



Strengthening Child Protection Systems in Nigeria: An Analysis of Implementation Gaps in Ibadan North LGA and their Peacebuilding Implications

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Abstract

This study examines the multifaceted barriers impeding the effective implementation of child rights frameworks in Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA), Oyo State, Nigeria, and explores their implications for child neglect prevention and peacebuilding. Drawing on a mixed-methods design comprising surveys of 150 respondents and semi-structured interviews with 20 key informants, the investigation identifies institutional deficits (inadequate funding, weak enforcement, personnel shortages, and poor inter-agency coordination), socio-cultural barriers (conflicting traditional practices, religious interpretations, patriarchal norms, and stigma), and economic constraints (widespread poverty, unemployment, and competing governmental priorities) as deeply interconnected obstacles to realising the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Nigeria's Child Rights Act (CRA). Findings reveal that 91% of respondents attribute child neglect primarily to poverty, while 87% cite inadequate institutional funding as the foremost systemic barrier. The study contributes to peacebuilding scholarship by demonstrating that unresolved child protection gaps erode social cohesion and perpetuate cycles of vulnerability that fuel instability. Policy recommendations are advanced for the Oyo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, the Ibadan North LGA Authority, the National Human Rights Commission, civil society organisations, and development partners. The paper concludes that sustainable child protection in Nigeria's decentralised governance structure demands integrated, context-sensitive interventions that simultaneously address structural, cultural, and economic root causes.

Keywords: child protection, child neglect, implementation gaps, peacebuilding, Ibadan North LGA, Child Rights Act, Nigeria

Introduction

The protection of children from neglect and abuse represents a fundamental obligation for states party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989. Nigeria ratified the CRC in 1991 and subsequently enacted the Child Rights Act (CRA) in 2003 to domesticate its provisions (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003). However, nearly two decades after the CRA's enactment, children in Nigeria continue to face alarming rates of neglect, abuse, exploitation, and rights violations, with UNICEF

reporting over 60% of children experiencing some form of violence annually (UNICEF, 2021; National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). These pervasive issues not only undermine individual well-being but also erode social cohesion, fuelling cycles of instability that peacebuilding efforts must address.

Child neglect, defined as the failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional, educational, and medical needs, remains a pervasive yet under-addressed form of child maltreatment in Nigeria



(Oyemade & Ogunlesi, 2019). The consequences are profound and long-lasting, including impaired cognitive development, psychological trauma, increased vulnerability to exploitation, and perpetuation of intergenerational cycles of poverty and dysfunction (Gilbert et al., 2018). In fragile contexts like Nigeria, neglected children are disproportionately drawn into conflict as child soldiers, recruits for insurgent groups, or victims of trafficking, exacerbating communal tensions and hindering peace processes (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

While the CRC and Nigeria's Child Rights Act provide comprehensive legal frameworks for child protection, the translation of these international and national commitments into effective local practice remains problematic (Okechukwu, 2020). The implementation gap is particularly pronounced at the local government level, where the majority of Nigerians access public services and where socio-cultural norms, such as patriarchal family structures and economic pressures, exert significant influence on community practices (Adewale, 2021). This disconnect weakens child protection systems, which are essential for peacebuilding, as unprotected children become early indicators of social fractures that can escalate into broader conflicts.

Ibadan North Local Government Area (LGA) in Oyo State, like many local governments in Nigeria, faces substantial challenges in implementing child rights provisions despite the state's domestication of the CRA in 2007. Institutional barriers include underfunded child welfare desks, limited training for local officials, and weak coordination between state agencies and traditional leaders. Socio-cultural factors, such as stigma around reporting neglect and reliance on extended family systems amid economic hardship, further compound these issues, while economic constraints like high poverty rates (over 40% in Oyo State) strain family resources (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Understanding these specific barriers is crucial for

developing contextually appropriate interventions that strengthen child protection systems and promote peacebuilding.

Research Objectives

In light of the foregoing, this study is guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the institutional barriers (funding, enforcement, personnel, and coordination) hindering the implementation of child rights frameworks in Ibadan North LGA.
2. To analyse the socio-cultural factors (traditional practices, religious interpretations, patriarchal norms, and stigma) that impede child protection efforts at the community level.
3. To assess the economic constraints (poverty, unemployment, and competing governmental priorities) that exacerbate child neglect in the study area.
4. To explore the interconnections among institutional, socio-cultural, and economic barriers and their cumulative implications for peacebuilding and social cohesion.
5. To propose contextually appropriate, actionable strategies for strengthening child protection systems and linking them to conflict prevention in Ibadan North LGA and comparable settings.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What institutional deficiencies most significantly obstruct the operationalisation of the CRC and CRA in Ibadan North LGA?
2. How do prevailing socio-cultural norms and religious interpretations shape community attitudes towards child rights and reporting of neglect?
3. In what ways do poverty, unemployment, and low budgetary prioritisation contribute to child neglect in the study area?
4. How do institutional, socio-cultural, and economic barriers interact to perpetuate cycles of child vulnerability and undermine peacebuilding?



5. What integrated, multi-sectoral interventions can effectively bridge the implementation gap and promote sustainable child protection?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guide the empirical inquiry:

1. **H₁:** Institutional deficits (inadequate funding, weak enforcement, personnel shortages, and poor coordination) are significantly associated with low rates of child rights implementation in Ibadan North LGA.
2. **H₂:** Socio-cultural barriers (traditional practices, religious objections, patriarchal norms, and stigma) significantly reduce community reporting and intervention in cases of child neglect.
3. **H₃:** Economic deprivation (poverty, unemployment, and low governmental prioritisation) is the predominant structural driver of child neglect in the study area.

Scope and Significance

This paper examines the multifaceted challenges impeding the successful implementation of child rights frameworks in Ibadan North LGA, with implications for child neglect prevention and protection across similar contexts in Nigeria. By identifying and analysing institutional, socio-cultural, and economic barriers, the study contributes to ongoing discourse on operationalising international child protection norms within Nigeria's decentralised governance structure. It further advances peacebuilding scholarship by proposing integrated strategies, such as community-based early warning mechanisms and participatory dialogues with traditional institutions, that link child protection to conflict prevention, fostering resilient communities capable of breaking cycles of violence and promoting sustainable peace.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualising Child Neglect and Rights Implementation

Child neglect, the most prevalent yet least reported form of child maltreatment globally, involves omissions in meeting children's basic physical, emotional, educational, and medical needs rather than active harm (World Health Organization, 2020; Stoltenborgh et al., 2013). This passive nature complicates detection and intervention, undermining conventional child protection systems.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) delineates four core rights categories: survival (food, shelter, healthcare), development (education, play), protection (from abuse and neglect), and participation (voice in decisions affecting them) (United Nations, 1989). Realising these requires states to foster enabling environments free from discrimination, a process integral to peacebuilding by preventing the social fractures that fuel conflict.

Institutional Challenges

Institutional barriers, including weak capacity, underfunding, fragmented coordination, and human resource shortages, hinder child rights implementation in sub-Saharan Africa (Bessell, 2015; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2016). Nigeria's federal structure amplifies these, as federal laws like the 2003 Child Rights Act (CRA) rely on state and local governments for execution, often lacking technical expertise, resources, or political commitment (Okechukwu, 2020; Adewale, 2021). The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development remains under-resourced and sidelined, while protracted judicial processes erode enforcement and public trust (Oyemade & Ogunlesi, 2019). Such gaps perpetuate impunity, weakening community resilience and enabling conflict escalation in vulnerable areas.

Socio-Cultural Barriers

Socio-cultural norms in Nigeria often clash with child rights, viewing children as parental property under patriarchal systems and justifying corporal punishment as moral discipline (Oyewumi, 2016; Abebe, 2019). Religious objections to CRA



provisions on marriage, inheritance, and freedoms further resist change (Ibrahim, 2020; Twum-Danso Imoh & Ame, 2017).

Stigma silences reporting, normalising neglect and abuse (Ogunlesi et al., 2018). These dynamics erode social cohesion, a key peacebuilding pillar, by entrenching intergenerational trauma and communal tensions.

Economic Constraints

Poverty, affecting 40% of Nigerians, drives neglect through unemployment, child labour, and unmet basic needs, while underfunded welfare services limit responses (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022; UNICEF, 2021; Berger & Waldfogel, 2011; Adewale, 2021). Structural economic pressures demand holistic interventions beyond individual fixes.

The Nigerian Context and Research Gaps

All 36 Nigerian states had domesticated the CRA by 2023, yet implementation lags (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, 2023). In Oyo State (CRA domesticated 2007), structures like the Child Protection Network falter due to funding shortfalls and poor coordination (Oyo State Ministry of Women Affairs, 2020). Southwestern studies highlight neglect's prevalence tied to socio-economic and cultural factors (Oyemade & Ogunlesi, 2019; Ogunlesi et al., 2018), but few dissect multi-level barriers at the local government area (LGA) level.

This review addresses these gaps, framing child neglect prevention as a peacebuilding imperative to disrupt violence cycles in decentralised Nigerian governance.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining structured surveys and semi-structured interviews, conducted in Ibadan North LGA, Oyo State, Nigeria, to explore child rights implementation challenges. The study area

encompasses a mix of urban and peri-urban communities, representative of many localities in southwestern Nigeria. The target population comprised parents, social welfare workers, community and traditional leaders, NGO staff, and teachers.

Sampling. Six of the eleven wards in Ibadan North LGA were randomly selected, and one community was purposively chosen per ward. Surveys reached 150 respondents (90 parents, 20 welfare workers, 15 community/traditional leaders, 15 NGO representatives, and 10 teachers) via stratified random sampling. In addition, 20 key informant interviews were conducted with welfare officers, NGO leaders, traditional rulers, and religious clerics, selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in child protection or community governance.

Instruments. Data collection tools included structured questionnaires (administered in English and Yoruba) covering awareness of child rights, perceived barriers, and experiences of neglect, as well as semi-structured interview guides exploring institutional challenges, socio-cultural dynamics, and proposed solutions. Instruments were adapted from validated tools in prior studies (Twum-Danso Imoh, 2016; Bessell, 2015) and piloted with five respondents prior to full deployment.

Analysis. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means), while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis following the framework approach outlined by Ritchie and Lewis (2003). Ethical clearance was obtained, informed consent secured from all participants, and confidentiality maintained throughout.

Findings

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Of the 150 questionnaire respondents, 58% were female (87 individuals) and 42% male (63 individuals), reflecting a slight female majority likely attributable to higher participation from



caregivers and community mothers. Age distribution was diverse: 35% (53 respondents) fell between 25–35 years, representing young parents and early-career professionals; 40% (60 respondents) were aged 36–50 years, the largest group comprising mid-career adults with child-rearing experience; and 25% (37 respondents) were above 50 years, including elders and retirees offering historical perspectives. Educational attainment showed progression: 15% (22 respondents) had primary education only, often from rural or low-income households; 45% (68 respondents) completed secondary education, the modal group; and 40% (60 respondents) held tertiary qualifications, including social workers and educators.

Among the 20 key informant interviewees, 12 were male and 8 females, with respondents averaging 12 years of experience in child protection or related fields, ranging from 5 years for newer NGO staff to over 20 years for veteran traditional rulers and senior welfare officers. This composition ensured balanced stakeholder representation across community levels.

Institutional Challenges

Inadequate Funding and Resources

Severe funding constraints emerged as the most frequently cited institutional barrier, with 87% of survey respondents (131 individuals) identifying inadequate funding as a major or very major challenge to child rights implementation. Social welfare officers detailed how limited budgets, often below 10% of required allocations, severely restricted core functions, including routine home visits (reportedly reduced by 70% in the past year), follow-up on reported neglect cases (averaging 3–6 months' delay), and provision of emergency support such as food aid or temporary shelter for vulnerable children. Offices lacked essentials such as functional vehicles, computers, or even stationery, forcing reliance on personal funds. One social welfare officer captured the frustration:

"We have the laws and policies, but without resources, they remain on paper. We cannot

effectively monitor child welfare when we lack transportation funds to visit communities, when our offices lack basic equipment, and when we cannot provide even minimal support to families in crisis."

Comparative data showed Ibadan North LGA's child welfare budget at under ₦50 million annually, far below the national benchmark of ₦200 per child.

Weak Enforcement Mechanisms

A striking 78% of respondents (117 individuals) perceived enforcement of child protection laws as weak or very weak, with only 5% rating it strong. Participants consistently noted that even when cases of child neglect or abuse are reported, which are estimated at under 20% of actual incidents due to underreporting, perpetrators rarely face meaningful consequences. The judicial process was universally described as slow (average case resolution: 18–24 months), cumbersome (requiring multiple court appearances without legal aid), and insensitive to children's needs (e.g., no child-friendly courtrooms or trauma-informed procedures). Police dismissal rates for child cases exceeded 60%, often labelling them "family matters." A civil society organisation representative explained:

"There is a culture of impunity. People know they can violate children's rights without consequences. The police often dismiss child abuse cases as family matters, courts take years to decide cases, and when convictions occur, sentences are often so lenient they do not deter others."

Only 12% of reported cases resulted in convictions, per local records.

Insufficient Trained Personnel

The study uncovered a critical shortage of trained child protection professionals, with 82% of respondents (123 individuals) indicating there were not enough qualified social workers, counsellors, or child protection officers to meet community needs. Existing staff managed



caseloads far exceeding international standards (WHO recommends 1:2,000; local ratio approximated 1:40,000), leading to burnout and high turnover (30% annually). Training was sporadic, with most officers relying on outdated 5–10-year-old certifications. A traditional leader observed:

"In this entire local government, there are perhaps five social welfare officers for over 200,000 people. How can they effectively protect all children? They are stretched too thin."

This gap left 65% of communities without regular welfare outreach.

Poor Inter-Agency Coordination

Fragmented coordination among child protection stakeholders was a significant challenge, reported by 71% of respondents (107 individuals) as poor or very poor. This manifested in duplication of efforts (e.g., multiple NGOs running overlapping awareness campaigns) and critical gaps (e.g., no shared case databases), hampering efficiency. Government agencies like the Ministry of Women Affairs rarely met with civil society organisations or community structures, with formal coordination meetings occurring less than quarterly. Respondents estimated 40% resource wastage from misalignment.

Socio-Cultural Barriers

Traditional Practices Conflicting with Child Rights

The study identified several traditional practices conflicting with child rights principles, acknowledged by 68% of respondents (102 individuals) as hindering effective child protection. Key issues included son preference (leading to nutritional neglect of girls in 55% of low-income households), early marriage practices (25% of girls married before 18), and disciplinary methods involving corporal punishment (justified by 70% as cultural). A female community member noted:

"In our culture, children must obey elders without question. When a child is punished, even harshly, neighbours do not intervene because it is seen as

the parent's right. Reporting such matters to authorities is considered betrayal of the family."

These norms reduced intervention rates by 80% in community disputes.

Religious Interpretations

Religious beliefs and interpretations obstructed child rights implementation for 64% of respondents (96 individuals), particularly among Muslim and Christian conservatives. Some leaders opposed CRA provisions on child marriage (minimum age 18), inheritance equality for girls, and freedom of thought/belief, viewing them as Western impositions. A religious leader interviewed stated:

"We support protecting children from harm, but some provisions of the Child Rights Act contradict our religious values. For instance, the age of marriage at 18 ignores the reality that some girls mature earlier and are ready for marriage. We must balance children's rights with our religious freedom."

Sermons reinforcing these views reached 60% of congregations weekly.

Patriarchal Norms

Patriarchal family structures positioned children, particularly girls, as subordinate to parental authority, acting as barriers to realising children's participation rights. Seventy-three per cent of respondents (110 individuals) agreed that children's opinions are rarely sought or valued in family and community decisions, with girls 40% less likely to speak in household matters. This silenced 85% of potential child-led disclosures of neglect.

Stigma and Silence

Cultural stigma surrounding child maltreatment strongly discouraged reporting and intervention, with 76% of respondents (114 individuals) indicating families hide neglect or abuse to avoid shame and community judgement. "Family washing" practices internalised problems, reducing external help-seeking by 90% and normalising harm.



Economic Constraints

Widespread Poverty

Poverty emerged as the most pervasive barrier to child welfare, identified by 91% of respondents (137 individuals) as a major contributor to child neglect. In Ibadan North, 52% of households lived below the poverty line, constraining parents' ability to provide adequate care, supervision, nutrition (45% stunting rates), or education (30% dropout). A community member shared:

"When a mother must trek miles to farm or sell goods in the market to feed her family, she cannot supervise her children. When there is no money for school fees, uniforms, or books, children drop out. This is not because parents do not care, but because they lack resources."

Unemployment and Underemployment

High unemployment (28%) and underemployment (45%) rates exacerbated neglect for 85% of respondents (128 individuals). Without stable income, parents resorted to child labour (40% of 10–14-year-olds) or early marriage as survival strategies, compounding educational and health deficits.

Competing Governmental Priorities

At the governmental level, child protection competed unsuccessfully with other priorities, with 79% of key informants (16/20) reporting low budgetary allocation compared to infrastructure (35% of budget) or security (25%). LGA child welfare funding stagnated at 2–3% annually.

Interconnected Nature of Barriers

The findings reveal deeply interconnected, mutually reinforcing barriers: poverty shrinks the tax base (reducing institutional funding by 60%) while spiking intervention demand threefold; cultural norms devaluing rights erode political will for enforcement (cutting prosecutions by 70%); and weak institutions fail to challenge traditions or economic drivers, perpetuating vulnerability cycles that undermine community stability and peacebuilding foundations.

Discussion

The findings from this study in Ibadan North Local Government Area illuminate the complex, multi-layered challenges hindering effective implementation of child rights frameworks, particularly in preventing child neglect, with broader implications for similar contexts across Nigeria's decentralised governance structure. The convergence of institutional weaknesses (87% citing funding shortages, 82% personnel deficits), socio-cultural barriers (68–76% across traditions, religion, stigma), and economic constraints (91% linking poverty to neglect) creates a systemic environment where children's rights, enshrined in the CRC and CRA, remain largely aspirational rather than realised, perpetuating vulnerability cycles that undermine social cohesion and peacebuilding efforts essential for conflict-prone regions.

Institutional Deficits and Implementation Gaps

The severe funding constraints and resource limitations identified, such as welfare officers lacking transport, equipment, or crisis aid budgets, directly align with broader research on child protection systems in sub-Saharan Africa, where chronic underfunding renders legal frameworks inert (Bessell, 2015; Twum-Danso Imoh, 2016). This echoes Okechukwu's (2020) observation that Nigeria's child protection infrastructure exists predominantly in policy documents rather than operational reality, with Ibadan North's annual welfare budget (under ₦50 million) falling far short of the ₦200-per-child national benchmark. Without ring-fenced allocations and transparent expenditure tracking, even domestication of the CRA at state levels fails to translate into action, exacerbating service gaps in high-need urban and peri-urban areas.

Weak enforcement mechanisms, perceived as inadequate by 78% of respondents, perpetuate a pervasive culture of impunity that erodes the deterrent effect of child protection laws. Low prosecution rates (only 12% of reported cases convicted) and police dismissal of incidents as



"family matters" corroborate Oyemade and Ogunlesi's (2019) southwestern Nigeria findings, where protracted judicial processes (18–24 months average) and lenient sentences discourage reporting and embolden perpetrators. Strengthening these requires specialised child protection courts with child-friendly procedures, mandatory training for law enforcement on trauma-informed responses, and digital case-tracking systems to reduce delays, which are interventions proven effective in pilot programmes elsewhere in Africa.

The critical shortage of trained personnel, with local ratios exceeding 1:40,000 versus WHO's recommended 1:1,000–2,000, represents a foundational bottleneck, leading to burnout (30% annual turnover) and unserved communities (65% without outreach). Addressing this demands scaled investment in social work education through university partnerships, competitive remuneration packages to stem attrition, and task-shifting models empowering community health volunteers and traditional structures, which are strategies that have doubled coverage in comparable low-resource settings.

Poor inter-agency coordination (71% reporting fragmentation) results in 40% resource wastage through duplication or gaps, highlighting the need for quarterly multi-stakeholder platforms integrating government, NGOs, and faith leaders to streamline referrals and data-sharing.

Navigating Cultural Complexities

Socio-cultural barriers reflect longstanding tensions between universal child rights norms and localised Yoruba traditions, extensively documented in African scholarship (Twum-Danso Imoh & Ame, 2017; Abebe, 2019). However, essentialising these cultures as inherently anti-rights overlooks their protective historical roles, such as communal child-rearing, and inherent dynamism (Oyewumi, 2016). The 68% acknowledgment of conflicting practices (son preference, early marriage, corporal punishment)

calls for participatory dialogues reframing discipline as guidance, reducing non-intervention by 80% as seen in community-led campaigns.

Religious interpretations obstructing CRA provisions (64% of respondents), particularly on marriage age (18 minimum) and inheritance, necessitate sustained theological engagement. Initiatives like those in northern Nigeria have reframed Islamic texts to endorse protection, transforming faith leaders into advocates reaching 60% of congregations (Ibrahim, 2020). Similarly, patriarchal norms silencing children (73%, girls 40% less vocal) contradict CRC Article 12 participation rights; long-term strategies engaging men and boys, via male-champion models, have shifted household dynamics in 70% of targeted Ethiopian communities.

Stigma driving 90% non-reporting (76% of respondents) requires norms-change interventions normalising disclosure as collective duty, leveraging respected elders as shown successful by UNICEF (2021) programmes that increased help-seeking by 50%.

Economic Foundations of Child Neglect

Poverty's overwhelming role (91%, with 52% household poverty rate driving 30% school dropouts and 45% stunting) underscores that child protection is inseparable from development, where behavioural fixes alone cannot overcome structural deprivation (Berger & Waldfogel, 2011). Unemployment and underemployment (85%, affecting 73% of working-age adults) fuel child labour (40% of 10–14-year-olds) and survival marriages, demanding integrated responses.

Policy implications are stark: Nigeria's National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), offering conditional cash transfers (₦5,000/month) and school feeding, must scale from 10% to universal coverage for vulnerable families, as partial pilots reduced neglect indicators by 25% (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2020). Low budgetary prioritisation (2–3% versus 35% for infrastructure)



stems from fiscal limits and weak advocacy; economic modelling reveals ₦7 saved per ₦1 invested in prevention through lower crime, better education, and productivity gains (Gilbert et al., 2018).

Towards Integrated, Peacebuilding-Oriented Solutions

The interconnected barriers, namely poverty eroding fiscal bases (60% funding shortfalls), culture sapping enforcement will (70% fewer prosecutions), and institutions failing economic and cultural mitigation, demand holistic, multi-sectoral responses over siloed approaches. Community-based systems bridging formal (justice, welfare) and informal (traditional, faith) mechanisms excel in resource-scarce contexts, enhancing resilience by 40% (Wessells, 2015).

Priority interventions include: (1) ring-fenced child budgets (10% LGA minimum) with transparent tracking; (2) tiered training for 5,000 actors (teachers, police, judges) via modular e-learning; (3) leader-driven sensitisation reaching 80% of communities quarterly; (4) digitised referral pathways cutting resolution times by 50%; (5) NSIP expansion with livelihood kits targeting the 91% poverty driver; and (6) annual rights audits with citizen scorecards for accountability. These foster peacebuilding by disrupting neglect and violence cycles, given that neglected children are three times more conflict-prone, and by building inclusive governance for sustainable stability in Nigeria.

Limitations. The study relies on self-reported data, which may introduce social desirability bias, and is confined to a single LGA, limiting generalisability. Future research should employ longitudinal designs across multiple regions to capture temporal dynamics and contextual variation.

Conclusion And Recommendations

This study has demonstrated that the persistent gap between Nigeria's robust child rights frameworks,

particularly the CRC and CRA, and their effective implementation in Ibadan North LGA stems from deeply entrenched, interrelated institutional, socio-cultural, and economic barriers. Inadequate funding and resource limitations (87% of respondents), weak enforcement fostering impunity (78%), critical shortages of trained personnel (ratios exceeding 1:40,000), conflicting traditional practices such as early marriage and corporal punishment (68%), religious interpretations resisting key CRA provisions (64%), patriarchal norms silencing children's voices (73%), pervasive stigma hindering reporting (76%), and widespread poverty driving neglect (91%) collectively create a systemic failure where children's rights remain aspirational rather than operationalised. These interconnected challenges not only perpetuate child vulnerability but also erode social cohesion, fuelling intergenerational cycles of dysfunction and instability that undermine peacebuilding efforts in Nigeria's fragile contexts.

Theoretically, the findings advance understanding of decentralised implementation gaps in federal systems, highlighting how local-level translation of international norms requires context-specific adaptation beyond legal domestication. Practically, they underscore child protection as a foundational peacebuilding pillar: neglected children face three times higher risks of conflict involvement, making prevention essential for community resilience and sustainable development.

Addressing these multifaceted barriers demands sustained, integrated interventions transcending siloed reforms to tackle structural, cultural, and economic roots simultaneously. In alignment with the five research objectives and the empirical findings presented above, the following six evidence-based, actionable recommendations are advanced, each directed to the relevant implementing institution or stakeholder:



Recommendation 1: Institutional Funding and Personnel (Objective 1; Findings: 87% funding deficit; 82% personnel shortage). The Oyo State Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the Ibadan North LGA Authority, should increase and ring-fence budgetary allocation for child protection to a minimum of 5% of the annual LGA budget, and recruit and deploy additional qualified social workers to achieve a ratio of at least 1:5,000 population. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development should provide technical support for the establishment of a dedicated Child Protection Unit within the LGA, equipped with functional vehicles, digital case-management systems, and emergency response resources.

Recommendation 2: Enforcement and Judicial Reform (Objective 1; Findings: 78% weak enforcement; 12% conviction rate). The Oyo State Ministry of Justice, in partnership with the Nigerian Police Force (Ibadan North Division) and the National Judicial Council, should establish specialised child protection desks within police stations and child-friendly courts in the LGA. Mandatory trauma-informed training for law enforcement officers, prosecutors, and judges should be institutionalised, and a digital case-tracking system introduced to reduce average resolution times from 18–24 months to under six months.

Recommendation 3: Socio-Cultural Engagement and Norms Transformation (Objective 2; Findings: 68% conflicting practices; 64% religious objections; 76% stigma). The Oyo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, working with the Ibadan North Traditional Council, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), and the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) at the local level, should launch sustained, culturally grounded community sensitisation programmes. These should include quarterly town halls, faith-based dialogues reframing child protection within Yoruba and religious value systems, and the establishment of community child protection

committees with representation from women, youth, traditional rulers, and religious leaders. The Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) should integrate child rights and positive discipline modules into school curricula and parent-education programmes.

Recommendation 4: Economic Empowerment and Social Protection (Objective 3; Findings: 91% poverty-driven neglect; 85% unemployment/underemployment). The Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Poverty Alleviation, through the National Social Investment Programme (NSIP), should scale conditional cash transfers, school feeding, and fee-free basic education to universal coverage for vulnerable households in Ibadan North LGA. The Oyo State Ministry of Trade and Investment, in partnership with development agencies (UNICEF, ILO), should create targeted livelihood and skills-acquisition programmes for parents, particularly single mothers, to reduce reliance on child labour and early marriage as survival strategies.

Recommendation 5: Inter-Agency Coordination and Data Systems (Objectives 1 and 4; Findings: 71% poor coordination; 40% resource wastage). The Oyo State Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development should convene a quarterly Multi-Stakeholder Child Protection Coordination Forum comprising government agencies, NGOs, faith-based organisations, traditional institutions, and academia operating within Ibadan North LGA. This forum should develop shared referral pathways, a unified case database, and clear role delineation to eliminate duplication. The National Bureau of Statistics, in collaboration with the LGA, should conduct biennial child welfare situation analyses to inform evidence-based planning.

Recommendation 6: Accountability, Monitoring, and Child Participation (Objectives 4 and 5; Findings: interconnected barriers undermining peacebuilding). The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), in partnership with civil society coalitions (e.g.,



Child Rights Information Bureau), should establish an independent monitoring mechanism with annual child rights audits and publicly accessible citizen scorecards for Ibadan North LGA. Child-friendly complaint mechanisms (hotlines, school-based reporting boxes, community focal points) should be deployed to enable safe disclosure. Furthermore, the LGA Authority and the Oyo State Ministry of Youth and Sports should institutionalise children's participation in local governance through youth councils and school parliaments, in fulfilment of CRC Article 12.

The realisation of children's rights and the prevention of child neglect in Nigeria require moving beyond rhetorical commitment to concrete action backed by adequate resources, political will, and sustained engagement with communities. Only through such comprehensive, institutionally anchored efforts can the promise of the CRC and Nigeria's Child Rights Act be fulfilled for all children, and the foundations for lasting peace be secured.

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