### YOUTH AND CHILD EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA: A LEGAL APPRAISAL\*

### **Abstract**

Youth empowerment is a process where children and young people are encouraged to take charge of their lives by addressing their access to resources to transform their consciousness through their beliefs, values and attitude. This is in tandem with the mandate of United Nations sustainable development goals. When youths are empowered, they have requisite skills and opportunities to positively impact their nation. Study advocates for youth empowerment and examines the various legal framework that provides for their protection. The work revealed that despite youth empowerment programmes sponsored by the Government, many youths and children still wallow in poverty due to many challenges that hinder their development. The work showed many factors that exacerbate lack of empowerment, such as population bloat, social economic and cultural factors. Further, the work discovered that despite the legal framework that provides for their empowerment that there are many lapses inherent to our laws that make it virtually impossible for the realization of their development. The work discovered that youth and children's development is a catalyst for sustainable development in Nigeria. Furthermore, the work found that youth and children's development is precedent for national growth and development. Hence, failure to empower them will increase the rate of social vices in Nigeria such as kidnapping cultism peddling, organ harvesting etcetera. The work recommends that government should make policies that will enhance entrepreneurial activities. Review of extent laws like Child's Right Act, the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. The government should eradicate every factor that is inimical to youth and children empowerment.

Keywords: Youth, Child, Empowerment, Nigeria.

### 1. Introduction

The need to empower children and youths in Nigeria particularly can never be over emphasized because they are the future of the nation. Empowerment simply means the process of giving children and youths the opportunity to develop themselves and make impact in every sphere. It entails providing them with enabling environment to actualize and release their potentials to positively affect their nations. Such enabling environment like education and vocational studies will horn their skills in order to liberate them from shackles of poverty. The implication is that they will be involved in decision making, free from violence, which will invariably enhance the economy of the state. It is worthy to note that, nothing fuels development of nations like empowerment of youths and children because it breaks gender discrimination, enhances equality and improves productivity in the nation. While lack of empowerment impoverishes the state and expose children and youths to delinquency such as school dropout, drug abuse, trafficking, etcetera. In fact, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) revealed that 40% of Nigerian youths between the age of 18 and 35 years are deeply involved in drug abuse. While the United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) revealed that 244 million children and youths between 6 and 18 years worldwide are out of school<sup>2</sup>. While over 20.2 million children and youths are currently out of school in Nigeria due to economic instability<sup>3</sup>. While, the latest unemployment statistics reveal that 40.8% of youth aged 15-24 and 30.7% of 25-34 are unemployed. Without employment young people become desperate for survival and will fall prey to antics of traffickers and fall into the web of crime. These negative conditions have necessitated this study. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to make serious advocacy for the empowerment of children and youths, to enable them develop and make positive impact in the society. Consequently, for the study to arrive at definite findings, the paper makes the following proposals: firstly, whether law has a role to play in the empowerment of youth and children in Nigeria. Secondly, whether there is a nexus between youth empowerment and sustainable development goals. The third is whether empowerment is a panacea for poverty alleviation. The fourth is whether empowerment is a human right issue. The last is whether empowerment will solve economic hardship and insecurity challenge in Nigeria.

### 2. Human Rights vis-à-vis Empowerment of Youths

The word 'right' has been defined to mean:

That which is proper under the law...something that is due to a person by just claim...

<sup>\*</sup> Nneka UMEJIAKU, LLB, BL, LLM, PhD, Senior Lecturer and Head, Department of Commercial and Property Law, Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. Email: nnekaumejiaku@gmail.com. Email: 08033809219.

<sup>\*</sup> Rose A. ENEMCHUKWU, LLB, BL, LLM, PhD, Lecturer, Department of International Law and Jurisprudence, Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. Email: ada.enen@yahoo.com. Tel: 08037411752; and

<sup>\*</sup> Odinakachukwu E. OKEKE, LLB, BL, LLM, PhD, Lecturer, Department of International Law and Jurisprudence, Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. Email: oe.okeke@unizik.edu.ng. Tel: 08066740136.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Report(NDLEA),https://www.premiumtimesng.com accessed on 28/2/2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> UNESCO Report, https://www.africanews,com accessed on 28/2/2023

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> UNESCO, www.premiumtimesng.com accessed on 28/2/2023

Legal guarantee..., a legally enforceable claim that another will do, or will not do a given act: a recognized and protected interest, the violation of which is wrong, a breach of duty that infringes ones rights. The interest, claim or ownership that one has in tangible or intangible property<sup>4</sup>.

From the above assertion, one can say that human rights are inalienable rights that one enjoys as a result of being a human. Many legal Osita Eze have attested to that, hence human rights have been defined as 'Demands or claims, which individuals or groups make on society some of which are protected by law and have become part of lex lata (positive law) while others remain aspiration to be attained in future'5. Furthermore, Cranston maintained that, a human right is something of which no one may be deprived of without affront to justice. There are certain deeds which should never be done, certain freedom which should never be invaded, some things which are supremely sacred<sup>6</sup>. Further, in Osondu & Anor. v A.G Enugu State & Ors<sup>7</sup>, the court defining, Order 1 Rule2 of the Fundamental Rights (Enforcement Procedure) Rules, 2009 aver that, 'Fundamental Rights' and 'Human Rights' in the following manner. Fundamental Rights means any of the rights provided for in Chapter IV of the Constitution and includes any of the rights stipulated in African Charter on Human and People's Right (Ratification and Enforcement). While, in Hassan & Ors v EFCC & Ors 8, the court, defined fundamental rights as basic moral guarantee that people in all countries and culture allegedly have simply because they are people. Furthermore, in Ransome Kuti v A.G of Federation<sup>9</sup> the Court held that fundamental right is a right which stands above the ordinary laws of the land and which are in fact antecedent to the political society itself and it is a primary condition to civilized existence. Fundamental rights are rights derived from natural or fundamental law.

Accordingly, empowerment of youths and children is a human rights issue, which must be upheld for the protection of their human rights and growth of the state. This was also endorsed by the Court in Igwe v Ezeanochie <sup>10</sup> and plethora of cases. Accordingly, fundamental rights, are those rights without which neither liberty nor justice would exist. They are freedom essential to the concept of ordered liberty, inherent in human nature and consequently inalienable. They are rights that belong without presumption or cost of privilege to all human beings. They are frequently held to be universal in the sense that all people have and should enjoy them, and to be independent in the sense that they existed and are available as standards of justification and criticism whether or not they are recognized and implemented by the legal system or official of a country. The moral doctrine of fundamental rights aims at identifying the fundamental pre requisites for each human being leading a minimally good life. In Nigeria, the fundamental rights of the citizen are constitutionally guaranteed in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Provided for in Africa Charter on Human and Peoples Right, domesticated as the African Charter on Human and People's Rights<sup>11</sup> In Bassey & Anor v Akpan & Ors, <sup>12</sup> the court reiterated that the Constitution of the Republic of Nigeria holds that every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person .Hence, empowering children and youth is a fundamental human right issue that is upheld by international, regional and domestic laws. At the international plane, the UN Convention on the rights of the child adopted in 1989 established conditions for nations to endorse young people's participation but only relate to people under 18 years of age and its main emphasis is on the protection of children. The only international treaty focusing specially on the civil, political, social and cultural rights of young people is the Ibero American Convention on the Rights of youth. Article 21 of the convention<sup>13</sup> establishes the rights to political participation of young people. In fact, the Committee on the rights of the child released a general comment on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence (GC 20, 2016). This General Comment build on the definition outlined in the UN Convention of the rights of the child advocates for specific minimum age as well as for the removal of other age limits entirely. While it does not mention age limits for voting and candidature, it does emphasize the realization of the rights of youths given their evolving capacities as they transit into adulthood.

In 2010, the international community re-affirmed its commitment to youth participation in several resolutions, charters and action plans, for instance the African Youth Charter and the Strategy for Youth both highlight the value of increased information and capacity development to ensure that young people are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to become active citizens and leaders in their communities, to enable the state achieve 2030 sustainable development goals.

Page | 93

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> BA Garner (ed), *Black's Law Dictionary*. U.S.A:ThomsonWest,8<sup>th</sup> Edition,2004

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Osita Eze, Human Rights in Africa, some selected Problems Lagos: The Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 1984

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Arinze-Umobi, Domestic Violence Against Women in Nigeria: A Legal Anatomy, FOLMECH Printing & Publishing Co.Ltd ,(2008) p.6 <sup>7</sup> LPELR-43096 (CA)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> (2013) LPELR

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> (1985) 2NWLR (pt6) 211 at 230

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> (2010) 7NWLR (Pt.1192)61.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> (Ratification and Enforcement) Act, Cap 10 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990

<sup>12 (2018)</sup> LPELR-44341(CA)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Ibero American Convention on the Rights of the Child

### 3. Youths Empowerment and Sustainable Development Goals

With the adoption of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 193 United Nations Member States pledged to ensure that no one will be left behind across the countries and the need to empower youths in the field of governance was emphasized. The empowerment of the youths is critical in attaining the sustainable development goals in Africa because the youths are the life wire of every nation. Hence, their development and productivity cannot be ignored. Therefore, it is very apposite that Nigerian Government should focus on empowering them, starting from the grass roots, for instance from primary to secondary schools. Children shall be given opportunity to acquire skills that will make them relevant and productive in the society. This can be achieved by establishing vocational infrastructures in primary, secondary and tertiary institution to enable them to be independent and resourceful. Once, they become resourceful, they become independent to fend for themselves, hence reduce poverty to the barest minimum. The paper submits that apart, from vocational studies, government should strive to make policies that is geared towards empowerment of youths and children.

Currently, there are many international, regional and municipal instruments that provide adequate provisions for the protection for legislation, youth empowerment.

# 4. The Relevant Legal Framework

## Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended)

The Constitution made provisions for socio economical rights that will empower children and youths in Nigeria, such as rights to education<sup>14</sup> and economic and social objectives.<sup>15</sup> These rights are critical for the emancipation of youths and children from poverty because it enhances their rights to development, survival and participation in making decisions that affect their lives, which will invariably promote individual and collective wellbeing in Nigeria, particularly the right to education. Generally, the right to education shall be available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable as developed by the first UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education and adopted by the committee on economic, social and cultural right in its General Comments on the right to education, aver that being available means that education shall be free, with adequate infrastructure, trained teachers to support the delivery of education. <sup>16</sup> While, accessibility means that education system should be non-discriminatory and accessible to all, and positive steps should be taken to include the most marginalized to have education in Nigeria. Education should be acceptable which presupposes that education should be relevant, non-discriminatory, and culturally appropriate and of quality hence schools should have professionals as teachers. It is worthy to note, that education evolves with the changing needs of society and changing inequalities, such as gender discrimination adapts to suit totally specific needs and contexts<sup>17</sup>. Hence, the right to education is the most fundamental tool that prepares youths and children for enviable future. In fact, nothing, breaks shackles of poverty like education. Unfortunately this right is made unenforceable by virtue of Section 6(6)(c) of the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 which forbids the court to enforce rights that are enshrined in Chapter II of the Constitution. By implication, these rights remain a mirage and can never be enjoyed by the youths and children until they are enforced. Accordingly, the paper makes an urgent call for activist judiciary to enforce the rights to education for empowerment and development of our nation.

### Child's Rights Act

The Act provides copiously for the rights of child and guarantees all the rights under Chapter IV of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Act, provides for the protection of children against abuse of diverse kind such as child's labor, prostitution and begging<sup>18</sup> and makes lucid provision on juvenile justice administration for adequate protection of children who fall into the web of crime<sup>19</sup>. Accordingly, the Act provides for the right to survival and development<sup>20</sup>. These rights are fundamental for the empowerment of the child in every sphere. However, many children in Nigeria are denied these rights because of the refusal of many states in Nigeria to adopt the Act. In fact, only twenty-four states out of thirty-six states have adopted it since its ratification in 2003. There is urgent need for government to push for adoption of the Act for adequate protection of Children, particularly the girl child who is very vulnerable<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, s. 18

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, ss. 16 and 17.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1616</sup> Right to Education Initiative, https://www.right-to-education.org, accessed on 28/2/2023

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Child's Right Act 2003, sec 31

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* ss. 204 to 232

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Punch Newspapers, https://punching.com accessed on 25/2/20

# International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

This international instrument<sup>22</sup> recognizes the right to economic freedom and aver, that state parties to the present Covenant recognizes the right to work which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work. Consequently, the Covenant to realize this is through vocational guidance and training programme and policies, steady economic, social and cultural development and full productive employment conditions safeguarding fundamental political and economic freedom to the individual<sup>23</sup>. Further, it recognizes the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family including adequate food, clothing and housing and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The state parties are enjoined to take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international cooperation based on free consent. Accordingly, the paper submits that empowering the youths and children is the most appropriate measure to improve the standard of living of the individuals and community as a whole.

# UN Convention and the Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children

Lack of empowerment has made the youths and children susceptible to trafficking. Many of them are already trapped in the web of traffickers, as they search for greener pastures in other countries. This instrument is a major attempt to enact an international legislative framework that is universal in nature and addresses all aspects of trafficking in persons, especially women, youths and children. The instrument provides that comprehensive international approach should be put in place in countries of origin, transit and destination to target measures to prevent trafficking. However, the study is of the opinion that the greatest strategy for control of youth and children trafficking is empowerment, unless they are empowered they will continue to be vulnerable to traffickers. Accordingly, this paper makes a clarion call for Nigeria to take the issue of empowerment serious and do the needful so that our youths and children will be saved from modern day slavery.

### African Charter on Human and Peoples Right 1981

Though, the Charter did not make any express provision on the empowerment of youths and children. It affirmed it in its preamble and article 2 of the Charter provides that state parties should eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa, and urges them to coordinate and intensify their co-operation and efforts to achieve a better life for the people of Africa and to promote international co-operation having due regard to the provisions of the Charter. Furthermore, it provides that all people shall have the right to existence and unquestionable, inalienable right to self-determination<sup>24</sup>. Hence, they shall freely determine their political status and shall pursue their economic and social development according to the policy they have freely chosen. The question that comes to the fore is how can citizens of Nigeria determine their political status and pursue their economic and social development if their youths are not empowered. From the above review, the paper submits that the government should make policies and laws that will empower the youths in Nigeria by removing every barrier and structure that is inimical to their empowerment.

### 5. Empowerment Programme by the Federal Government of Nigeria

In order to curb the rate of poverty in Nigeria, the Nigerian Government have embarked on many programmes such as Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan (NIYEAP). Between 2009 and 2011, the Federal Government deployed the Nigerian Youth Employment Action Plan (NIYEAP) to tackle the challenge of youth employment in the country but with moderate success. The goal was to create an enabling environment for youth unemployment. As the relevance of the Action plan decreased in the face of changing realities other polices such as the National Employment Policy (2017) and the National Youth policy (2019) replaced it. Additionally, in 2021, the Federal Government launched the revised NIYWEAP (2021-2024) to address youth employment in a comprehensive and coordinated manner based on lessons learned from the previous Action Plan. The NIYEAP will focus on achieving a job creation target of 3.7 million jobs annually. Based on the failure of the earlier policies, sustainability as well as impact, appears to be a vital issue. Therefore to achieve this target, there is a need for a model that will sustainably address the problems. Furthermore, the Youth Employment Pathway (YEP) was introduced. This programme is a demand led, evidence-driven and competency focused model. It identifies systemic constraints to youth unemployment, vis-à-vis the peculiarities of a statement economy and considers multiple pathways to employment. It employs an entrepreneurship system and strengthens and relies on a network of stakeholders and actors. Subsequently, YEP was initiated by the partnership initiative in the Niger Delta (PIND) in 2018, following extensive research to develop a model of youth training in which marginalized young people are trained in market relevant skills and subsequently supported into sustainable jobs or enterprises. It focuses on

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Adopted and Opened for Signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly Resolution 2200A(xxi) of 16 December 1966 entry into Force 23 March 1978 in accordance with Article 49

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted and opened for Signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly Resolution 2200A(xxi) of 16 December 1966 entry into Force 3January 1976, in accordance with Article 27. Article 6

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> African Charter on Human and Peoples Right, 1981,otherwise called ,the Banjul Charter was adopted on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1981.It entered into force on 21 October, 1986 . Article 20

training young people in technical skills and soft skills to prepare them for the marketplace while linking them with access to capital. However, despite all these laudable programmes by the Government our youths have not been sufficiently empowered to stem the tide of poverty in the system, due to the challenge of unsustainability and other factors that exacerbate disempowerment.

### 6. Factors that Hinder Empowerment in Nigeria

## **Lack of Implementation of Extant Laws**

Despite, plethora of laws on the protection and enhancement of youths empowerment, many youths and children still struggle due to inherent lapses in our legal frame work, for instance the unenforceable clause in 1999 Constitution of Nigeria which makes these rights practicable impossible to be enforced. Although, the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria made holistic provisions for socioeconomic, which are invariably empowerment rights but those rights will remain a mirage until they are made justiciable. Amongst, those rights enunciated in chapter II of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, the rights to education is very pivotal because it is very fundamental to empowerment. In fact, the importance of education cannot be over emphasized because education is the cultivation of the entire individual including intellectual character and psychomotor development<sup>25</sup>. It's the main investment and in vesture in human capital development that leads the lamp of productivity and growth, both in micro and macro levels separate. It represents everything that will make people have core dream, value for life, hope for tomorrow, mind to project, vision for better life and to detest trouble of any kind because of exposure and civilization. However, this rights is not justiciable by virtue of section 6(6)(c) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, though, the rights to empowerment are not expressly termed as rights of empowerment but because socioeconomic rights drive the civil and political rights. They are precedent to enjoyment of other rights. The socioeconomic rights under Chapter II are known as second generation rights, these rights are precedent to enjoyment of other civil and political rights. The question that comes to the fore is whether the constitution should provide and cunningly remove such rights at the same time. It is apposite to note that as long as sections 13 and 6(6)(c) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 are not reviewed or removed, that the empowerment of children and youths will remain a mirage in Nigeria because the socio-economic rights is a pre-requisite for the enjoyment of civil and political rights. These rights make a mandatory positive demand on the government, so as to provide the living conditions without which it will be impossible to realize and enjoy the first generation rights<sup>26</sup>.

### **Discriminatory Laws**

The essence of empowerment is to create enabling environment by removing hindrances to empowerment. Such hindrances include gender inequality, discriminatory practices in our bye laws and obnoxious cultural practices that hinder the rights of children that hinder empowerment. Recent, studies show that discriminatory laws hinder youths and children, particularly, the girl child from participating equally in certain fields of endeavor like their male counterparts, for instance, rules and conditions of service for female police officer's <sup>27</sup>contain restriction on marriage and this, obviously, is an interference with their rights to private and family lives, including the right to a decent livelihood. The question is why should a woman police officer be restrained from marrying unless she has served for a period of not less than three years? Why should she be required to obtain permission to get married whereas such condition is not given to her male counterpart. This offends the provision of CEDAW<sup>28</sup>, which calls for non-discrimination in the field of employment and pay; and guarantees job security in the event of marriage and maternity. Also, section 42 of the Constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex. <sup>29</sup>Female youths, with disabilities suffer additional discrimination in accessing job and other opportunities for their survival and development. Nigeria has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In addition, the Protocol recognizes the rights of women with disability to employment<sup>30</sup> and equality protects elderly women's rights to livelihood, as well as state assistance to women in distress. Furthermore, article 13(c) of the Protocol enjoins state parties to protect women from sexual harassment and ensure transparency in recruitment, promotion and dismissal of women and combat and punish sexual harassment in the workplace. Sexual harassment is sexual discrimination under the law. Sexual harassment undermines a woman's right and freedom to choose who to associate with, right to privacy, bodily integrity and freedom from discrimination, particularly in employment. It affects a woman's right to participate in public life, to work and earn a decent livelihood and in general participation in the public spaces. Hence, there is great need for empowerment of youths particularly the females because women's low socio-economic and political statuses increase their vulnerability to sexual harassment in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup>P.S Rwang & G.S Puldu, Education: A Therapy and Cure For Peace in North-East Nigeria, Functions of Executives and Empirical Development Strategies for This Millenuium, A Festschrit For Prof. Joseph Chukwuneke Okoye(2022) p.331

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Archbishop Olubunmi Okogie v the Lagos State (1981) 2NCLR,337

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Regulations 118,121-128 of the Police Act, Cap. 359 LFN 1990.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> CEDAW, Article 11

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 herein also cited as the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> By article 23(a) States Parties undertake to (a) ensure the protection of women with disabilities and take specific measures commensurate with their physical, economic and social needs to facilitate their access to employment and professional training

the workplace as they desperately seek employment for survival, enhanced status and decision-making positions. In *quid pro quo* type of harassment, individual female victims suffer job loss or the threatened loss of a job as a result of her response to a request for sexual favours. This results to economic loss and amounts to a violation of female's economic rights as well as causing some emotional violence to their person. Apart from making a serious advocacy for empowerment of women, the study also makes an urgent call for legislation on sexual harassment to provide legislation on sexual harassment to provide women a safe environment to work and earn a livelihood. The government should also protect youths and children that have disability because they suffer double violence *ie* poverty and disability. Also, the directive principles of state policy in section 16 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 outlines the economic objectives, which include protecting the rights of every citizen to engage in any economic activities. Sexual harassment prevent many women from realization of their right to engage in economic activities of their choice and should, therefore, be tackled urgently as many of the civilized world have done. Furthermore, obnoxious cultural practices like early marriage disempower female youths because it hinders them from accessing education.

### **Terrorism and Insecurity**

The greatest factor that exacerbate, hunger and insecurity presently in Nigeria now is insecurity. In fact, the terrorists and bandits attack in Nigeria has destabilized the economy and has negatively affected food production, invariably exacerbating hunger in the polity, hence, the need for youth empowerment. Youth empowerment is needed to bring the country out of financial quagmire because efforts of the people are needed to unit with the effort of the government to improve economic, social and cultural conditions of communities in every sphere <sup>33</sup>. The absence of this has increased the rate of crime such as, kidnapping, armed robbery, organ harvesting and *et cetera*. Hence, to tackle insecurity the issue of youth empowerment must be addressed because poverty is the underlying factor that drive them to crime.

### 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper finds that, despite plethora of laws on empowerment and programmes mapped out for youth empowerment in Nigeria, many of them still suffer adverse poverty. The work observed that many factors such as legal, economic, social, religious factors disempower children and youths in Nigeria, particularly lapses in the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria which makes socioeconomic rights unenforceable. The work observes further, that virtually all the programmes made for empowering the youths are not sustainable enough to eradicate poverty in Nigeria. Furthermore, the study reveals that some of our laws are discriminatory like the Police Act that discriminates against the economic rights of female police officers. Furthermore, the paper notes that lack of education and huge school drop prevalent in Nigeria is endangering the future of our nation. Accordingly, the paper makes an urgent call for the review of extant laws like, the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, Child's Right Act, the Police Act *et cetera*. The work, advocates that education should be made accessible to all, so that Nigeria will have hope like other nations. Apart, from that all cultural practices that are inimical to youth and children empowerment should be jettisoned. The paper also observes that Nigeria may not likely fulfill the United Nations mandate by year 2030 without empowering the youths who are the major labour force in Nigeria. The following measures may be helpful:

- 1. Review of the relevant extant laws in Nigeria including the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, the Child's Right, and the Police Act.
- 2. Establishing viable structures for youth and children empowerment in Nigeria.
- 3. Making vocational studies to be compulsory in the primary, secondary and tertiary institution.
- 4. Implementation of laws and major programmes on youth and children empowerment.
- 5. Creation of awareness on youth and children empowerment apposite through mass media and social media is very.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Ezeilo, Women, Law & Human Rights, Global and National Perspectives, ACENA Publishers,(2011)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> F.L Onyeulo, O.Chukwumbah and M.U Okeke ,Integrated Community Development Initiative and Sustainable Development in Nigeria, Functions of Executives and Empirical Development Strategies for This Millennium, A Festschrift for Professor Joseph Chukwuneke Okoye, SCOA Heritage Publications, (2022)