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**ROLES OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN CHILD PROTECTION: A POLICY OPTION FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

Child protection is a global concern, especially in the developing countries. This paper explores the roles of social workers in child protection, and the need for a policy option for sustainable development in Nigeria. This is in response to the growing need for all and sundry to eliminate child abuse and neglect. Globally the transition from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has made appreciable growth to enhance human welfare, including children. Although significant progress has been made, progress varies across regions, countries and even within countries, and extreme hunger and poverty nevertheless devastates the world population especially the developing countries. However, among all these the target of MDGs and SDGs, eradicating hunger and poverty remains unabated. However, with current state of hunger and poverty in Nigeria, addressing child abuse and neglect remains one of the obstructions to achieving sustainable development goals in the country, especially if the economic growth that translates into overall wellbeing of the people is not achievable. In this discourse, the role of social workers in child protection is crucial as obtainable in the developed societies. As a remediation, the paper recommends not only the implementation of child rights act but include social work intervention in the change process, and improving the capacity of families through wealth creation to be able to provide and protect the needs of the Nigerian children and enthrone world fit for children to thrive.

Keywords: Child protection system, Social work roles, Child participation, Child protection laws, Policy development

Introduction

Globally, it is recognized that children in need of protection are not receiving appropriate services from professionals and are still facing poor outcomes (Coman & Devaney, 2011). The inadequate protection is aggravated by rise in poverty and HIV/AIDS infection and deaths of child care givers. More so, the incidence of substance misuse remarkably contributes to child abuse and neglect. Although, the extended family or communities protect children to

the best of their abilities, they deserve societal support to be able to provide the needed material and psychosocial needs children (Shiller & Strydom, 2018).

The forms of abuse against children includes physical violence, sexual violence, threat of physical or sexual violence, and psychological/emotional abuse (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC 2012). Child abuse encompasses insensitive words or actions indicating physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Conversely, child neglect denotes the passive behaviours of care givers roles and responsibilities expressed in failure to address the physical, emotional, or educational needs of a child that might lead to harm. In addition, child abuse and neglect include insufficient supervision of children or exposure to violent environs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). Child abuse is also associated with psychological and behavioral problems in childhood and early adulthood, such as depression, anxiety disorders, smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, aggression and violence towards others, risky sexual behaviors and post-traumatic stress disorders (Cui, Xue, Connolly, & Liu, 2016).

Studies show that vulnerable children are faced with life-threatening outcomes. Whitaker (2012) revealed that children that are not protected often face varying degrees of difficulties including death. The child welfare system observed that the affected children are those whose care givers are poor and lack protective ability, prone to domestic violence, and substance misuse. With the domestication of Child Rights Act of 2003 in Nigeria, it is expected that children all over Nigeria will be adequately protected and cared for. However, the domestication and/or implementation of the Act in various states of Nigeria is becoming a grievous challenge to the lives of children and the nation at large. Owing to diverse ethnic nationalities with peculiar cultures and religion, understandings and interpretations in these diverse domains pose setbacks to effective care and protection of the children.

In addition, the implementation of the existing laws as enshrined in the constitution of the country continues to be problematic. It may be argued that in the development of, and implementation of policy, professional expertise of social workers is not involved in the children's welfare system. This may have contributed to poor policy change and application in Nigeria compared to the developed countries. It implies that the absence of explicit legislative support for social workers in and the domestication of international conventions or treaties in Nigerian child protection system contribute to myriads of challenges to children's future. A regime change toward child protection in terms of domestication and implementation of global convention on children's protection will promote the adequate utilization of social workers toward protection of children's welfare (Rosicky & Northcott, 2016).

Internationally, remarkable achievements have been made toward policy frameworks to improve children's welfare (Southwell & Fraser, 2010). As conceptualized by International Federation of Social Workers, in child protection services, social workers are preoccupied with three specific interventions demonstrated as social analysts, social catalysts, and social activists. As social analysts, social workers help people to have a firm understanding of issues demanding intervention, while as social catalysts, social work practitioners' support their service users to make informed choices in order to achieve sustainable change for themselves. Furthermore, people needing the assistance of social workers are exposed to their rights and privileges, and assisted through social relationships through family, local, community, national and international levels to advocate for and sustain protection (Rosicky & Northcott, 2016).

Based on values of social work profession, the principal interest of this paper focuses on the professional gap in policy change that has eluded the Nigerian State over the decades. Worldwide, social workers are known for their wealth of knowledge, skills and quality-control on child related issues and practice. It becomes imperative that in child abuse and neglect issues, social workers should be involved as an integral resource to child protection. This is because effective intervention in relation to child protection must recognize the voices and contribution of children and families of the Nigerian people. Currently, the position of children and family will provide an insight to a more robust, comprehensive and sustainable approach to the eradication of child abuse in Nigeria. Social workers working together with the government and other child-led organizations and civil society in child's protection will generate the much needed acceptance in children's rights, and observance of such rights in daily lives.

Status of child protection laws and implementation in Nigeria

Social workers recognize the efficacy of both international treaties and domestic laws world over. International social workers draws on the universal Convention on the Rights of the Child, among other principles articulated in the treaties such as, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; European-based Convention on Human Rights, 1950; European-based Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights, 1996; the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, 1980, the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation (Inter-country Adoption) of 1993; and the Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation (Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children) of 1996 (Rosicky & Northcott, 2016).

In Nigeria, prior to the domestication of Child Rights Act of 2003, Ogunniran & Nwanna (n.d.) observed that for decades, the main laws guiding juvenile justice administration were the Children and Young Persons Laws (CYPLs) in the states of Nigeria. Although the rights of the child have been domesticated in Nigeria and in some states of the federation, yet, the level of implementation is far-fetched. There are evidences of child abuse and neglect everywhere in the country. The condition of children is complicated by the prevailing economic situations of the country, coupled with misappropriation of resources and corruption of government officials, among other anomalies.

Child abuse and neglect in Nigeria may be regarded as reflecting two sides of a coin. While the government is accusing parents and stakeholders for violating the rights of the child, parents and guardians are equally accusing the government for poor governance as a cause of child abuse and neglect. For example, Lawal (2013), noted that Kwara State Government expressed displeasure over nonchalant attitude of parents and stakeholders for violating Child Rights Act of 2003. In addition, Ayodele (2013), noted that the law regulating hawking appears to be weak with regards to the rate of hawking among children on major roads and feeder roads, which may jeopardize the future of these children. Furthermore, after a critical review of cases of sexual abuse in the country, Nnorom (2010), observed that since the domestication of Child Rights Act of 2003, sexual abuse of children is widespread within and outside their homes, leaving most suspects unprosecuted.

According to Nnorom (2010), in Lagos State, the sexual abuse offenses reported to Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs) between 2004 and 2005, revealed that 17 and 10 cases were reported respectively, while some were not reported. Out of the cases reported and charged to

court, some were bailed, a few others were convicted between one to seven years in imprisonment. Nnorom (2010) argues that this contravenes the provisions of the Act which stipulates life imprisonment for culprits. Similar situations may apply in other states of the federation. By implication, it is obvious that both the governmental authorities and some members of the Nigerian society are blameworthy to the issues of child abuse and neglect.

Largely, this is because the government has not been proactive in the domestication (in some states) and/or implementation of the law protecting the children of Nigeria. The key obstacles which prevents institutions from implementing the rights of the child without parental care or at risk of losing parental care are lack of qualified specialists, underdeveloped infrastructure and value judgments in the society, other than economic, political situations, flaws in the legal system, lack of inter-institutional cooperation, bureaucracy, amongst others (Česnuitytė, & Okunevičiūtė-Neveauskienė, 2009), and including diversities in the country.

Varying cultures among different ethnic nationalities in Nigeria seems to be an impediment to addressing child abuse and neglect in Nigeria. According to Ogunniyi (2018), the fragmented nature of Nigeria in terms of culture, religion, ethnicity, language and so on, domestication of children's treaties becomes a huge challenge. Also, among Muslims and Christians, perception about child abuse considerably varies. More so, Ogunniyi (2018), contends that a uniform legislation that takes cognizance of differing perspectives is problematic. The import in this area is that there is an obvious gap between government and legislation, and the people. With the persistence of divergent perceptions, interpretation and non-implementation of the children's rights, it is equally indicative of non-inclusiveness of professionals such as social workers in the scheme of affairs concerning the children, as well as in the formulation and implementation processes.

Social workers are trained professionals that recognize the inherent worth and dignity of a people in all ramifications. Employing knowledge, perceptions skills, including the professions Code of Ethics as espoused by the International Federation of Social Workers, social work practitioners are able to re-direct changes in policy advancement and implementations, to reflect the welfare of Nigerian children. In this direction, social workers generalist practice gives credence to the professions capacity to deal with human problems, be they individual, group or the larger community. Through engagement, assessment, communication, problem solving and negotiating skills, and networking and collaborating skills, social workers can help individual states to develop an acceptable policy standards and relevant laws that guarantee the overall wellbeing of children in each state or geopolitical zones.

Roles of social work in child protection policy

Social work intervention is human-oriented. No professional discipline is endowed in knowledge that are needed for quality-control and relationship-based child protection practice than social work. A good number of social workers practice in child protection settings with significant roles in direct case work, management and policy issues (Australian Association of Social Workers [AASW], 2015). Furthermore, AASW asserts that social workers are recognized worldwide as a core profession in child protection policy, management and practice. Social workers in the child protection structure provide child-centered services, including the aiding referral pathways that link services to service users (AASW, 2015).

The deficiency of governmental authorities' reference to the significance and role of and capability of social workers in international and domestic laws, or policies on child safety is notable in the ineffective implementation of transnational treaties and public domestic policies. Thus, social workers' practice engagement in the child protection system is of utmost importance to ensuring the safety and protection of children (Rosicky & Felicity Northcott, 2016). Social workers promote social justice by understanding of the impact of social structures and policy upon service users, as well as participating actively in the policy practice (Weiss, Gal, & Katan, 2005). Put differently, social workers professional input in the formulation, administration and accomplishment of social policy has direct influence toward the guarantee of social rights, and sustenance of the profession's ethical political mission. The profession's influence is a demonstration of the ethical, theoretical as well as the technical acceptability of the profession (Mioto & Nogueira, 2013).

Professional expertise is resourceful in the quests to find solutions to challenges in human living. This is similar to demonstrating the commitment and political obligation of the government to its citizens. Laws and policies are veritable tools to ensuring cohesion, regulate behavior and entrench peaceful and healthy living among the people. It is in this light, that children welfare system must be inclusive in approach and management for quality livelihood. Social workers are well-positioned to impact policy, especially as it affects children's development, survival and protection. It is important because, maltreated children are at high risk of lifelong developmental challenges, including HIV infection, social problems and other forms of abuse. The obvious outcome is capable of compromising the socio-economic development of societies (Medrano, & Tabben-Toussaint, 2012).

In modern times, many acts of violence which could lead to loss or abusing children are enormous. It is necessary to provide appropriate services and community awareness through policy foundation. There is also the need for the governments to demonstrate the political will to provide family and children welfare system that will engender stability and adequate protection of children in human environment. Adequate policy would provide a platform of creating a local network of specialized services to assist children and families who are victims of violence; developing professional skills and competencies of professionals working with abused and neglected children, because interest in child abuse and neglect should be a principal task of social care professionals, parents, community and the government.

Generalist social workers perspectives and skills are employed to make changes in laws, rules, budgets and policies, including the authorities that create those policies, be they at the local, state and national levels (Cummins, Byers & Pedrick, 2011). Furthermore, Cummins, Byers and Pedrick (2011), assert that policy practice entails using social work skills to propose and change unfavourable policies to achieve social and economic justice, as well as within micro, mezzo, and macro intervention levels (Cummins, Byers, & Pedrick, 2011). In view of social work intervention at all system levels (micro, mezzo and macro practice), social workers recognize children as an integral participant in the policy change, and family unit as the caregiver or the domain within which child abuse occurs, and other supportive context of the society.

Social work intervention with children

The family is the primary setting within which the child develops. Unfortunately, within the family are also traumatic events like child abuse. Children are in constant exposure to different types of neglect and abusive behaviours, particularly on sexual, emotional, and physical intensities. The intensities of abuse take the form of bullying, isolation, rejection, punishment, physical force, ignorance and exposure to dangerous stimuli (Constantinescu, M., Constantinescu, C., & Dumitru, 2017). Considering the implications of abuse to children's wellbeing, social work intervention becomes crucial.

Early intervention is vital to guarantee timely promotion of children and family welfare, particularly in situations where they are vulnerable or at risk of adequate protection. Irrespective of social conditions, political circumstances and organizational arrangements, social workers still have to balance care and control toward their service users, helping them to achieve empowerment and needed protection, provide support and surveillance in the face of individual and societal challenges (Dickens, 2011). Further, Dickens (2011) argues that harmonizing care and control remains a core component that informs social work practice in spite of political circumstances, legal dictates and professional ethics. The expected care and control is likened to harmonizing risk and need. An attempt to balance the risk and need is a dynamic process, and should not be approached based on assumption but entails effective supervision as well as practice support (Seden, 2016). This means that partnering with other service providers is invaluable to achieving meaningful outcome for the vulnerable children, as well as the families' welfare that serve to protect and promote or diminish the wellbeing of the children.

Social workers collaborate with other practitioners or informal system during assessment process by providing relevant information and services. In the assessment process, the input of relatives, friends, educationists, health practitioners, among other relevant bodies are required for informed planning and execution of priorities. A broad understanding of the concepts of need, risk, and assessment provides social workers with the needed foundation for practice, and when collaborating with other professionals in the change process. Although social worker's prime focus on their own agency's responsibilities, working with other practitioners remains and adds to important information to intervention strategies (Seden, 2016).

Social workers work with government and non-government service providers, to design, and develop policy to ensure adequate protection for children in child protection system. This protection system is not only child-focused, but family-inclusive care arrangements to enhance the families' capacities for sustained care for their children. For those children whose welfare cannot be guaranteed within the family setting, alternative arrangement is sought to ensure child protection. This intervention approach requires professional skills to deal with complexities arising from treatment strategies (Australian Association of Social Workers [AASW], 2015).

Collaboration between social workers and other service providers is essential. Due to complex issues that social workers encounter in their day to day situations, the sole effort of social workers does not generate the expected outcome without the combined effort of essential bodies or agencies that can provide the needed assistance. This cooperation should transcend child protection agencies, to include educational settings, the law enforcement

agencies, general practitioners, extended family system, friends and neighbours, among other care facilities (Australian Association of Social Workers [AASW], 2015).

Social workers in a helping process are holistic in practice approach. Social workers, however, make assessments about risks, not just for themselves, but on behalf of society in legally specified areas and within the policy contexts that shape their practice. They have publicly accountable responsibilities to meet needs and prevent people from harming themselves and others. This can mean debating the dilemma of whether an individual's life style and life choices can be supported, or whether intervention is needed because of the risks to others or the individual concerned. These are ethical and moral, rather than procedural debates. Negotiation for what the vulnerable person considers they need, and respect for their perspective, is very important (Seden, 2016).

There are many social work roles, relating to risk. In general, it can be identified that social workers are concerned with those risks which people pose to others and those risks to which people are exposed. These are further explained as people who are vulnerable to risk (Kemshall, 2013). A common steps in assessing risks according to Kemshall (2013) include, identifying those concerned with risky behaviour or event; likelihood of the risk; the conditions that creates situation(s) in which risk might occur; the possible impact of risk; and the after effect of the risk on those who might be harmed or exposed to the risk (Kemshall, 2013).

Social workers usually aim to manage risk through actions to reduce risk and minimize harm (Kemshall, 2013). There may be high expectations of social workers, yet they are often asked to manage situations where others have given up or failed. They can therefore only make decisions they can defend, which means ones that can be accounted for, are ethical and made on the best information available at the time. In the context of social work practice, defensible decision entails critical thinking, reflexive and cautious judgments that is evidence-based and instrumental to justifying assessments, plans and interventions (Cooper, 2010). In addition, social workers making decisions they account for involve the active participation of children in the change process.

Child participation in decision-making process

Child participation is involving the child in affairs that concerns him/her to the level of understanding that promotes self-expression in decision making process (Gallagher, Smith, Hardy & Wilkinson, 2012). In their views, Healy and Darlington (2009) suggest that successful participation involves encouraging and supporting children to express their views, for example in family group meetings. Practitioners also emphasized that the techniques used has to be appropriate to the child's needs based on age and maturity. Thus, for many practitioners, the use of activities such as play, storytelling and creative arts may be instrumental to active participation. Children's participation underlines the efficacy of interventions. Vis and Thomas (2011) noted that successful participation may have a number of beneficial effects to children including improved safety and well-being. This effect is related to a child's relationship with the social worker and the child-friendliness of processes.

Children's physical presence is fundamental in participation. Vis and Thomas (2009) underline the importance of children's attendance at meetings, and found that those who had attended a meeting were three times further possible to have participated in decision making than those who had not attended a meeting. This suggests that enabling children to attend more meetings should be a priority for those who wish to increase children's participation.

Furthermore, Vis and Thomas (2009) suggested that increased attendance at meetings might be accomplished by developing some kind of structural system to ensure this, such as a mandatory review meeting. They emphasize that this would need to be designed around children's needs, and permitting these children to express their opinions in person.

Children as integral part of the system are expected to be given serious attention with regards to their rights and privileges. They should be meaningfully engaged in all matters that have relevance to their lives, with special consideration of their age and level of understanding. To adequately address the welfare of children, state authorities should make available opportunities that enable them to present their views independent of their parents or caregivers (Health Service Executive, 2011). In the light of respect for independent views of children, parents or caregivers deserve respect, and should be consulted in family matters. The major factors to be considered include family and child's circumstances, gender, age, stage of development, religion, culture, and race should be considered when taking protective action; ignoring criminal issues; separating children from parents and caregivers when alternative means of protection have been exhausted in the change effort; children's re-union with parents must be within the best concern of the children; and a multidisciplinary and coordinated approach is required in the prevention, detection, and treatment of child maltreatment (Health Service Executive, 2011). To this regard, greater relationship of social workers and children is critical for positive experiences and social work intervention (Ruch, Turney, & Ward, 2010).

Engaging with parents and families

Effective working with families depends upon the provision of support to parents as well as children. In child protection cases, for example, social work interventions commonly involve working with parents as well as children. In some cases, parents are the main involuntary client(s). It is often argued that initiatives focusing solely on children can be unhelpful in the long term (Gallagher, Smith, Hardy & Wilkinson, 2012).

Buckley, Carr and Whelan (2011) found that parents involved in the child protection system experienced social work involvement as demanding but that good relationships with social workers could compensate for this. A trusting relationship is most likely to develop through the demonstration of warmth, friendliness and good humour. In particular service users' value courtesy, respect, accountability, transparency, experience and expertise in social work professionals. Healy and Darlington (2009), reporting on practitioners' views about parental engagement, highlight the importance of recognizing and respecting parental expertise, and degree of input about the situation and the solutions to it.

It is often very difficult for experts to discuss child protection concerns with parents. It is important that a decision following an investigation of a child welfare concern is communicated to an individual or a family, taking into consideration the circumstances of the case and the outcome of the investigation (Health Service Executive, 2011). For example, it may be more appropriate that communication in the first instance is in person rather than communication by telephone or letter. It is recognized that each individual case may require a different approach, but one-to-one personal discussions, where everything can be explained in an unhurried fashion, can give assurances to families. In developing a professional and supportive working relationship with a family, the social work practitioner begins with purposeful relationship,

clarity of purpose, genuine, responsible and respectful in intervention with service users (Health Service Executive (2011).

Scope of social work practice in child protection system

Determining how to improve the child protection system is a difficult task as the system is inherently complex. The difficulties confronting children are complicated and the cost of failure high. Abuse and neglect are associated with numerous signs and symptoms, and can present in unclear concerns about a child's safety or development. The nature of child abuse and neglect implies that responding to these issues by relevant professions and agencies is dependent upon effective coordination and communication between the service providers is central to accomplishment (Munro, 2011).

Besides the hereditary influences, the social environment plays important role in children's development and survival. In early childhood, the parents or caregivers as the closest persons to the child shape the environment in ways that affect the child's growth. If the environment is beneficial, the child develops positive experience, but if there are any risks, they can unfavourably affect the child's development and physical and mental health. The United Nations Organization provides the Guidelines on child's rights and welfare. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides for care and support in provision of children's right, as well as emphasizes the significance of the roles of the family to ensure positive conditions for a child's welfare and development (Razgale, Kokarevica, & Bolsteina, 2014).

According to Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), the scope of social work practice in child protection among others involves attending to physical, educational needs, and spirituality; identification of vulnerability; establishing client–social worker collaborative relationships, psychosocial and risk assessment in relation to child abuse; facilitating networking and advocacy; facilitation of kinship networks; social, legal, and ethical obligation, developing policy and research; and among other areas of concern (Australian Association of Social Workers [AASW], 2015).

Social workers are oriented to focus on preventive intervention, and that working with the child means working with the whole family and with other environmental factors in a culturally competent way (National Association of Social Workers [NASWS], 2009). Prevention of child abuse and neglect occurrences may likely reduce vulnerability and the burden on children's development and survival, and increase healthy living among the young population. The systems of care and support are engaged to provide the needed conducive environment for child protection. The justice system, law enforcement agencies, and other government ministries and agencies, as well as charity-based, faith-based and non-governmental organizations are resourceful in lessening the wave of child maltreatment. This means that social workers and other professionals help families by identifying and addressing the individual, family and community challenges they encounter (NASWS, 2009).

In real life situations, it is imperative to use early intervention methods, in order to reduce, or prevent risk factors, evaluate the efficiency of these methods, sustainability, usefulness and coherence. An essential feature in the wellbeing of children include the knowledge of how to help a child grow up; how to bring up a child emotionally and physically healthy; how to modify the child-care model and; the firm grasp of the family related issues and ways of resolving these issues (Razgale, Kokarevica, & Bolsteina, 2014). These solutions may be addressed at the primary, secondary, and tertiary preventive levels. In a nutshell, primary

prevention aims to protect individuals in order to avoid problems prior to signs or symptoms of the problem. These include those activities, programs, and practices that operate on a fundamentally non-personal basis and alter the set of opportunities, risks and expectations surrounding individuals, for instance education and awareness (Daro & Dodge 2009).

Further, Daro and Dodge (2009) noted that secondary prevention include services which identify persons in the early stages of problem behaviour and attempts to avert the ensuing negative consequences by inducing them to cease their problem behaviour through counselling or treatment. It is frequently mentioned as early intervention, for example, removing children to alternative care. Lastly, tertiary prevention are services that strive to end the problem behaviour and/or to ameliorate its negative effects through treatment and rehabilitation.

With the expected policy-option in Nigeria, it is important to note that social workers are formidable professionals with requisite knowledge and skills capable of engendering the desired paradigm shift in child protection policy in Nigeria. Government of Nigeria at all levels should urgently make a paradigm shift in the process of making policy affecting children in particular, and families in general. This is because policies that do not recognize and appreciate the input of the affected might not produce positive outcomes in the immediate or long run. It is high time the government of Nigeria should recognize and appreciate the unique institutionalization of social work profession in Nigeria. The involvement of social workers will heighten awareness, reporting, investigation and adjudication of offenders, involving the law enforcement agencies, justice system, and among other stakeholders in the system.

Social workers in the country are trained to mobilize both human and material resources, introduce their wealth of expertise to bear on the domestication and implementation of appropriate child right laws that is in consonant with the international best practices, with due consideration of the peculiarities, cultural and religious orientation of a people that does not undermine the protection and future of children. In addition, Due to social workers problem-solving approach that cut across micro, mezzo, and macro practice in human living, the professionals can advance this approach through advocacy, networking and working with other team members in Nigeria. Social workers are capable of protecting the best interest of children and enthrone world fit for children to meet the set target of SDGs agenda, and beyond.

Conclusion

All forms of abuse and exploitation that result in tangible or likely harm to the child's health and development are counterproductive in every well-meaning society. Historically, social work profession has been involved in the design and delivery of child protection services as well as addressing the social and economic conditions that undermine children's welfare. Social workers' have the trained ability to create protective environments for healthy development and well-being by tackling poverty; reducing discrimination; promoting social justice; ensuring protection from violence, abuse, exploitation, neglect, and family separation; and providing the needed services.

Social workers can act as a mobilizing factor to generate political will and financial resources and provide real opportunity for increased collaboration to strengthen the workforce that will effect positive change in the lives of children and families. There is need for adequate care and provision for not only the children but include their families or care givers that are

exposed to abusing children knowingly and unknowingly across cultures. In this direction, this paper restates the roles of social workers in the process of formulation and implementation of policies that can impact positively on Nigerian children. Social workers utilization of the knowledge, perceptions and skills, including the principles and values of the profession as contained in the professions Code of Ethics to stimulate policy framework is encompassing irrespective of sex, colour, culture, religion and status.

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