

**STATEMENT  
UPR Pre-session of Nigeria  
Geneva, 28 November 2023  
Delivered by: SOS Children's Villages Nigeria**

Thank you Chair!

I am honoured to speak before this distinguished assembly and bring to your attention important issues related to children's rights in Nigeria. I represent SOS Children's Villages Nigeria, a child rights organisation founded in 1973, three years after the Nigerian civil war. We are a member association of SOS Children's Villages, and our main area of work is centred on providing services and advocating for the rights of children without, or at risk of losing, parental care.

My presentation shall focus on the following:

- Access to quality compulsory education for the most marginalized children, including almajiri and nomadic children;
- Social protection for children in disadvantaged situations;
- Lack of data on marginalized children and child participation in decision-making processes.

**I. Access to quality compulsory education for the most marginalized children (almajiri and nomadic children)**

At the last UPR, Nigeria supported a number of recommendations made by Slovakia, Saudi Arabia, Estonia, Algeria, Tunisia, and Djibouti, aimed at ensuring that all children, without discrimination, have access to compulsory education and improving the quality of education and school dropout rates.

In our UPR submission, we expressed concern about the almajiri and nomadic children's education and emphasized the need for these children to have access to quality basic education and a safe learning environment. Almajiri are children mainly from poor families who cannot afford formal education and send their children to remote locations to receive an Islamic education. While almajiri children account for 2 million out-of-school children in Nigeria<sup>1</sup>, nomadic school-aged children number 3.1 million, most of whom remain outside of the formal education system<sup>2</sup>. Several government initiatives have been taken to improve education for these marginalized children, including the Almajiri Education Programme, the Nomadic Education Policy, and the Universal Basic Education Act. Despite efforts by the Nigerian government and key stakeholders, inadequate funding, stale curriculum content, and insufficient mobilization of these children back to school at the federal level and some state governments, as well as lack of capacity building for specialized teachers, remain major challenges.

**Recommendation**

In light of the above, we would encourage States to recommend Nigeria the following:

- **Intensify efforts to ensure access to quality compulsory education to all children without discrimination, including in particular almajiri and nomadic children.**

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, For every Nigerian child: A future - Education for marginalized girls and boys: An investment opportunity for the public and private sectors.

<sup>2</sup> [Research – National Commission for Nomadic Education \(ncne.gov.ng\)](https://ncne.gov.ng/research)

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## II. Social protection for children in disadvantaged situations

At the last UPR, Bhutan, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Yemen, and Zimbabwe recommended that Nigeria redoubled its efforts to reduce poverty and improve the socio-economic conditions of the most marginalized groups, such as women and children. Despite the government's various efforts to expand social protection programs, Nigeria still faces high levels of poverty and income inequality, requiring greater investment, coordination, and innovative approaches to address these persistent challenges. According to official data, 67.5% of children aged 0-17 are multidimensional poor, making up half (51%) of the total impoverished population in Nigeria<sup>3</sup>. This requires greater investment in social protection interventions. The government initiatives, such as the Conditional Cash Transfer Programs (CCT), the National Social Investment Programs, and the Home-Grown School Feeding Program aim to provide financial assistance, improve access to education and healthcare, and reduce the vulnerability of targeted households. Through these initiatives, 1,997,483 eligible poor and vulnerable households enrolled into the National Beneficiaries Register (NBR), which translates to 9,987,415 individuals that are enrolled into the NBR across 36 states.<sup>4</sup> However, there are challenges in terms of coverage and targeting. Many individuals and communities in disadvantaged situations still lack access to social protection due to limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and difficulties in identifying and reaching the most marginalized groups. These programs lack adequate special considerations for children in socioeconomically disadvantaged situations.

### Recommendation

- **We therefore would encourage States to recommend that the Nigerian government step up its efforts to ensure universal social protection, with a particular focus on children, especially those in disadvantaged situations.**

## III. Lack of data on marginalized children and child participation in decision-making

At the last UPR, Uganda recommended to the Nigerian government to promote and protect the human rights of vulnerable persons in its population. Meanwhile, there is no recent data on marginalized children. Children without, or at risk of losing, parental care constitute a great part of the disadvantaged population in Nigeria. It is important to collect accurate data on these children to effectively address their situation.

There was no recommendation addressed to Nigeria in the previous cycle on enhancing child participation in decision-making processes. We acknowledge existing efforts such as the national children's parliaments but emphasizing the need for meaningful inclusion. While there are children's parliaments at state level, and in the federal capital territory, they mostly play ceremonial functions and do not provide contribution towards law making in Nigeria. Much more needs to be done to deepen involvement of children, particularly from marginalized groups, in processes and activities aimed at influencing decisions, policies, and practices that affect their lives.

### Recommendations

Therefore, we would encourage States to address the following recommendations to the Nigerian Government:

- **Strengthen its data-collection system on marginalized children, particularly children without or at risk of losing parental care, in order to facilitate the analysis and response to specific social needs;**
- **Further invest in amplification of children's voices to ensure that children's perspectives, particularly from marginalized groups, are heard and taken into account in decision-making processes at all levels.**
- **Review the federal Child Rights Act and the Child Rights Laws at state level, and actively involve children, including through the children's parliaments, especially those from marginalized groups.**

Thank you for your attention!

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<sup>3</sup> [NIGERIA MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX SURVEY RESULTS 2022.pdf \(nigerianstat.gov.ng\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [NCTO - National Cash Transfer Office](#)