the colonial authorities decided against it. Lord Lugard ordered the use of Romanize Hausa instead. And two drastic measures were taken to ensure a stoppage in the use of *Ajami*. First, English language was made the only official language of the colonial authorities. Secondly, new alphabets, that are the Roman alphabets, were introduced to replace the Arabic ones (Alkali, *et al.* 1993:99). The implication of this policy was that traditional Islamic scholars were rendered officially "illiterate", thereby rendering the Qur'anic school system no longer relevant in the dispensation of knowledge as far as the colonial state was concerned. This constituted a major setback in the development of the Qur'anic school system, and it posed a serious challenge to its capacity to prepare the younger generation that pass through it in the challenges of modern times.

Thirdly was the economic transformation that was set in motion by the colonial state, which generated a trend that was sustained even after

independence by the post-colonial state. The peak of it all was attained with the introduction of the structural adjustment programme in 1980s. This was the economic transformation of the country from a pre-capitalist mode into a modern market economic system, in more severe manner. It was this transformation that has changed the interest and logic of socio-economic relationships in the traditional societies of Northern Nigeria and reshaped them along the general interest of the new market economy.

The implications of this transformation on the Qur'anic school system are many. First, it has undermined the single most important source of support to Qur'anic School system, the traditional peasants societies. The transformation has not only led the peasant societies to lose their internal dynamism (Barker, 1989:125), but it also placed them on the defensive in terms of their ability to provide the basic means of sustenance for a healthy population (Gwadabawa, 1995). Thus, hunger became the bane of life of the *Almajirai*. The peasant families actually provided the largest number of pupils to the schools and their incapacity to support their children with food in school constituted a major drawback for healthy living for the *Almajirai*. In Sokoto township, our survey revealed that pupils from peasant families constituted 56.6% of the total children attending Qur'anic schools. In a less cosmopolitan township like Talata Mafara, pupils from peasant families constituted over 82.3% of all the children attending the schools.

Secondly, individualisation of production, which was one of the most lasting impact of market economy on the peasant's production set-up, became synonymous with the severing of peasant households from pre-capitalist reciprocal ties, which was the backbone of community support to the Qur'anic school system.

Under these conditions the logic of socio-economic relationships, which supported the schools changed completely. They became exposed and subjected to all the distress and shocks of the market economy without either the support of the community or the state. Consequently, Qur'anic schools have been left to their own device, namely, destitution. There was virtually very little or no community support to most of them. Parents were left to make only individual contributions to the schools whenever they so wish. Most parents would prefer not to contribute anything besides shedding

off the burden of their children to the schools. In some schools less than 10% of parents made any contribution at all. It was on this basis that this study was able to establish a link between the general disposition of the traditional societies under the condition of general crisis, and collapse of the Qur'anic school system.

Recent findings have shown that the historical antecedents which underlie the transformation of *Almajirai*, that is, the institution of the *'Almajiri'*, into its present identity as an institution for the production of street kids, kid-beggars, hawkers and wanderers amongst pupils of such school system, were rooted in poverty (Focus Group Discussion, December, 1995, Daura, 1995). This was traced first at the level of the general social structure in terms of lack of the control of societal resources, most especially amongst the low-income category of the Muslim populace. This was determined by historical development and it constituted the underlying causes to the problems associated with the *Almajirai*. Secondly, the central issues of household food security, family care, and the religious conviction of Muslim families of the victims, were the basic causes of the problems. Our survey revealed that 56.6% and 82.3% of the pupils of the Qur'anic schools in Sokoto and Talata Mafara respectively, were from peasant families Thirdly, inadequate resources, lack of care, and some times even faulty foundation of learning for pupils at the level of the schools, constitute the immediate causes of the problems. The dynamics of this scenario had some serious consequences on the life and social development of the *Almajirai*.

Furthermore, there is a correlation between the influx of kids from Muslim peasant background into cities and suburbs, and the traditional seasonal migration, popularly known as *Cirani*. Both serve as mechanisms for handling the problems of inadequate food reserve at family level which cannot last the whole year, or at least taking the families through the most critical period of the year, that is, the raining season (Gwadabawa, 1995).

The female child, *Almajira,* appeared more vulnerable. Both male and female children suffer from the consequences of poverty of their respective families. But the female *Almajira* suffer the additional burden of being forced to contribute to whatever resources was available to the family to help in preparing her for marriage (Nana, 1995). Our study found that

where mothers were the only surviving parents, and where husbands were so poor to fend for the family effectively, girls from such family were forced to hawk petty commodities for mothers in the process of supporting the family (Nasara, 1995; Ati, 1982). The consequence of this action was devastating, most especially on the sexuality of the female child.

The custom in which young scholars were encouraged to put into practice trade skills learnt at home whenever they found themselves, and the encouragement of those *Almajirai* who had no skills to become apprentices in different crafts of the communities they were studying in, have virtually vanished (Barkindo, 1983. The few cases of the practice of crafts and petty trade we observed among some senior students, male and female pupils were on their own and this was said to have originated from the homes of those who practice them.

On the other hand, our survey results show that, in Sokoto, out of 780 Qur'anic School pupils interviewed, 56.6% of the pupils came from peasant families. Out of this, 50.6% were male pupils and 6.0% were female pupils. From the working class families were 43.3% of the *Almajirai*. The male and female pupils constituted 38.46% and 4.97% respectively.

The results further show that 68.7% of the Qur'anic school pupils in the survey came from families with five and above children. 60.4% of this figure were boys, while only 8.3% were girls. Families with four and less than four children supplied 31.3% of the pupils, 27.3% were boys and 3.9% were girls.

We found that 38.8% of the pupils in the survey did not attend primary school in Sokoto; 33.3% and 5.5% of this figure were boys and girls respectively. The study shows that 15.2% of the pupils came from outside Sokoto. Male pupils constituted 14.7%, while the females were only 0.5%. Hunger was found to be the major problem of 23.0% of the pupils, most of them males, only 0.5% girls were affected. Among this group 9.6% all boys were found to be perpetually begging for food.

In Talata Mafara, out of 260 pupils interviewed in the survey, 82.3% were children from peasant families. The boys were 63.4% and the girls 18.8%. From the working class families of Talata Mafara, there were only 17.7% of the pupils in Qur'anic schools of this figure, 15% were boys and only 2.7% were girls.

Families with five and above children provided 86.53% of the pupils. Boys constituted 68.1% of this number, while girls were 18.7%. On the other hand, families with four and less than four children provided only 13.5% of the pupils. Girls were only 3.1% and the boys 10.4%.

We found that 76.5% of the Qur'anic school pupils were not enrolled in primary school. Boys constituted 56.5% and girls 20%. Pupils from outside Talata Mafara constituted 18.5% of the Almajirai. 14.2% of the pupils faced hunger as a major problem daily, all of them were boys and 13.8% were always in the move during mealtime begging for food.

Pupils in Qur'anic Schools and the Challenges Ahead

In the wake of urbanisation and the attendant class struggle in Northern Nigeria, there emerged greater social ills and economic crisis which led to the intensification of destitution, poverty, squalor, filth and depression. The pupils of Qur'anic schools were not left out in their struggle to survive under this appalling social condition. This situation was engineered by capitalist transformations, which placed the lives of its victims, most of them women and children, in greater jeopardy in the face of the challenges of the modern world.

With knowledge being the cornerstone of both religious and socio-economic life of traditional Muslim communities in Northern Nigeria, Qur'anic Schools occupied a very central position in societal life before colonial conquest. Muslim families will object to having their offspring grow up as illiterates, because that signifies double tragedy in one's life. This was considered to be a great loss in this world and complete loss in the hereafter. It was for this reason that the Islamic religion encourages followers to seek for knowledge, as per the popular tradition of the Prophet of Islam: *'Seek knowledge even if it means going as far as Sin (China)'*.

It was on this ground that parents send their children to school, and even send them far away from home to learn under a particular Mallam. But the socio-economic environment has changed. The school support set-up has changed, even from the angle of parents who actually send their offspring to these schools. A number of practices, which not only assisted the schools but also encouraged the pupils to devote themselves to learning, no longer exist. Practices like the provision of special beans

meal to the school, when a pupil attained the first stage of his learning of the Qur'an, or the slaughter of goat or ram when such pupils have gone half way, or even a grand *Walima* party when they finally graduated, were no longer feasible for most parents. But every family wanted its offspring to attend the Qur'anic school. They wanted their children to know how to read and write, memorize the scriptures, and know how to practice the religion as good Muslims. With a population growth rate of 3%, and childhood population of more than 50% of the adult population, the pressure on the Qur'anic schools have become overwhelming in Northern Nigeria.

Survival of the *Almajirai* and their Teachers under the Qur'anic School System in Nigeria

Taking into cognisance, the number of children that large families send out to the Qur'anic schools outside their localities, which may suggest attempts by some parents to reduce the burden of taking care of such children in difficult times, the condition under which the scarce resources at the disposal of the school have been over-stretched. This has posed very serious challenge to the attainment of the fundamental objectives of the school system. For instance, an average school in Sokoto with a population of 180 pupils under the control of one Mallam and an assistant, is usually located in a house entrance known as *Shigifa or Zaure* in Hausa, being used as the classroom, which has the capacity of less than 25 pupils and a shed. Such school would sometimes have at least not less than one-third of its total number of pupils/students from outside Sokoto. It does not have an additional space as an accommodation for such migrant pupils, and neither does it have even toilet facilities. The Mallams did not earn any steady income. At best, less than 20% of the parents contributed between one Naira and five Naira weekly; otherwise: the Mallams had to look elsewhere for their daily survival. The Mallams have mostly been left to their own devices. Such situations pose a very serious challenge to any Mallam, more especially under a crisis situation. With practically very little or no support from most parents and the community, the mere burden of "Mallam's domestic work" was a problem (Liman, 1995).

Thus, as part of the coping mechanism of the schools, part of the burden was also transferred onto the pupils and students most especially those

coming from outside the locality. They have to till the soil for the Mallam, if he has a farm, fetch water for his domestic use, collect fire wood, and some times bring even part of what they get from begging. The innovation under the present condition of crisis was that male pupils and students have to contribute money to some Mallams, from whatever sources available outside the school as a result of begging. Thus, the intensification of begging by the pupils will enhance the living condition of the Mallams. In addition, the pupils and students would also have to find other ways to fend for themselves; in the midst of all the difficulties of an urban life.

The innovation on the side of the *Almajirai* as a response to these demands was in the form of commerciogenic food transaction'. This comes out of as a form an association between the *Almajirai* and some food vendors who sell specific types of foods, which are commonly given to *Almajirai* as alms. They move in groups with the food vendor on the lead, from one spot to another, looking for prospective buyers and givers of alms to the needy. Once a good Samaritan gives out money to the vendor for the food to be shared to the needy, the *Almajirai*, ready made needy, are shared the food or snacks by the vendors of the equivalent of whatever amount that was given. The process continues repeatedly, until such a time the *Almajirai* have gathered so much of such food, which in most cases they eat virtually nothing from; then the food vendor buys it back from the *Almajirai* at a price lower than the actual price of the food. The *Almajirai* will then collect their money, and the process continues again and again, until such a time when the food vendor had made enough money over and above the actual cost of the food brought out for sale, then the vendor would reject buying back from the *Almajirai*. The *Almajirai* in turn would have made some money in the process to take to the Mallam, and some times part of the rejected food from the vendor. The process exposes them to all kinds of food poisoning due to lack of proper hygiene of the food conditions.

For the Mallams, we observed that in addition to conventional practices of teaching, leading in prayers and other spiritual activities of the societal daily life, that is, presiding at naming ceremonies, marriages, funerals, and offering of spiritual advice and medicines for spiritual healing, some of them have now acquired additional roles. These include being

contracted by some government agents to pray for the success of oppressive governments, organise prayers for primitive accumulators and appropriators of societal resources, and offer charms to notorious criminals, who sometimes reward them heavily from their loot.

The Phenomenon of *Begging (Bara)* and Hawking *(Talla)*

Begging *(Bara)* and Hawking *(Talla)* are the double tragedy that undermined and are still undermining the educational progress of students of the Qur'anic school system. As part of the impact of the general economic crisis, some parents and teachers in the schools have consciously sent their wards to the street to beg or to hawk. This is irrespective of the dangers associated with such practices. In essence, *begging* and *hawking* have become part of the lives of the *Almajirai* in order to satisfy their economic needs.

Begging, which is the predominant practice of the male *Almajiri*, entails moving from one spot to another, where people perform their daily activities, to beg for alms, food, etc. Very few cases of the female *Almajirai*, in such practice were noticeable. In most instances, it is only on special occasion in which you could find girls moving around with their slates, well decorated with writings from the scriptures, signifying the completion of a stage in the learning of the Qur'an. The expectation was that they could be given alms as they show the slate to their audience.

Begging is the most distracting part of the daily activities of the *Almajiri*. It takes them off the school environment and out of the control of the teacher *(mallam)*. This gives them the opportunity to mix up with delinquent children and provided chances of visiting several 'unholy places' such as prostitution houses and playhouse. In some cases they serve as errand boys or do certain menial jobs to prostitute, local restaurants, etc that could lead them into imbibing negative habits.

Hawking has the most devastating effect on the girl child. It at times leads to her withdrawal from school. According to Modibbo Nasara, "Allah forbids girls from *Talla*. He promised to punish any parent that allows his or her daughter to go to *Talla*. Any girl who attained the age of 12 years must not be allowed to wander outside her home". Part of the ills of *Talla* which Modibbo Nasara outlined include: exposure to early sex

and sexual harassment, bad orientation from bad company, and stealing. All these were in addition to the distraction of taking the female child's attention from school. It was however acknowledged that the prevalence of female child practice of *Talla*, was not unconnected with the poverty of some of the families involved. Modibbo Asma'u pointed out that, in households where husbands were sacked from their jobs and failed to support the family adequately, situations exit in which mothers had to send their daughters for hawking in order to generate money to support the family and other cultural practices that were associated with the preparation of marriage for their daughters.

Exposure to Diseases

The conditions of destitution and penury, which the majority of the *Almajirai* are exposed to, have rendered them vulnerable to poverty, to diseases related to malnutrition like tuberculosis, scabies, respiratory problems, and even sexually transmissible diseases. Taking into cognisance the fact that sexually transmissible diseases (STDs) are major problems in the world today, and going by the present rapid degeneration of morality, as a component of the general crisis in Nigerian society, it is necessary to recognise the fact that one of the major drawbacks of the Qur'anic schools is their lack of capacity to handle effectively the number of children under their care. That is getting the children to go through all the basics of a Qur'anic school, and at the same time giving them sound moral lessons and the knowledge of Islamic reproductive health issues.

Taking into consideration the fact that an adequate sexuality education to prepare the adolescents to deal with the problems that may arise during puberty rarely takes place at home, the traditional role of the Qur'anic school system is still very relevant. This is because, among most Muslim parents, sexuality education was constrained by the cultural practice of *Kunya* (modesty), that is, parents are too shy to impart sexuality education to their children. The Qur'anic school system remains one of the most viable institutions to prepare the adolescents against the challenges of the modern scourges in society. More so, this was a set-up in which the majority of parents would not like to send their children to modern formal schools, due to their legendary hatred against western education.

We also found that the Qur'anic school system was faced with the major constraints in terms of societal individualism and disorder in this critical period of capitalist transformation. Children have become the worst victims of this transformation. In addition to their suffering from consequences of massive poverty in the society, in terms of hunger, poverty, diseases and squalor, they also suffer from rape, unwanted pregnancies, and sometimes even incest. Parents, scholars, communities and authorities that view the situation with serious concern, should do whatever is possible to save this young generation from an impending disaster.

The Responsibilities of Government and Muslim Groups to the *Almajiri* Phenomenon:

In the short and medium term, the communities affected by the *Almajiri* phenomenon cannot afford to continue to fold their arms and watch the rapid degeneration of the lives of their offspring. If the government recognises the importance of religious education, then they must take the full responsibility for educating and socialising the young ones. This has become an obligation more especially under the situation of general societal crisis and the absence of a responsible authority to bear such burden in a plural society. The socio-economic and political costs of not acting are enormous. It should be a matter of concern to the whole country. Taking into cognisance the current trend of societal degeneration under the condition of general socio-economic crisis, and the withdrawal of subsidies by government from social sectors,

Muslim communities should bear part of the responsibilities of educating and providing adequate socialisation of their offspring in order for them to be able to face the challenges of modern times. Muslim communities should consider putting on the agenda, the vexed problems of *Almajirai* and the general upbringing of Muslim children, whenever they are to select or elect their representatives into any leadership position. In addition, they should insist and work towards seeing that only representatives that are honest and incorruptible in the management of all public funds are elected to represent them. This challenge should first go to the community leaders, Local Government officials, and then to the national level. For immediate

action, each Muslim community hosting a Qur'anic school should bear part of the responsibilities of the school in their locality.

In the long run, the Muslim communities (Umma) in Nigeria have to come to terms with the objective realities of their existence. They have to consciously and collectively decide as to whether to allow the drift into socio-economic, cultural and political degeneration to continue, to stop it, through purposeful planning for the future in terms of ethical and cultural development. This study presumed that collectively the affected communities in this country would go for the later. And if that be the case, then the challenge before the Muslim Umma as far as the *Almajiri* phenomenon is concerned, is to recognise the magnitude of the problem with a view to demanding for the National Policy on Education to recognise and capture the peculiarities of the Qur'anic school system. This should be done even if it means allowing for the development of a free and compulsory set-up at the primary level. The present trends in socio-economic, cultural and political development in Nigeria have challenged earlier position held by policy analysts in education which presumed that the QS system would wither away with the development of the modern primary education system.

For policy makers and analysts, there is the need to take into account a number of issues. First, the historical significance of the practice of the QS system persists because of the memories of colonial atrocities against the traditional intellectuals and the education system. What was done in the form of enlightenment of the traditional Muslim societies in northern Nigeria, to recognise that the objectives of modern education in the post colonial era was different from what these societies had experienced earlier under colonialism, appeared not to be enough. To counter the position of skepticism, which still prevails, there is the need for more serious enlightenment campaigns not just by government, but also by enlightened Muslims in the localities.

Secondly, it is important to recognise that the QS system is still relevant to the majority of the population of the Muslims at the grassroot level. The system remains pertinent within the context of the socio-economic, cultural and political circumstances which the majority of the Muslim populace found itself. The degree of the patronage of the

system should be a matter of serious concern to any national education policy. In Sokoto metropolis, for example, our survey reveals that for every one primary school there were over twelve Quranic schools, and the schools have over twice the number of pupils in terms of total enrollments of the primary schools in the township. Furthermore, 45% of the total number of the school-aged pupils in the schools were not enrolled in modern primary schools. In Talata Mafara, a less cosmopolitan area compared to Sokoto, the ratio is nineteen Qur'anic school to one primary school. Over 54.5% of school age pupils in Qur'anic schools do not attend modern primary schools.

Thirdly, there is need to explore the possibility of utilising the Qur'anic school system as cheap alternative means for pre-primary education based on community efforts with possible assistance, regulation, and control of government.

Conclusion

The Nigerian political economy, being overwhelmingly a neo-colonial one, has inherently some internal dynamics that never worked in the interest of the oppressed majority. The problems of the *Almajirai,* therefore, are an explicit result of capitalist transformation. Caught up within the combined effects of poor socio-economic base and capitalist instigated economic crisis, Muslim communities of the lower class in Nigeria have to confront the pernicious consequences of poverty as it affects the lives of their offspring. It is also a challenge to the well-to-do section of the Muslim communities, within the framework of their beliefs, to support the uplifting of this less privileged class, more especially its younger generation.

It is very clear that the lasting solution to the problems of the Nigerian children from peasant and working class families is dependent on the ability of their parents to effectively control and determine their destiny through active participation in taking decisions on issues which affect their lives. We still believe that all those concerned with the plight of children should do whatever is possible to avert the dangers of destruction of the future of these children and by implication, the destruction of the future of the country.

Notes

FGD: Interview, Talata Mafara, (December 16th 1995).

Almajiri Field Survey, Sokoto and Talata Mafara, (September/October, 1995).

Adamu Gwadabawa: Interview, Sokoto, (September 13th 1995).

Modibbo Nana: Interview, Yar Sake, Sokoto, (November 13th 1995).

Modibbo Nasara: Interview, Siridawa, Sokoto, (December 10th 1995).

Sambo na Liman: Interview, Gidan Liman, Sokoto, (November 2nd 1995).

Modibbo Asma'u: Interview, Yar Sake, Sokoto, (November 13th 1995).

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