

## Reporting Nutrition and the Right of Nigerian Child: Focus On Internally Displaced Children in Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

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**Abstract:** Children whose rights are violated in one way or the other are affected intellectually, physically and emotionally to mention but a few. Such children in most cases become fixated. Researchers have revealed that the first one thousand days or three years are very crucial in terms of good nutrition in the development of the child's brain. Unfortunately, UNICEF report reveals that over 2.5 million Nigerian children are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, warning that 20 percent of the number could die if urgent steps were not taken to address the situation. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine the strategies in reporting the nutritional needs of the Nigerian child particularly the internally displaced children visa-vis the right of the child. This paper is a theoretical paper that analyzed the empirical works done in this area. The study is anchored on agenda setting and Child Act theories. Findings are based on comparative analysis of empirical works done in the area of nutrition and the right of the child particularly as it affects the internally displaced children in Boko Haram insurgency. It highlighted the strategies for reporting the rights of the Nigerian child particularly the internally displaced children in terms of nutrition. Findings from the study show that internally displaced children are malnourished and enough is not being done by both the government of Nigeria and individuals to redress the situation. The study recommends that government should pay special attention to the nutritional needs of children displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria; resident medical doctors and other paramedics should be available in every IDP camp in Nigeria to check the health condition of internally displaced children; the mass media should create greater awareness on the nutritional needs of internally displaced children; journalists in Nigeria and foreign correspondents should adhere to the guidelines and principles of child's rights reporting in the reportage of issues relating to internally displaced children.

**Keywords:** Reporting, Nutrition, Internally displaced children, Boko Haram, Insurgency, Nigerian Child, Child Right Act.

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### I. Introduction

Nutrition is essential for the growth and development of a child both at prenatal and postnatal stage. Balanced nutrition is a necessary condition for a woman before and during pregnancy for healthy pregnancy outcome (Black, *et al*, 2008). Beyond prenatal period, the nutritional status of a child cannot be compromised. This is because it is the right of a child to be cared for by way of proper feeding with breast milk, and the type of foods the child requires to grow and develop physically, intellectually and emotionally. Unfortunately, many children in Nigeria suffer from nutritional imbalance due to poverty, mothers' ignorance and low income that make it impossible for parents to provide their children with good nutrition. In a developing country as Nigeria, parents need to be properly and regularly educated on the need for proper feeding of children even when such children are victims of displacement by insurgent groups.

Under nutrition leads to stunting, wasting, and deficiencies of essential vitamins and minerals that provide nutrients; the absence of or inadequacy of these micronutrients give rise to a condition known as malnutrition (Black, *et al*, 2008). Conversely, over-consumption of specific nutrients by children result in obesity and this also is not good for the healthy development of a child (Black, *et al*, 2008).

Considering the prevalence of malnutrition among children in developing countries, it is important that the mass media be it print, broadcast or social media platforms should be used to educate parents on the need for proper feeding of children. However, in a country that is engulfed in crisis that leads to the displacement of both parent and children from their homes, the dissemination of information by the media to educate parents and the government on the nutritional needs of children requires strategies that could differ from the conventional methods of mass media reporting. Nigeria, for example, has experienced displacement of children and their parents by the activities of insurgents, especially the Boko Haram group that has made the North East of Nigeria almost inhabitable with many displaced parents and children now settled in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Camps in the country.

The place of settlement of a child notwithstanding, it is vital to note that children whose rights are violated in one way or the other are affected intellectually, physically and emotionally and such children in most

cases become fixated. Hence, journalists who are the custodians of conscience need to engage the public with information and news that will make every well-meaning Nigerian and international organisations to rethink the plights of internally displaced children in the country. Thus, the mass media agenda setting function is crucial at a time like this in order to make both the government and the parents of internally displaced children appreciate the need for proper feeding of children in all circumstances.

### **Background of the Study**

Nigeria has witnessed incessant cases of internal displacement of people. At the early stage of Nigeria's independence, the country experienced crises leading to the displacement of people from their original homes (Chibuike and Onuoha, 2016). For instance, the civil war that broke out in Nigeria between 1967 and 1970 caused displacement of people especially those from the Eastern region of the country. The resulting malnutrition from the war caused the displaced South Easterners a disease that popularly became known as *Kwashiokor* and many died. Also, intra-ethnic conflicts, flooding, erosion, desert encroachment among others (Chibuike and Onuoha, 2016) have led to what could be termed minor displacement of persons (MDPs) when compared to the number of internally displaced persons resulting from the activities of the Boko Haram sect. Many people have also been displaced from their original inhabitations due to oil spillage and development projects as is the case in Niger Delta (South South) (Laden, 2011). Thousands are annually internally displaced as a result of natural disasters including flooding in the North and West and erosion in the East (Laden, 2011).

However Ladan (2011) stated that in Nigeria, most of the incidences of internal displacement occur because of violent conflicts with ethnic religious groups and politically motivated crises. In fact, the phenomena of insurgency in Nigeria have been evident since the country's independence in 1960, ranging from the twelve-day revolution by AdakaBoro (1964), to the civil war (1967-1970), to the various ethnic militias such as the O'odua People's Congress(OPC), the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger-Delta insurgency and the most recent the "Ahl al sunnali al alDa'wawa al Jihad", popularly known as Boko Haram which has been operating in Northern Nigeria since the early 2000, with its origin linked with the wide spread socio-economic and religious insecurity among certain communities in the North.

The continued increase in the spread of the nefarious activities of the Boko Haram sect in North East Nigeria since 2009 has created adverse humanitarian consequence to the North East region. Life in the various communities of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, such as Kawuri, Baga, Konduga, Bama, Shuwa, Ajjgin, Gamboru, Giwa, Chibok, Gwoza to mention a few, have been characteristically nasty, brutish and most times short (Salkida, 2012; Fwatshak and Larab, 2007; Ikelegbe, 2010). The increasing influx of refugees and the spillover of Boko Haram violence to neighbouring countries over the years had resulted to serious regional security implications, despite the establishment of a Joint Border Patrol Command to address the increasing security challenges attributed to the insurgency(Salkida, 2012; Fwatshak and Larab, 2007; Ikelegbe, 2010). The region has ceased to know civil normalcy as a result as evident in human casualties, human right abuses, population displacement, refugee debacle, and loss of means of livelihood, food insecurity, limited medical facilities and other social amenities as well as nutritional problem for internally displaced children in IDP Camps.

The sect's activities in the North-east have left many children in Nigeria especially the internally displaced children in critical conditions that range from hunger, diseases and ill health associated with poor feeding to deaths due to malnutrition. It is against this background that we undertake to examine how the Boko Haram insurgency impact on the right of children to be well fed and cared for.

### **Research Method**

We adopted descriptive analytical approach to explore the nutritional needs of children in IDP Camps and how the journalists in Nigeria report the condition of such children. The approach is qualitative and data generation was from secondary sources: books, journals, and newspapers. The choice of this method was informed by our report on risk assessment which suggests that it could be dangerous to employ the survey method or qualitative interview approach. Hence, we resorted to critical evaluation of the available literature and the information we could get from our communication with some people that live close to the IDP camps in Nigeria

### **Problem Statement**

The emergence of Boko Haram insurgents in the North-east of Nigeria has affected all categories of people in the area. The most affected group is women and their children because of their inability to defend themselves against the activities of sect. UNICEF (2014) reported that a greater majority of the IDPs are women and children and over 90 percent are accommodated in host families within communities who are themselves poor and consequently putting pressure on already scarce resources. Adimula (2016) stated that greater number

of internally displaced persons in Northern Nigeria is women and children; they constitute more than 50 percent of the Internally Displaced Camp formation. The internally displaced women in most cases wonder from place to place with their children and many of them finally find themselves in IDP Camps established by the government and some non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Some of these camps are located in the same North East Nigeria which has been under the threats of Boko Haram in recent time.

Life in IDP Camps in Nigeria is difficult and conflict with the displaced persons condition of living before they were displaced. The displaced women and children as well as their male counterpart face poor living condition, rigors of long journeys for medical attention, psychological trauma, safety challenge, harassment, frequent sexual abuse, children molestation, forced labour, poor sanitation which exposes members of the camps to infectious diseases, poor medical facilities which accommodate growth of infectious bacteria, fungi and virus in their bodies, poor feeding which exposes them to malnutrition, poor condition of infrastructure such as power, water, roads, lack of healthcare, security, education among other basic amenities, (Olawale, 2015 as cited in Adimula, 2016). In all these, women and children are more vulnerable.

The high death rate of children in IDP camps in Nigeria is caused by malnutrition. In support of this view, The Premium Times News and Guardian Newspaper (2016) report that all the 450 death of children recorded in 28 IDP camps in Borno State in 2015 was caused by malnutrition. These children according to Sule (NEMA Executive Director in Borno) were between age one and five and out of the 209,577 children that were screened for various illnesses, including malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and vomiting, about 6,444 severe cases of malnutrition were recorded in the camps, 25,511 have mild to moderate symptoms, while 177,622 among them were not malnourished. This figure could be higher than we are made to know when we realise that no government wants to be seen as not doing enough to assist its people; hence, official figures are sometimes played down especially in developing countries to protect the image of the government in power. Sometimes, the interest of the government makes most of these conditions go unreported and ironically, this makes it difficult for the government to understand the enormity of the challenge and the extent to which the rights of internally displaced children are violated.

The problem of this study therefore is to highlight the condition of Internally Displaced Children in Nigeria and chart the way forward for Nigerian Journalist to report the challenges of Children who are internally displaced in a way that could make the government more sensitive to this issue, and move them to protect the interest of the children and also influence the intervention of philanthropist and non-governmental organisations to commit more to the plight of internally displaced Children in Nigeria.

To address this problem, we put forward the following research questions:

1. What is the condition of feeding of children Displaced by Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria?
2. How do journalists in Nigeria report the nutritional needs of Internally Displaced children in Nigeria?

The central objective of this study therefore is to find out the strategies that Journalists in Nigeria use to report the nutritional needs of children internally displaced by Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria.

## **II. Review of Related Literature**

### **Clarification of Conceptual and Theoretical Issues**

#### **Insurgency**

Insurgency has become a threat to global peace and security in the 21st century because it is the highest contributor to humanitarian crises in varied forms. The consequences of insurgency anywhere in the world include among others the rise in human casualties, internally displaced persons, refugee debacles, food insecurity and the spread of various diseases (Emmanuelar, 2015). In most cases, the crises are the result of sectarian violence. In the North east of Nigeria, residents of the area experience sectarian violence. The violence affects men, women and children in the area. However, women and their children in the North East of Nigeria suffer from appalling violence and abuse, and deprivation that increase the burdens imposed on them by stifling patriarchy (Emmanuelar, 2015).

According to Powell and Abraham (2006), insurgency refers to a violent move by a person or group of persons to resist or oppose the enforcement of law or running of government or revolt against constituted authority of the state or of taking part in insurrection. Insurgency as defined above result in violation of the constitution's criminal law and the international treaty obligations of a nation when it launches attack on defenseless citizens and other property leading to injuries, loss of lives and properties as well as forced or massive internal displacement of people out of their habitual places of residence; when it drives business/investors away from an insecure area and also when it constitutes domestic and international crimes punishable by law such as treasonable felony, terrorism, murder, crimes against humanity and genocide (Powell and Abraham, 2006).

Traditionally however, insurgencies seek to overthrow an existing order and replace it with one that is in line with their political, economic, ideological or religious goals (Gompert and Gordon 2008). Killcullen

(2006) stated that insurgency is a struggle to control a contested political area, between a state (or a group of states or occupying powers), and one or more popularly based, non-state challengers. The author further draws a line between classical and contemporary insurgencies indicating that the latter seeks to replace the existing order, while the former sometimes strive for the expulsion of foreign invaders from their territory or seeks to fill an existing power vacuum (Kilcullen, 2006). When insurgency involves a religious sect or a group that lays claim on religious reformation to attack another religious group or the state, it becomes sectarian insurgency as is the case in the North east of Nigeria.

The last decade in Nigeria has witnessed the resurgence of several Islamic sects seeking political and religious reforms in the country. These groups include, among others, “the Islamic Movement of Nigeria, the *Boko Haram* (Nigerian Taliban), the *Kala-Kato*, the *Darul-islam*, the *Ahmadiya* Movement, the *Khadiyya*, *Darika Shi’a Salafiya* (or *Izala*), the *Tijjaniya*, and the *Tariqqagroup*” (Onuoha, 2012:134). Of these sects, the activities of the *Boko Haram* are one that is growing in scale and frequency.

### **Origin of Boko Haram**

Boko Haram is a fundamental Islamist sect, formed in 2002 in Maiduguri capital of Borno state by Mohammed Yusuf. Muhammed Yusuf formed the group with the aim of establishing a Sharia government in Borno State (Eme and Ibieta, 2012). Prior to the origin of the Boko Haram sect, a group of young men began to assemble in the mid 1990’s led by Abubakar Lawan and later AminuTashen Illimi. The Islamic group which is better known by its Hausaname “Boko Haram” was a local radical Salafist group which later transformed into a Salafist-Jihadist terrorist organisation after year 2009. The phrase Boko Haram is derived from a combination of both an Hausa word, Boko (book) and Arabic word, Haram (forbidden) meaning “Western education is forbidden”. Boko Haram whose Arabic name, Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’awatiwal-Jihad, means in English “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad” (Cook, 2013:2).



**Figure 1:** Historical Background of Boko Haram

**Source:** Internet, 2014

In another account which seems to be similar but slightly different to the forgoing, Osita-Njoku and Chikere (2015:102) explained that “The Islamist terrorist sect known as Boko Haram but whose formal name in Arabic is Jama’a Al-Sunnah li-da’wawa al-jihad (Sunni Group for preaching and Jihad) was founded by MallamLawal when in 1995 he started the muslim youth organisation under the name shabaab. Later, the leadership of the group was taken over by Mohamed Yusuf in 2002 when Lawal left to continue his education. The authors argue that it was under Yusuf’s leadership that the organisation gained political influence and relevance in Nigeria. At its early stage, “scholars and analysts have maintained that prior to the use of violence and terror by the group, Yusuf was an itinerant preacher that established an Islamic school free of charge to propagate its ideology” (Osita-Njoku and Chikere, 2015:102). He also had a farm, provided welfare and employment for its member. It was in the school that Yusuf recruited unsuspecting and innocent almajari (literally translated as children of the air) to its cause (Osita-Njoku and Chikere, 2015).

However, with time, the organisation became increasingly militant and also engaged in the abduction of women and girls as wives and sex-slaves. The Nigerian government lunched a violent attack on the group to

stop its spread across north-eastern Nigeria in 2009. The uprising led to the death of 800 Boko Haram members, including Yusuf. With the death of Yusuf, his second in command, AbubakarShekau in 2010 emerged with one of the most radical and destructive terror campaign against Nigeria and its people (Osita-Njoku and Chikere, 2015). He announced in this chilling words to journalists that: “jihad has begun” (Osita-Njoku and Chikere, 2015, p.103).

Although the exact date of Boko Haram emergence is difficult to establish, there is a consensus that the sect’s uprising started to constitute a threat to democracy in Nigerian. Abimbola (2010, p.96) states out that “The outbreak of the Boko Haram uprising in July 2009 marked yet another phase in the recurring pattern that violent uprisings, riots and disturbances have become in Nigeria”. Supporting this view, Akinbi (2015:32) states that “The activities of the sect especially since 2009 has constituted a major security threat to the nation and make Northern Nigeria particularly the North-East (where their activities are rife), the most dangerous region to live in the country”. Agbiboa (2014) states that since July 2009, Boko Haram, the ‘Nigerian Taliban’ from northeastern Nigeria, has stepped up its violence against the Nigerian state and its citizens, unleashing a systematic campaign of bombings, kidnappings and drive-by shootings on diverse government and civilian targets. Akinbi (2015, p.32) notes that “The dynamics and sophistication of its operations and apparent invincibility of the sect have raised fundamental questions not only about national security, but also on governance issues as well as on Nigeria’s corporate existence”.

The ideology of the Boko Haram sect under Mohammed Yusuf was basically the opposition of western education, political philosophy which sought to overthrow the government and implement sharia throughout the country (Bartolotta, 2012). From the beginning, the group made its manifest known: rejection of western education, institutions, and agencies that go with it, including government institutions. “It prefers to have a sharia law applied all over the country, but if that is difficult to allow, they would want to have separate Islamic state carved out of Nigeria, where they can practice their religion unhindered. If this is not granted Nigeria will be made ungovernable” (Chukwurah, Okechukwu and Nmire, 2015, p.371). Yusuf perceived that the system of government based on ‘Western values’ has resulted in increase in corruption, poverty, unemployment and continued suppression of true Islam (Bartolotta, 2012), hence the declaration of Jihad.

### **Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria**

When people are forced to leave their homes for safety and find themselves in organised or unorganised structures that are not their original homes where they now live in deplorable conditions within their own countries, they are internally displaced persons. Adimula (2016) stated that “internally displaced persons (IDPs) are persons who have been displaced by natural disaster or conflicts from their homes and traditional support structure and have not crossed the borders of their countries”. In Nigeria, conflicts arising from the war between the government and Boko Haram insurgents have turned many children and their mothers to internally displaced persons (IDPs). IDPs are different from refugees and migrants. Refugees refer to those driven out of their own countries by war, hunger or disaster and they cross borders to live in another country that is not their own while migrants merely leave their own countries to other countries for greener pasture.

Nigeria has experienced increasing number of internally displaced persons as a result of Boko Haram insurgency in the North east of the country (Chibuike and Onuoha, 2016). Various factors are responsible for the increasing number of internally displaced persons in Nigeria. Report from International Organisation for Migrations (IOM, 2016) shows that there are 2,241, 484 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria as of February, 2016. The breakdown of the total number of IDPs in Nigeria as at February, 2016 indicate that 13.33 percent were displaced as a result of communal clashes; 0.99 percent by natural disaster and 85.68 per cent due to insurgency attacks by Islamists (IOM, 2016). According to the report, “this figure is particularly based on an assessment conducted from November to December 2015 by the International Organisation for Migrations (IOM) and Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) team in 207 Local Government Areas (LGA) covering 13 States of Northern Nigeria”(Chibuike and Onuoha, 2016, P.5).

However, this number might have become smaller due to the recapturing of some of the Boko Haram controlled states like Borno and the return of some of the displaced persons to their original inhabitations. On the other hand, there is a delicate balance in the figure of internally displaced persons in Nigeria. This is because “as IDPs are returning to their habitual residences, others are still being displaced, thereby making it difficult to accurately have reliable statistics of IDPs in Nigeria” (Chibuike and Onuoha, 2016, p.5). What is very clear is that the States in North-east of Nigeria have been affected by insurgency between Boko Haram and governmental forces (UNICE, 2014).

At present, the scenario created by the insurgency of Boko Haram terrorist group whose religious ideology is to establish Islamic caliphate based on Sharia Law in the Northern region remains the most worrying issue in Nigeria (Chibuike and Onuoha, 2016), The authors note that the Boko Haram insurgency has caused many people to flee their homes for protection in IDP camps while several others fleeing North east Nigerian for security find their way to neighbouring states, thereby causing refugee crisis. The report from IOM (2016)

revealed that 85.68% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) identified in Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe have been displaced because of the insurgency. This represents massive displacement of people by Boko Haram insurgency. Most of the IDPs keep up with families in host communities who are themselves poor, thus severely straining already scarce resources as well as aggravating poverty levels (including food and nutrition insecurity) of the affected/host communities (OCHA, 2015).

In the face of these challenges, the Federal Government of Nigeria never relented in containing the situation. With her military might in the sub-Sahara region and the support of military forces from neighbouring countries like Chad, Cameroon and Niger, the government has continued to launch successful attacks on the insurgents. But despite efforts of the Nigerian military forces in the region, Boko Haram violence in the North east Nigeria continues (Chibuike and Onuoha, 2016). International media report almost on daily basis on Boko Haram attacks since May 29, 2015 resulting in more than 200 deaths in northeastern Nigeria between June 27, 2015 and July 3, 2015 alone (USAID, 2015). According to the agency, as of June, 2015, Boko Haram attacks had internally displaced nearly 1.4 million people—more than 1 million of whom are displaced in Borno State—in northeastern Nigeria, according to IOM's and Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). This represents a slight decrease from nearly 1.5 million IDPs in late April to approximately 1.4 million by late June, following the return of 120,000 people to areas of origin in Adamawa (USAID, 2015).

As the Boko Haram group continues to launch attacks on innocent citizens and the combined military forces, the Nigerian military has claimed to have defeated Boko Haram (Chibuike and Onuoha, 2016). It is however not certain what Nigerian government claim of defeat means since a state of insecurity in the North east has not eased off. The dislodging of Boko Haram from the Sambisa forest only for the members of the sect continue killing of people unabated cannot be said to be a defeat. However, it can be said that the strength of Boko Haram force has been reduced but not defeated. Supporting the view that the claimed defeat of Boko Haram is more in theory than in reality Chibuike and Onuoha (2016) stated that “access to the Northeast is highly constrained given the frequency of insurgent attacks”.

### **Nutrition**

Nutrition is a concept which the meaning has changed severally over the years. Some years past, nutrition was more or less taken to mean the same thing as ‘food’ and ‘alimentation’ but in the past few decades, the meaning of nutrition has become broader and incorporate several factors including food, health and care (Urban, 1993).

Some United Nations declarations specifically mentioned nutrition and the right of a child. For instance, Principle 4 of the United Nations 1959 Declaration of the Right of the Child and the 1969 Declaration on Social Progress and Development both recognised nutrition as the right of the child. However, there are some conventions and declarations that did not specifically mention nutrition as human right but it is implicit in the concept of food and freedom from hunger that are contained in such conventions and declarations.

Nutrition is mentioned three times in the convention on the rights of the child (CRC) (Urban, 1993). Article 24 of the convention recognises the right of the child - the highest standard of health and medical care attainable and explicitly states in section 24.2 that State Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and in particular, shall take appropriate measures:

- “(c) To combat disease and malnutrition including within the framework of primary healthcare, through *inter alia* the application of readily available technology and through the provision of adequately nutritious foods and clean drinking water.
- To ensure that all segments of society, in particular, parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breast feeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation...” (Urban, 1993, p.3).

The rights of Nigerian children that are internally displaced by Boko Haram insurgents (especially right to nutrition and care) are not protected. Children are malnourished to the level where mothers look frustrated. Yet, it is the right of a child to be adequately cared for, and nutrition is fundamental to care.





**Figure 2:** Bama IDP Camp: A Mother ,Yakana from Kanuri with her baby at Bama IDP Camp in Maiduguri during Minister’s Tour of Bama.

**Source:** Vanguard, [online] 29 July, 2017.

Article 27 also specified nutrition as the right of the child. It asserts the child’s right to an adequate standard of living and section 27.3 states that “States Parties...shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with nutrition, clothing and housing” (Urban, 1993, p.3).

### **Child and Childhood in Nigeria**

There are variations in the conceptualization of who should be regarded as a child, and even when childhood begins and ends (Ihua-Madu-enyi, 2008). The Nigeria Child Rights Act (CRA) of 2003 defines a child as “a person under the age of eighteen years” whereas the UK Children Act of 1989 defines a child as “a person below the age of eighteen years”. Article 2 of African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of a Child (ACRWC) (1999) defines a child as “every human being below the age of eighteen years”. However, this could vary in line with the law applicable to the child.

The various definitions of a child show the level of controversy over who is a child. However, the definition of a child provided in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) seems to be more accommodating, allowing for flexibility that gives room to every country to define a child contextually (Ihua-Madu-enyi, 2008). It states that “a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”. While a kind of consensus exists in the age a person is regarded as a child, when we examine the various definitions of a child by different scholars and child rights Acts, especially with the age of 18 years, there is a disagreement on when childhood begins and when it ends. Hence, the definition of childhood is contestable.

Contestable as the definition of childhood remains, various scholars have tried to provide what could be regarded as the working definitions of childhood. Archard (1993) sees childhood as a period of incompetence relative to adulthood. The author defines childhood as that which “lacks the capacities, skills and powers of adulthood”. By implication, the status of being a child means that such a person is not yet an adult (Ihua-Madu-enyi, 2008).

The understanding of a child becomes more complex when we think about the time childhood begins and the time it comes to an end. The status of the unborn child or the foetus, for instance raises questions as to the beginning of childhood. For instance, under the English law, childhood is established at birth and not before and this is the same as the United States of America, as the unborn child is not regarded as a person under the Constitutions of these countries (Ihua-Madu-enyi, 2008). Any kind of legal protection for the unborn child (foetus) in England and USA is not based on the status of childhood. Thus, from the foregoing, childhood in both the UK and USA does not appear to exist before birth (Ihua-Madu-enyi, 2008). However, the situation is different in Nigeria. The Child Rights Act in Nigeria accords rights to an unborn child especially to protection from harm or injury caused to the child willfully, recklessly or negligently before, during or after the birth of the child (Ihua-Madu-enyi, 2008). The unborn child in Nigeria has the right of inheritance in the family if the father or mother dies intestate but the child was conceived before the death of the father or the mother or both.

### **Plights of Internally Displaced Children in Nigeria**

In Nigeria, conflicts arising from the activities of Boko Haram in the North East have led to the death of many and displacement of several people. It has as well resulted in loss of properties and making the residents of North East Nigeria to live in fears. Despite the commitment of the Nigerian government to control the activities of Boko Haram and reduce the sufferings of the internally displaced, it has been reported that people living in IDP camps have continued to face hard conditions. Health officials in Maiduguri (Nigeria) reported that nearly 6,500 children were found to be severely malnourished in 2016 at camps set up in Maiduguri for people made homeless by Boko Haram insurgents. This figure in only one State in the Boko Haram affected region is an indication that the case of malnutrition among displaced children in IDP camps and other homes in Nigeria cannot be overstated.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2012) reports that violent attacks by armed groups on IDPs result in insecurity, loss of innocent lives, exploitation and abuse, living in overcrowded shelters, isolated and inhospitable areas. This is the condition that children in IDP camps and elsewhere are subjected. Under a state of insecurity, parents of internally displaced children cannot work for a living. They, therefore, depend on food provided by the government and donor agencies which are usually insufficient and most of the time diverted by corrupt officials. Abubakar and Olatunji(2016)writing in *Daily Trust* report that in most internally displaced persons camps in Borno Sate, there is hunger because food items meant for their feeding continuously disappear, leaving the IDPs helpless and hungry.



**Figure 3: Malnutrition of Children in IDP camps in Nigeria**

**Source:** Internet.

This kind of situation has led to the death of many internally displaced children in Nigeria. The Federal Government of Nigeria has been intervening to reduce malnutrition of internally displaced children but it appears that the government is yet to do enough. This was acknowledged when the government itself FRN (2012) notes that the efforts of humanitarian, faith-based organisations and government agencies to address these problems have not reduced the vulnerability of the IDPs.



**Figure 4: Malnutrition of Children in IDP camps in Nigeria**

**Source:** Internet.



Instead, the plights of IDPs tend to be increased and the obstacles that frustrate their access to healthcare services continue to increase. Education, employment, economic activities and participation in making decisions that affect their wellbeing (FRN, 2016) are out of the reach of the children.

Food shortage situation in IDP camps in Nigeria according to the assessment of FRN (2016) is worse in Borno, Yobe, Adamawa and Taraba states. IDPs face food insecurity mainly due to loss of incomes and livelihood caused by the insurgency and displacement (OCHA, 2014). This condition makes children and others in the camps and elsewhere in Nigeria vulnerable. It is also precarious and worrying (Ekpa&Dahlan, 2015), and infringes on the right of the internally displaced children to proper nutrition and health care. By implication, the continuous existence of Boko Haram in Nigeria means that children that are internally displaced by Boko Haram insurgents in Nigeria will continue to suffer.



**Figure 5:** Care of the malnourished children in IDP camp.

Source: Internet.



**Figure 6:** Malnutrition of Children in IDP camps in Nigeria. **Figure 7:** Saving a malnourished child.

Source: Internet.



**Figure 8:** Food for children suffering malnutrition in IDP camps in Nigeria.

Source: Internet.



**Figure 9:** An IDP Camp in North East of Nigeria.

**Source:** Adimula, B. 2016.



**Figure 10:** About 450 children died of malnutrition in 28 Internally Displaced Persons' camps in Borno state in 2015.

**Source:**Adimula, B. 2016.

### **Children's Rights and their Universality**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 by the United Nations after the Second World War was meant to ensure world peace and avoid a repetition of the horrors meted out to minority groups and prisoners of war during world war 11. The declaration recognized the inherent dignity, equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family (UNICEF, 2007). These include men, women and children. As stated by UNICEF (2007), children's rights are human rights for children and people under the age of 18 years. This is vital for protecting the best interests of a child. The Child's Rights Act, 2003 provides that the best interests of a child should be central in all considerations. A child shall be given such protection and care as is necessary for its wellbeing, retaining the right to survival and development and to a name and registration at birth (UNICEF, 2007).

The importance the world attaches to the protection of the rights of a child has led to establishing a separate set of rights for children and young people as an acknowledgement of the fact that childhood is a special time in our lives. It is a time when we do a lot of growing and learning. These rights of children and young people became a United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) ratified by the organization in 1989 and which all the countries of the world have signed up except that Somalia, unable to have a recognised government and United States of America have not ratified, though USA signing up indicates her intention to ratify the convention; countries that have ratified UNCRC are legally required to fulfill it (UNICEF, 2007). UNCRC of 1989 states that people under 18 have all the rights it contains, whatever their race, religion or abilities, whatever they think or say, and whatever type of family they come from. The African Union (AU) "Assembly of Heads of States and Governments adopted the African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (CRCW) in July 1990" (UNICEF, 2007).

Under the convention, children have the right to have their basic needs met: survival, protection, healthcare, food and water; development rights. They also have the right to opportunities to help them reach their full potential: education, play, sports, freedom to express opinions and involvement in decisions that affect them. The convention emphasizes that all children have the same rights and that all rights are interconnected and

of equal importance. It also refers to the responsibility of children to respect the rights of others, especially their parents (UNICEF, 2007).

The convention categorised children's rights into four: Survival rights, protection rights, development rights and participation rights. Survival rights of a child recognise the child's right to life and the needs basic to existence: nutrition, shelter, an adequate standard of living and access to health care (UNICEF, 2007). Development rights outline what children need to reach their full potential such as education, leisure, cultural activities, and access to information and freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Protection rights require that children be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation. They cover issues such as special protection for refugee or displaced persons children, safeguards for children in employment, and protection and rehabilitation for children who have suffered any form of abuse or exploitation (UNICEF, 2007). Participation rights recognise that all children should be enabled to play an active role in their communities and societies such as the rights to freely express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their lives (UNICEF, 2007).

### **Strategies for Reporting Nutrition and the Rights of Internally Displaced Children**

“Media professionals are well-placed to keep children's rights on the news agenda, by scrutinising efforts to protect those rights, and challenging those who fail to meet their commitments to children” (UNICEF, 2005).

Journalist are the watchdog of society hence, they are the “champions of human rights. They act as the eyes, ears and voices of the public, drawing attention to abuses of power and human rights, often at considerable personal risk” (UNICEF, 2005, p.4). Reporting children in the way that could promote the rights of a child is therefore the responsibility of every journalist.

Journalist can use their work to encourage government and civil organisations to lead changes that will improve the quality of people's lives (UNICEF, 2005). In all news media, journalists, photographers and programme makers often “expose the plight of children caught up in circumstances beyond their control, or abused or exploited by adults. However, it is equally important to consider the ‘children's angle’ in more conventional news coverage” (UNICEF, 2005, p.4). Such exposures could make even the most insensitive government and society to pay attention to the plights of children. This has been long pointed out by UNICEF (2005) when the organisation stated that:

The way in which the media represents, or even ignores, children can influence decisions taken on their behalf, and how the rest of society regards them. The media often depicts children merely as silent ‘victims’ or charming ‘innocents’; ...media professionals can remind the public that children deserve to be respected as individual human beings.

Reporting on nutrition and the rights of internally displaced children in Nigeria requires a good understanding of ethical reporting and the principles of reporting on issues concern children. This understanding is even more compelling when journalists acknowledge that as adults, they are the custodian of the rights of children. Thus, it is vital for reporters, whether print or broadcast, to follow principles that respect the dignity and rights of every child.

Internally displaced children in Nigeria are not expected to lose their rights just because they are displaced persons. Hence, it is the duty of journalists to make all and sundry be aware of the rights of such children and why such rights should be protected. The importance of awareness of the rights of children is underscored by the creation of a convention on the rights of the child which reflects a generally accepted rule that the greater the awareness of rights, the more chance there is of securing them (UNICEF, 2007). However, the promotion of children's rights based in part on recognition that awareness of children's vulnerability and thus need for special protection has not prevented them from suffering as a consequence of decisions made in the adult world around them (UNICEF, 2007). The cause of this problem is that the adult world considers children as people whose destiny is in the hands of the adults, especially parents and as such, issues concerning them are not issues of human rights but that of compassion by parents and caretakers. Compassion for the plight of children has often led to their being viewed collectively and treated as objects of charity rather than as individual human beings with their own strengths and abilities, their own needs and rights. As a consequence, the issues surrounding children have often been deemed non-political and have failed to be addressed (UNICEF, 2007).

The basic principle of the rights of the child is that society has an obligation to satisfy the fundamental needs of children and to provide assistance for the development of children's personalities, talents and abilities.



In this case, the press as agenda setter has the duty to wake up everybody to the needs for child rights protection. It is common to see many Nigerian newspapers and broadcast media report about internally displaced children: their sufferings, condition of the children in IDP camps, and even on malnutrition in the camps. However, the extents to which these deprivations infringe on the rights of the children are rarely reported. This under reporting leaves many in ignorance on why collective actions should be taken to ensure that the rights of IDP children are protected. Under reporting of IDP children by the media could also be because reporters do not consider such stories as hot news that could market the media and make media audience patronize their organisations. In this regard, UNICEF principles and guidelines on reporting children could be of help. These principles and guidelines are:

### **Principles**

- The dignity and rights of every child are to be respected in every circumstance.
- In interviewing and reporting on children, the rights of the child to privacy and confidentiality should be respected. Children have the rights to have their opinions heard, to participate in decisions affecting them and to be protected from harm and retribution, including the possibility of harm and retribution (UNICEF, n.d).
- The best interests of each child are to be protected over any other consideration, including over advocacy for children's issues and the promotion of child rights. The determination of what is the best interest of a child is in the hands of parents or guardians of the child but the opinion and views of the child are still necessary and should be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.
- Those closest to the child's situation and best able to assess it are to be consulted about the political, social and cultural ramifications of any reportage.
- Do not publish a story or an image which could put the child, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are changed, obscured or not used (UNICEF, n.d)

### **Guidelines**

UNICEF guidelines provide as follows:

- “Do not further stigmatize any child; avoid categorisations or descriptions that expose a child to negative reprisals - including additional physical or psychological harm, or to lifelong abuse, discrimination or rejection by their local communities. This could be achieved by avoiding descriptions that could cause any of the mentioned harms.
- Always provide an accurate context for the child's story or image.
- Always change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as:
  - i. A victim of sexual abuse or exploitation.
  - ii. A perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse.
  - iii. HIV positive, or living with AIDS, unless the child, a parent or a guardian gives fully informed consent.
  - iv. Charged or convicted of a crime.
- In certain circumstances of risk or potential risk of harm or retribution, change the name and obscure the visual identity of any child who is identified as: i. a current or former child combatant. ii. an asylum seeker, a refugee or an internally displaced person.
- In certain cases, using a child's identity - their name and/or recognisable image - is in the child's best interests. However, when the child's identity is used, they must still be protected against harm and supported through any stigmatisation or reprisals. Some examples of these special cases are:
  - i. When a child initiates contact with the reporter, wanting to exercise their right to freedom of expression and their right to have their opinion heard.
  - ii. When a child is part of a sustained programme of activism or social mobilisation and wants to be so identified.
  - iii. When a child is engaged in a psychosocial programme and claiming their name and identity is part of their healthy development.
- Always confirm the accuracy of what the child has to say, either with other children or an adult, preferably with both.
- When in doubt about whether a child is at risk, report on the general situation for children rather than on an individual child, no matter how newsworthy the story” (UNICEF,n.d)

In addition, the International Federation of Journalists notes that the media's portrayal of children perpetuates a collection of myths: children living in poverty and victims of war and disaster, especially in developing countries, lose their individuality and humanity. They are usually depicted as helpless sufferers, unable to act, think or speak for themselves (UNICEF, n.d).

Stories of child abuse, children involved in crime and street children tend to dominate, while the broader issues of children's rights, such as the right to play, recreation and sport and good nutrition are often not regarded as newsworthy. The result is an unbalanced impression of children as victims or as threatening trouble-makers (UNICEF, 2005, P.49).

Reporter's coverage of issues concerning children tends to focus on the sensational while ignoring the broad array of issues confronting children as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. "Children's confidentiality is not always respected; when children do feature in the news, they are usually portrayed as stereotypes such as starving children in Africa and irresponsible teenagers" (UNICEF, 2005, p.49). Media reports about children are often scanty stories, with little or no analysis or follow-up.

The International Federation of Journalists principles and guidelines for reporting children state that:

- "All journalists and media professionals have a duty to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards and should promote within the industry the widest possible dissemination of information about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its implications for the exercise of independent journalism.
- Media organisations should regard violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, their education, health and social welfare and all forms of exploitation as important questions for investigation and public debate.
- Children have an absolute right to privacy, the only exceptions being those explicitly set out in these guidelines.

Journalistic activity which touches on the lives and welfare of children should always be carried out with appreciation of the vulnerable situation of children (UNICEF, 2005). Journalists and media organisations shall strive to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct in reporting children's affairs and, in particular, they shall:

- Make efforts to attain excellence in terms of accuracy and sensitivity when reporting on matters involving children;
- Eschew programming and publication of images which infringe on the media space of children with information which is damaging to them.
- Do not use of stereotypes and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children;
- Consider carefully the consequences of publication of any material concerning children and shall minimise harm to children;
- Avoid the use of any visually or otherwise identifying children unless it is demonstrably in the public interest;
- Allow children, where possible, the right of access to media to express their own opinions without inducement of any kind;
- ensure independent verification of information provided by children and take special care to ensure that verification takes place without putting child informants at risk;
- avoid the use of sexualised images of children;
- use fair, open and straightforward methods for obtaining pictures and, where possible, obtain them with the knowledge and consent of children or a responsible adult, guardian or carer;
- verify the credentials of any organisation purporting to speak for or to represent the interests of children;
- Do not make payment to children for material involving the welfare of children or to parents or guardians of children unless it is demonstrably in the interest of the child.

Journalists should put to critical examination the reports submitted and the claims made by governments on implementation of the UNCRC in their respective countries. "Media should not consider and report the conditions of children only as events, but should continuously report the process likely to lead or leading to the occurrence of these events" (UNICEF, 2005, p.48-49)

Sometimes, there is need to hear from a child and when this is necessary, the reporter needs to interview the child. Interviewing an internally displaced child in IDP camps or elsewhere cannot be an easy process. You will need to obtain formal approval from the camp's director or any other relevant authority. Then, you will need to obtain consent of the parents and for children of certain age, the consent of the child is also important. For a quick understanding, UNICEF has provided the following guidelines for interviewing a child:



- “Ensure that report does no harm to any child. Do not ask questions or take actions that are judgemental and disregard of cultural values that could place a child in danger or expose to humiliation, or that reactivate a child’s pain and grief from traumatic experience.
- Avoid discrimination based on sex, race, age religion, status, educational background or physical abilities when choosing children to interview.
- Do not divert a child attention to tell a story or take an action that is not part of the child’ own history.
- Make sure that the child or guardian knows that they are talking with a reporter. Do not hide your identity and explain the purpose of the interview and what it is intended to be used for.
- Obtain permission from the child and his or her guardian for all interviews, videotaping and, when possible, for documentary photographs.
- Do not ask the child many questions and limit the number of interviewers and photographers to avoid intimidating the child” (UNICEF, nd).

### **Empirical Review**

This section examined some empirical studies on child’s right to nutrition. It compared six studies: Rabi, 2007; Tari, Kibikiwa and Umar, 2016; Abonyi and Ezeh, 2017; Alobo and Obaji, 2016; Abdulazeez, 2016; Itumo and Nwefuru, 2016.

Rabi (2017) carried out a study on *Implications of Poor Feeding on Displaced Children in Adamawa Camp in Nigeria* using Adamawa camp as the unit of analysis. The study used secondary data sourced from text books, journals and newspapers to examine the conditions of the displaced children in Adamawa camp, the implications of poor nutrition on the children and the ways of improving their situation.

The study found that most of the displaced children in Adamawa camp face serious harsh problems that are pathetic as they left their houses without any belongings because of the activities of Boko Haram insurgency. The children lack money to buy necessities of life and the foods provided do not have the basic ingredients for growth and development of a child (Rabi. 2017). These put the survival of displaced children in Adamawa IDP camp at risk leading to illness and death of many of them (Rabi, 2017).

Rabi (2017) found that the large number of malnutrition in Adamawa camp was due to lack of access to highly nutritious foods in the camp, poor feeding practices, such as inadequate breastfeeding, offering the wrong food or food meant for adult to children which affect the health, growth and physical development of children. WHO (1996) and Amosu, Degun, Atulomah, Olanrewaju (2011) argued that children still suffer malnutrition when they eat enough of foods that do not contain the right amounts of micro-nutrients, vitamins and minerals to meet daily nutritional requirements. The authors found that the reported death of 450 children in 28 Internally Displaced Persons camps in Adamawa State in 2015 was due to malnutrition, and that there was 6.444 critical cases of malnutrition in the camps while 177, 622 among them were not malnourished as reported by the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). Rabi. (2017) however, made no recommendations on how the problem of malnutrition among internally displaced persons in IDP camps could be addressed. The findings of Rabi (2017) study are similar to the findings from several of the literature reviewed in this study (e.g. Ocha, 2014; Ekpa and Dahlan. 2015; FRN, 2016). The study concludes that the findings reveal that lack of access to good drinking water, basic health services and lack of access to high nutrition food for children are the consequences of Boko Haram insurgency in North East Nigeria.

Another study by Tari, Kibikiwa and Umar (2016) on *The effects of Boko Haram insurgency on food security status of some selected local government areas in Adamawa State, Nigeria* reveals that food security in Adamawa State is no longer guaranteed because of the displacement of the farmers in the State from their homes. The authors state that the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents have displaced many residents of the area and “kept many farmers away from their usual livelihood activities (mainly agricultural activities). This has reduced the families of internally displaced persons in North East to live below average life (Tari, Kibikiwa and Umar, 2016)

Tari, Kibikiwa and Umar (2016) study is descriptive in nature and employed purposive and simple random sampling for data generation. The study established that malnutrition especially among children in the study is still on the high level. The children studied here were internally displaced children. Findings from the study also show that the number of household that is not sure of the food to eat in the future is still alarming; agricultural sector tends to suffer more than other sectors due to the activities of the insurgents in Adamawa State.

Based on the findings of the study, Tari, Kibikiwa and Umar (2016) recommend that there is need for government and Non-Governmental organisations (NGOs) to help to address malnutrition and other related issues among children, especially those under five years. The author suggested that “Special agricultural programs and policies should be initiated in order to resuscitate agricultural potentials of the attacked zone. Government and humanitarian partners should strategized and strengthen their joint effort in responding to emergencies in the affected localities” (Tari, Kibikiwa and Umar, 2016, p.18). Tari, Kibikiwa and Umar (2016)

established that the insurgency attacks on the areas studied in Northern Adamawa state continues to pose serious challenges to agriculture and households food security, make many farmers that depend on the food they can produce to face hardship.

In another related study, Abonyi and Ezeh (2017) investigated *Terrorism/insurgency and the welfare of the African child: the case of Boko Haram in Nigeria* using cross sectional survey research design and structured questionnaire administered to 180 respondents from different works of life in Benue, Enugu and Edo of Nigeria. The study was anchored on Multi-factorial theory of social change and Differential opportunity theory. Findings from the study showed that Boko Haram is a product of Northern political elites and sponsorship from foreign terrorist's organisations; that children are the first destabilised victims by the Boko Haram insurgency. It mentioned death and injuries, abduction and coercion of children and use of such children as suicide bombers; illness and rape and emotional and psychological trauma were also found to be the impacts of Boko Haram insurgency on children. The authors, however, did not say anything about nutrition of internally displaced children or persons in Nigeria. This oversight provides the knowledge gap which this study strives to close.

In a similar study by Aloba and Obaji(2016) on *Internal displacement in Nigeria and the case for human rights protection of displaced persons*, the authors found that bulk of the displaced persons residing in these camps are women and children who are also most vulnerable. The study reveals that half of the total numbers of individuals residing in the camps are children under 17 years old. Aloba and Obaji (2016, p.31) also found that "some IDPs have access to food distribution every day while others receive irregular food distribution. On the other hand, some IDPs never receive food distribution. Malnutrition in the conflict areas continue to rise as there is limited access to food in this situation. This is mainly because no actual statistics of IDPs exist in Nigeria as not all displaced persons are accounted for". Under this situation, children who cannot compete for the scarce food are likely to suffer more than others.

Aloba and Obaji (2016) recommended that Boko haram insurgency should be put to an end without delay to eliminate the menace threatening the livelihood of internally displaced persons. The authors submitted that fundamental human rights of all citizens should be maintained at all times irrespective of whether the area is engulfed in violence and that violence is no ground to violate the rights of people. It is the duty of the government of Nigeria to protect the rights of children under all circumstances. At least, government is expected to provide the basics (Abdulazeez, 2016).

Abdulazeez (2016) carried out ethnographic research in IDP camps in North East Nigeria. In the study, the author found that some camps had government employed cooks but in some, there were no women organised into cooks. The researcher found that government officials claim to feed internally displaced persons in IDP camps three times a day with different kinds of "nutritional meals but in reality, people are usually fed only once in a day and they eat the same things every day" (Abdulazeez, 2016, p.10). The finding that claims that internally displaced persons in IDP camps in Nigeria are fed once a day cannot be far from the truth. However, *Guardian* Newspaper of 18th June, 2016 reports that AlhajiModuBukar, an IDP in Dalori camp, said that IDPs were being fed twice daily but the quality of the food was appalling.

In a study on *Nigerian State and Response to the Plights of Internally Displaced by Boko Haram Insurgents: Implications for Socio-Economic and Political Development* by Itumo and Nwefuru (2016), it was found that the IDPs in the north east suffer challenges of starvation, accommodation, unemployment, school dropouts, sexual harassment, child labour, early marriage, poor health and sanitation, with implications of adding to the poor standard of living in the area and low development of Nigeria. The study also discovered that although there is no official record on the total number of IDPs caused by the Boko Haram insurgents, Human Right Watch (2014) reports that in 2013 alone, 300, 000 people fled Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, out of which seventy percent of them are said to be women and children. The study employed qualitative method to carry out the investigation. It generated secondary data, using documentary data for its investigation while content analysis was used for data analysis. It, however, did not give much attention to the plight of internally displaced children but mentioned starvation as one of the major problems faced by IDPs in North East Nigeria.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is based on the Agenda Setting Theory of mass media and the Interest Theory of Rights. McCombs and Shaw(1972) introduced their notion of media agenda-setting by quoting Cohen's (1963) epigram: "The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about." In our evolving digital world made possible by internet, the dynamics of issue of agendas are becoming more complex (Neuman, Guggenheim, Jang, and Bae, 2014). This is because the boundaries of agenda setting by the mass media have broadened with internet and online activities of users. However, because both the traditional and social media are online they are equally accessible to time-series analysis (Neuman, Guggenheim, Jang, and Bae, 2014). Hence, both parents and children have the opportunity to evaluate what the media say about child rights protection and how much those who supposed to protect the

rights of children violate those rights. The pervasiveness of the media helps them in setting agenda for all their audiences,

However, Shaw (2008) states that the mass media are said to be all pervasive but not particularly persuasive (Shaw, 2008). The author agrees to the view that the media is pervasive but not persuasive. However, Shaw (2008) notes that while it is a truism that the media are pervasive but not persuasive, researchers in communication has come to the view that the media are persuasive in their own unique way. While the media may not succeed in “shaping and manipulating people’s public attitudes - their likes and dislikes, pros and cons regarding political, economic and social matters - the media are persuasive in focusing public attention on specific events, issues and persons and in determining the importance people attach to public matters” (Shaw, 2008 p.96).

The agenda setting theory gives support to this study by making child rights and nutrition of internally displaced children a topic of public discussion. The mass media present the custodians of child rights a list of what to talk about. Talking about child’s rights is one way that the rights of the child could be made known to others and making people respect and protect the right of a child to good nutrition in all circumstances.

Also, the interest theory of rights supports the basis of this study. The interest theory of rights was first proposed by Bentham (1987) who argued that a person has a distinctive human right when others have duties which protect one of that person’s interests. According to Freeman (2002), children have interests that justify protection before they develop wills to assert their rights. The protection of the rights of children is crucial since children lack the capacity to form a will to assert their rights. Freeman (2002) argued that a child has rights whether or not he or she is capable of exercising those rights. The view by Freeman (2002) that the child may or may not be capable of exercising his or her rights imposes duties of protecting the child on parents or guardians who are adult. Journalists fall within this adult category that owes the duty of child protection. This is perhaps why Freeman (2002) opined that it is necessary to bring children to a capacity where they are able to take full responsibility as free, rational agents that can determine their own sovereignty.

The interest theory of rights has the advantage that it does not hold that “rights are to be determined by the moral capacity to act rationally. Rather, the theory argues that children, as humans, have rights if their interests are the basis for having rules which require others to behave in certain ways with respect to these rules” (Anon, n.d, p.386). It is therefore both a moral and legal requirements to protect the rights of children and adults who are the care takers should do this.

The interest theory of rights is apt for this study going by the fact that a child has not developed the mental and physically capacity to protect and defend his or her own her own rights, and this protection should be guaranteed by journalists who are not just adults but some of them are as well parents or guardian. In addition, it is the duty of journalists to protect the rights of every individual as part of their social responsibility functions.

### **III. Discussion of Findings**

The literature reviewed in this study reveals that the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria has resulted in the displacement of millions of children who are currently camped in various internally displaced persons camps in different parts of Northern Nigeria particularly in the North East of the country. Thousands of these children are malnourished and suffer from severe malnutrition and the diseases associated with it. In support, Health officials in Maiduguri (Nigeria) report that nearly 6,500 children were found to be severely malnourished in 2016 at camps set up in Maiduguri for people made homeless by Boko Haram insurgents and more than half of this number is children. Aloba and Obaji (2016) in their study found that the bulk of the displaced persons residing in IDPs are women and children who are also most vulnerable. The study reveals that half of the total numbers of individuals residing in the camps are children under 17 years old (Aloba and Obaji, 2016). The rights of these children to proper nutrition in the camps are never guaranteed by both the government of Nigeria. This is because the foods provided by these bodies in many occasions are diverted to the use of those entrusted with the care of IDPs. Abubakar and Olatunji(2016) writing in *Daily Trust* report that in most internally displaced persons camps in Borno Sate, there is hunger because food items meant for their feeding are stolen, leaving the IDPs helpless and hungry. This situation is not only unfortunate but also an infringement on the rights of children to get what they need from adults.

We believe that the situation in Maiduguri IDP camps gives an insight of the situation in many other IDP camps in Nigeria. The deaths of children in IDP camps are attributed to malnutrition in the camps. Vanguard newspaper of 29 July, 2017 report that the high level of malnutrition of children has also resulted to the death of many of these children and that 450 children died of malnutrition in 28 IDP camps in Borno. The number of children that have died in the various IDP camps in Nigeria when added together could be alarming. The Executive Director of the Borno Emergency Management Agency, Sule Mele, disclosed to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Borno State that the children casualties were those between one and five years (Vanguard, 2017).

It was also found that malnutrition in IDP camps is the cause of many illnesses that the children in the camps suffer. As Vanguard (2017) reports, more than 209,577 children have been screened for various illnesses, including malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea and vomiting and about 6,444 severe cases of malnutrition was recorded in the camps, and 25,511 have mild to moderate symptoms, while 177,622 among them were not malnourished. The causes of these, according to the report, were found to be malnutrition, lack of access to highly nutritious foods in the camps, and poor feeding practices. However, apart from deaths resulting from malnutrition, the internally displaced children in IDP camps in Nigeria die also from attacks by the Boko Haram insurgents.

Finding from the literature reviewed in this paper also indicate that the Boko Haram insurgence is far from being over as claimed by the Federal government of Nigeria. There are still a number of attacks in North East by the insurgents that suggest that Boko Haram is still active. For instance, Olanrewaju (2017) reported in *Daily Sun* of July 25, 2017 that five persons have been confirmed dead and 15 others injured after suicide bombers attacked two internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps in Maiduguri, Borno State. These incidents occurred in Dalori 1 IDP camp and Dalori 2 IDP camp where a male and female suicide bombers detonated their improvised explosives. However, the defeat of Boko Haram in Nigeria could be said to be at sight considering the Nigeria's army determination to fight the insurgents to a halt.

This paper also found that there are many strategies available for reporters to explore and use for reporting child rights to nutrition in the North East Boko Haram devastated areas. For instance, there are the UNICEF guidelines for reporting children. These guidelines can be adequately tailored to reporting nutrition and child's rights. Also, the International Federation of Journalists provided guidelines and principles for reporting children. These guidelines and principles are there for journalists but it seems that many journalists in Nigeria and other countries do not yet understand the importance of reporting the rights of children and engineering their protection under a crises situation like the onslaught of Boko Haram in North East Nigeria

#### **IV. Conclusion**

##### **Conclusion**

This paper concludes that there is under reporting of the impact of malnutrition and denial of the rights of internally displaced children in Nigeria. This under reporting is occasioned by the reporters' low appreciation of the rights of children. This poor reporting has made many Nigerians that are not close to the North East of Nigeria to be ignorant of the plights of children in IDP camps in Nigeria; hence there is low level of support for the children, especially support from the southern part of Nigeria where the activities of the insurgents are not practically felt.

Findings from the empirical review of literature in this study show that agricultural activities in the North East of Nigeria have been jeopardized by the activities of Boko Haram. This has resulted to shortage of foods in the area and given rise to hunger, especially in the internally displaced camps. The resulting starvation has made children in the camps and even the women to be more vulnerable. Thus, some of them turn to be agents of Boko Haram, suicide bombers, and informants while some other internally displaced children and women engage in prostitution to eke out a living.

Life of the internally displaced persons by Boko Haram insurgents is precarious, brutish and short, and children are the most affected. We believe that until the media set the right agenda for the discussion of the plights of internally displaced, there is the tendency of the plights of the children in the camps or displaced children living with others in Boko Haram controlled areas turning to pose more threat to the stability of Nigeria when the grow up to know how much less Nigerians paid attention to their nutritional needs.

##### **Recommendations:**

Based on the findings of this paper, we recommend that:

1. Government should pay special attention to the nutritional needs of children displaced by the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. This can be achieved through providing fund readily accessible in the banks for the feeding of internally displaced children. The use of the fund should be monitored by a committee of trusted Nigerian with proven integrity in handling public office, and charged with the responsibility to run a transparent distribution of children foods of high quality to all internally displaced children in IDP camps and those living with others in North east.
2. Resident medical doctors and other paramedics should be available in every IDP camp in Nigeria to check the health condition of internally displaced children. The bulk of these doctors should come from military backgrounds so as the also serve as security agent to internally displaced children.
3. There is also the need for the mass media to create greater awareness about the nutritional needs of internally displaced children in Nigeria. The press can do this by providing air time and spaces on the pages of newspapers where columnists and other writers could regularly bring the nutritional needs of the children in IDP camps and others living in host communities to the fore. This could attract the attention of the

governments and philanthropists to render more assistance to internally displaced person. The measure could as well help to reduce malnutrition and the resulting death of children displaced in North East Nigeria by Boko Haram insurgency.

4. Journalists in Nigeria and foreign correspondents should make use of the guidelines and principles of child's rights reporting in the reportage of issues relating to internally displaced children. In doing this, it is important that reporters pay attention to how nutrition and the health of internally displaced children in Nigeria are handled by both the governments and their agents.
5. Government should do more to eliminate Boko Haram in North East Nigeria and the country in general. It is only through this way that the menace and miseries brought to the children in North East by the nefarious activities of this sect will come to an end. It is clear that Boko Haram is fighting a war they cannot win but it takes a willing government that has no political and religious interests to protect by using the sect to bring the crisis to an end.

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