

# AN ASSESSMENT OF FACILITIES AND BEST PRACTICES IN CHILD CARE CENTRE'S IN BENUE STATE OF NIGERIA

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**Abstract:** Unfortunately, the number of children living in Orphanages appears to be rising and managing these institutions in a professional manner still poses serious challenges. There is variability in the availability of important facilities such as portable water, electricity, clothing, medical, recreational and educational facilities in Child Care Centre's. The objective of this study was to assess the quality and quantity of facilities in Child Care Centers in Benue State and also to implement best practices. The study used Purposive Sampling technique to assess 14 known registered Children Homes with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, the Government Ministry tasked with Social Protection. The 14 Homes had a total number of 344 children. (64.3%) 9 out of 14 Homes had an administrative office in place. (35.7%) 5 out of 14 Children Homes did not have adequate space for sleeping. (78.5%) 10 out of 14 Children Homes did not have access to recreational facilities. Only (50%) 7 out of 14 Homes had a good nanny to children ratio. All the 14 Child Care Centers assessed did not have either Social Workers or Counselors among their staffs. Most of the Homes did not meet the minimum criteria or standard for a Child Care Center as prescribed by the Government or even indulged in best practices. The study recommended that Governments at the National, State and Local level should give financial support to approved Orphanages depending on their capacities and needs, and also establish a careful and frequent monitoring framework for them.

**Keywords:** Child Care Centers, Children Homes, Facilities, Orphanages.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

An Orphan is defined as a child that has lost one or both parents. The loss of one parent classifies a child as a "single orphan" and the loss of both parents as a "double orphan". In many cases an orphan may still live with primary or extended family. Globally, it is estimated that there are approximately 153 million children who have lost a mother or a father; 17.8 million of them have lost both parents according to United States Government Fifth Annual Report to Congress on Worlds Vulnerable Children (2010). The most frequent causes of separation of children from parental care include poverty, lack of access to basic services, abuse, neglect, disease, disabilities and emergencies. UNICEF estimates that at least 2.2 million children in the world live in Orphanages. Orphanages in this case include all types of residential care from small (15 or fewer children) to large scale institutions. Pinheiro (2006) noted that this number is considered by many to be a significant underestimate, given that many Orphanages around the world are unregistered and the children living within them are not officially counted. Unfortunately, the number of children living in Orphanages appears to be rising. This increase contradicts global guidance and the stated policies of many governments directing the scaling down of Orphanage care, and in some parts of the world the rise is growing unchecked.

Benue State was created on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1976 with its headquarters located in Makurdi. The 2006 National Population Census placed Benue State population at 4,253,641 of which 2,109,598 were female and 2,144,043 males (NPC 2009). This was projected to reach 5,614,066 by 2015. According to National Bureau of Statistics (2013) in their report, Benue has a geographical area of 30,800 km<sup>2</sup>, making it 11<sup>th</sup> largest state in the country. The state is known as the Food Basket

of the Nation and 70% of the population work in agricultural sector. Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (2013) in their report asserted that Benue State claims the highest percentage of Orphans (25%) in the country, only 36.9% of all Benue children are able to meet their basic needs for shoes, clothing and a blanket.

This study aimed at assessing the quantity and quality of facilities in Orphanages in Benue State, and also to determine whether these institutions are implementing best practices as described by the National Policy and Guidelines for the Establishment, Management and Monitoring of Child Care Centers in Nigeria. The information obtained from this study could serve as a baseline to compare changes in vulnerable Children programming and also as a source of information for evaluating interventions and making evidence-based decisions regarding the care of Orphans and other vulnerable children in the state.

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The plight of children in Child Care Centre's (Orphanages, Motherless Babies Homes, Children Homes, Remand Homes etc.) in Nigeria has attracted national and international attention. Reports in the media concerning abhorrent practices including baby racketeering, proliferation of sub-standard homes and illegal adoption all call for collective societal concern and need urgent attention. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (2007) in their Directory of Orphanages in Nigeria, noted a variability in the availability of important facilities such as portable water, electricity, clothing, medical, recreational and educational facilities in Orphanages assessed across the country. In the light of the need to sanitize the situation, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development Benue State through its Child Development Department embarked on this research, monitoring tour to supervise Children Homes in Benue State.

## III. OBJECTIVES

The Specific objectives were;

1. To find the total number of children disaggregated by sex and age in all Child Care Centre's.
2. To identify the total number of children enrolled in school in all the Child Care Centre's.
3. To ascertain how many Child Care Centre's, meet the minimum requirements of a standard Child Care Centre.
4. To sensitize owners of Child Care Centre's on world's best practices.
5. To make recommendations on how to ensure or improve the provision of adequate support facilities for Institutionalized Orphans

## IV. METHOD

### A. Design

A Non-probability Sampling approach was adopted. Specifically, Purposive Sampling technique was used to select the 14 Children Homes assessed. This technique was used because, the 14 Children Homes were the only registered and recognizable Homes by the State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Benue State Government of Nigeria, a Government Ministry saddled with the responsibility of social protection and welfare.

### B. Population and Sample of Study

A total number of 14 Children Homes were assessed in the study area and stated below is the data generated from these Homes disaggregated by Sex of Children, School Enrolment Records and Age range of the children. We had (59.9%) 206 males and (40.1%) 138 females in the 14 Homes. As for the School Enrolment Records (55.8%) 192 were enrolled in nursery and primary school, (19.8%) 68 were enrolled into secondary school, (4.1%) 14 were enrolled into tertiary institutions and (20.3%) 70 were at that time not in school, some under age, some still waiting for enrollment. In regards to the age range of these children (16.6%) 57 were between 15-17years, (27.6%) 95 were between 10-14years of age, (39.5%) 136 were between 3-9years and (16.3%) 56 were between 0-2 years of age.

### C. Instrument of Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative primary data was collected through the use of a checklist and questionnaire developed from two national documents namely; National Policy and Guideline for the Establishment, Management and Monitoring of

Child Care Centre's in Nigeria developed by Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD) and the Guidelines for Protection of Children in Formal Care developed by National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP). The instrument collected data on Socio-Demographic variables in Section 'A' such as sex, age and school enrollment rate of the studied sample. In Section 'B' data was collected on 9 thematic areas, which includes; General Administration Office, Adequate Space for Sleeping, Laundry Staff and Equipment, Toiletries, Recreational Facilities, Ratio of Nannies, Presence of Sickbay, Adequate Food Stuffs and kitchen and the availability of Social Workers and Counselors.

#### **D. Research Procedure**

Purposive Sampling Technique was used for the selection of the Children Homes under study, because these Homes are the only recognizable and registered Homes in the study area. The researcher went to each of the Homes and administered the checklist and questionnaire to either the managers or the owners of the Homes, depending on who was available and accessible at the time of the visit. Observation was also carried out in the Homes.

#### **E. Method of Data Analysis**

IBM Statistical Package for Social Science Version 21 was used for data analysis. The study implored descriptive statistics, such as averages, frequencies, percentages and cross tabulation to define the data.

### **V. PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS**

**Table 1: Distribution of Access to Administrative Office in Child Care Centre's**

Responses	Child Care Centre's	Percentage
In place	9	64.3
Not in place	5	35.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

The result indicates that majority of the Child Care Centre's under study (64.3%) 9 have an administrative office in place.

**Table 2: Access to Adequate Sleeping Space in Child Care Centre's**

Responses	Child Care Centre's	Percentage
In place	9	64.3
Partially in place	3	21.4
Not in place	2	14.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

This result indicates that a majority (64.3%) 9 of the Child Care Centre's have adequate sleeping space, while (35.7%) 5 don't have enough space for sleeping.

**Table 3: Distribution of Laundry Staff in Child Care Centre's**

Responses	Child Care Centre's	Percentage
In place	6	42.9
Partially in place	2	14.2
Not in place	6	42.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

The output of this assessment shows that (57.1%) 8 of Child Care Centre's lack the required number of laundry or support staff.

**Table 4: Distribution of Toiletries and Other Supplies in Child Care Centre's**

Responses	Child Care Centre's	Percentage
In place	4	28.6
Partially in place	8	57.1
Not in place	2	14.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

The result shows that at least (71.4%) 10 of Child Care Centre's do not have adequate supplies of toiletries and other suppliers

**Table 5: Distribution of Recreational Facilities in Child Care Centre's**

Responses	Child Care Centre's	Percentage
In place	3	21.4
Partially in place	1	7.1
Not in place	10	71.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority that is (78.5%) 11 of Child Care Centre's had no recreational facilities or toys for the Children to play with.

**Table 6: Adequate Nannies to Children Ratio in Child Care Centre's**

Responses	Child Care Centre's	Percentage
In place	7	50.0
Partially in place	1	7.1
Not in place	6	42.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

At least (50.0%) 7 of Child Care Centre's did not have a good nanny to children ratio.

**Table 7: Distribution of Sick Bays in Child Care Centre's**

Responses	Child Care Centre's	Percentage
In place	5	35.7
Partially in place	1	7.1
Not in place	8	57.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority of the Child Care Centre's (64.3%) 9 had no sick bay in their premises.

**Table 8: Access to a Kitchen and Food Supplies in Child Care Centre's**

Responses	Child Care Centre's	Percentage
In place	9	64.3
Partially in place	2	14.3
Not in place	3	21.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

Majority of the Child Care Centre's that is (64.3%) 9 have a kitchen and food supplies in place.

**Table 9: Distribution of Social Workers and Counsellor's in Child Care Centre's**

Responses	Child Care Centre's	Percentage
In place	0	0.0
Partially in place	0	0.0
Not in place	14	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>100</b>

Of all the 14 Child Care Centre's assessed, non-had social workers or counsellors in place as part of staff.

## VI. DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to assess the quality and quantity of facilities in Child Care Centre's in Benue State and also to determine whether these institutions are implementing best practices as described in the National Policy and Guidelines for the Establishment, Management and Monitoring of Child Care Centre's in Nigeria. A total number of 344 children were found in the 14 Child Care Centre's assessed, (20.3%) that is 70 of the children were not yet enrolled in school due to the fact that these institutions couldn't provide such services and also lacked funds to put them in school, another reason is, some of the children were not yet up to school age. (64.3%) that is 9 out of 14 Children Homes had administrative offices in place, although they were either insufficiently staffed or equipped. (35.7%) that is 5 out of 14 assessed Child Care Centre's did not have adequate accommodation. This was observed by the number of Children living in a single room, which was more than 10 Children per room and an age difference of more than 5 years between them. The living environment was dilapidated and lacked adequate furniture, which was a similar sight in both government owned and private institutions. It was also observed that (78.5%) that is 10 out of 14 Children Homes had no recreational facilities for children. Other important infrastructure not in place or in a good state for use included Sick bay (64.3%) that is 9 out of 14 Children Homes. (35.7%) that is 5 out of 14 Child Care Centre's had no kitchen and an adequate supplies of food stuff. This study also observed that (50.0%) that is 7 out of 14 Child Care Centre's had an adequate ratio of nanny to children which is set at 1 nanny to 5 children. In all the 14 Children Homes assessed, not a single home had Social Workers or Counselors. The study observed that (57.1%) that is 8 out of 14 and (71.4%) that is 10 out of 14 did not have adequate laundry staffs and toiletries respectively. These findings are similar to the outcome of a study by Nwaneri and Sadolph (2016) "Assessment of Facilities and Best Practices in Orphanages in Benin City, where most Orphanages did not meet the minimum standard of a Child Care Centre. Also similar is a study by Bilson and Cox (2005) where poor conditions were observed in Child Care Centre's.

This study also observed that not all children placed in Care Centre's are Orphaned, but poverty, abuse and not lack of caregivers is often the reason. Funding was identified to be a major problem to all the Child Care Centre's assessed, most of them got funds through donations, including the government owned institutions, which is also similar to a finding by Momoh (2010) in his study Protection for Children Orphaned by Aids in Nigeria.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The assessment of 14 Child Care Centre's in Benue State of Nigeria observed a great disparity in the availability of facilities in these Centre's. On the average facilities were either not in place or inadequate in most of the Children Homes assessed. Some of the privately-owned Child Care Centre's were better equipped than the government owned institutions. Some of the Homes lacked adequate number of caregivers and no single home had either Social Workers or Counselors. The major challenge of all the Homes was funding which came mostly through donations. Recommendations have been made in order to cushion the effect of poorly managed Children Homes.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that governments at National, State and Local levels should give financial support to approved Child Care Centre's depending on their capacities and needs. Subventions in cash or kind should be substantial, regular and well monitored.
2. The government should also establish careful and frequent monitoring of Child Care Centre's to ensure they comply with stipulated guidelines and laws.
3. There should be regular training of staffs of Child Care Centre's
4. Child Care Centre's should establish formal referral systems for the benefit of the children and make referrals to other institutions for those services they might not be able to provide.
5. There is a need for public-private partnership for improved service delivery to children in Child Care Centre's

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