

ALMAJIRCI IS NOT BARA!

**Presenting The True Perspectives On, And The
Possible Solutions To The Problems Of The Almajiri
Education System In Nigeria: A Time Bomb
That Is On Its Way To Fully Explode!**



**Prof. Sani Abubakar Lugga, MFR
The 5th Waziri of Katsina**

For over 1,000 years, from the advent of Islam into Kanem-Borno and Hausaland, the Almajiri Education System provided for the educational needs of Muslims in those areas. It was called “Makarantar Allo” literally meaning the school where wooden slate (“allo”) was used. Sheikh Usman Dan Fodiyo, Sheikh Mohammed El-Kanemi, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Sardauna Sir Ahmadu Bello, Waziri Sir Kashim Ibrahim, Alh. Shehu Shagari, Alh. Umaru Yar’adua, Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, The Sultan of Sokoto, The Shehu of Borno, Gen. Murtala Mohamed, Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, Gen. Sani Abacha, Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar, Sheikh Ibrahim Sherif Saleh, Sheikh Abubakar Gumi, Sheikh Dahiru Bauchi, Sheikh Nasiru Kabara, Alh. Aliko Dangote, Alh. Aminu Dantata, Alh. Mai Deribe and all Muslim Northerners who are above the ages of 60 years, were products of the “Makarantar Allo”! That Almajiri System (Almajirci) was NOT the same with the current Bara System (Begging) by helpless, hungry and sickly children wearing tattered dresses, holding small bowls and roaming the streets in an undignified manner begging for alms. This Book seeks to provide the true perspectives on, and possible solutions to the problems of the current infamous Bara System, which has been allowed to become an eyesore and a time bomb that is about to fully explode!

THESE GREAT MEN WERE ALL PRODUCTS OF THE ALMAJIRI SCHOOLS HAVING STUDIED AT THE FEET OF THEIR MALAMS AND USED THE WOODEN SLATES WITHOUT GOING OUT TO BEG



**HE Alhaji Sir Abubakar
Tafawa Balewa, Prime
Minister of Nigeria**



**HE Alhaji Sir Ahmadu
Bello Sardauna, Premier
of Northern Nigeria**



**HE Alhaji Abubakar ibn Umar
Garbai Al-Kanemi, the
Shehu of Borno**



**HE Alhaji Muhammad
Sa'ad Abubakar III, the
Sultan of Sokoto**

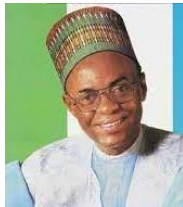


**HE Alhaji Sir Kashim Ibrahim
Waziri of Borno and Governor
of Northern Nigeria**



**HRH Alhaji Ilyasu Bashir
the Emir of Gwandu**

**THESE GREAT MEN WERE ALL PRODUCTS OF
THE ALMAJIRI SCHOOLS HAVING STUDIED AT
THE FEET OF THEIR MALAMS AND USED THE
WOODEN SLATES WITHOUT GOING OUT TO BEG**



**HE Alhaji Shehu Shagari
First President of Nigeria**



**HE Gen. Muhammadu Buhari
Head of State of Nigeria**



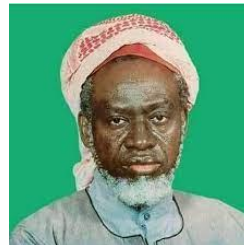
**HE Alhaji Umaru Yar'adua
President of Nigeria**



**HE Sheikh Ibrahim Sharif
Saleh Al-Husainy**



**HE Sheikh Dahiru Usman
Bauchi**



**HE Sheikh Abubakar
Mahmood Gumi**

**THESE GREAT MEN WERE ALL PRODUCTS OF
THE ALMAJIRI SCHOOLS HAVING STUDIED AT
THE FEET OF THEIR MALAMS AND USED THE
WOODEN SLATES WITHOUT GOING OUT TO BEG**



**HE Gen. Murtala Mohamed
Head of State of Nigeria**



**HE Gen. Ibrahim Babangida
Military President of Nigeria**



**HE Gen Sani Abacha
Head of State of Nigeria**



**HE Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar
Head of State of Nigeria**



**HE Gen. Hassan Usman
Katsina, Governor of
Northern Nigeria**



**HE Gen. Zakaria Mai Malari,
First Nigerian Commissioned
Military Officer**

**THESE ARE THE CURRENT PRODUCTS OF
THE ALMAJIRI SCHOOLS WHERE BEGGING
IS THE UNFORTUNATE “EDUCATION”**



**THESE ARE THE CURRENT PRODUCTS OF
THE ALMAJIRI SCHOOLS WHERE BEGGING
IS THE UNFORTUNATE “EDUCATION”**



**THIS IS ALMAJIRCI, NOT BARA
ISLAMIC EDUCATION, NOT BEGGING**



ALMAJIRCI IS NOT BARA “ISLAMIC EDUCATION IS NOT BEGGING”

By:

Professor Sani Abubakar Lugga, MFR

The 5th Waziri of Katsina

Professor of Management Studies

Doctor of Philosophy in Conflict Management

Fellow of the Nigerian Institute of Management

Fellow of the Institute of Management Consultants (Nigeria)

Fellow of the Institute of Professional Financial Managers (UK)

Fellow of the London Graduate School, London, United Kingdom

Key Founder and former Senior Lecturer, Al-Qalam University, Katsina

Visiting Prof., Ecole Supérieure Universitaire, Cotonou, Benin Republic

Visiting Professor at St. Clements Private Swiss University, Switzerland

Committee Member, Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs

Committee Chairman, Jama'atu Nasril Islam, Kaduna, Nigeria

Member of Sultan Foundation for Peace and Development

Executive Member, Interfaith Initiative for Peace, Nigeria

Ambassador of Universal Peace Federation, New York

Member of Professors World Peace Academy, Korea

www.books.luggaweb.com

**COPYRIGHT: Sani Abubakar Lugga
(EXCEPT FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION)**

All rights reserved. No part of this Book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means through electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the Author

ISBN 978-978-778-066-4

Published and Printed by:

**Lugga Printing Press, Gidan Lugga Complex, Kofar Marusa
Layout, Katsina, Katsina State of Nigeria**

Sha'aban 1446 AH

February 2025 AD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTENTS	PAGE
CHAPTER ONE	11
Emergence And Collapse Of The Almajiri Education System	11
The Emergence Of The Almajiri Education System	13
The Collapse Of The Almajiri Education System	17
Consequences Of The Collapse Of The Almajiri Education System	18
CHAPTER TWO	21
Begging Is Not Part Of The Almajiri Education System	21
Zakaah: The Panacea To Poverty And Begging	26
Muslims Should Eradicate Begging	29
CHAPTER THREE	31
Almajiri Education Problems Are Products Of Negligence	31
The Guilt Of The Parents And The Communities	34
The Guilt Of The Authorities	36
CHAPTER FOUR	39
The Rights Of Children On Their Parents In Islam	39
Children's Rights To Parental Care In General	39
Choosing Righteous Wife And Righteous Husband	41
Right To Care During Pregnancy And At Birth	42
Right To Education	43
A Right To Education Is Not A Right To Begging	44
Right To Love And To A Decent Life	46
Right To A Life That Is Devoid Of Problems	47
If Anyone Has A Right To Beg, It Should Be The Parents!	48
CHAPTER FIVE	49
The Rights Of Children And Other Citizens To Education	49
CHAPTER SIX	54
Long Term Solutions To The Problems Of The Almajiri System	54
The Full Implementation Of Constitutional Provisions On Education	57
Full Implementation Of The Universal Basic Education Act 2004	58
States To Make Laws To Cater For Their Peculiar Needs	58
What Are The Prospects Of Implementing The Stated Laws?	59
CHAPTER SEVEN	62
Immediate Solutions To The Problems Of The Almajiri System	62

CHAPTER ONE

THE EMERGENCE AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE ALMAJIRI EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Almajiri Education System was the result of the movement by both Muslim Scholars and Pupils/Students from one place to the other seeking for knowledge imparting knowledge and converting non-Muslims into Islam. The Hausa Language word, “**Almajiri**”, is the corrupted version of the Arabic word, “**Al-Muhajir**” that broadly means, “a person who moves from one place to another in search of knowledge or for other lawful purposes”. What is called the “Almajiri School” today was initially called the “Makarantar Allo”, which literally means the school where wooden slate (“Allo”) is used. It was so called because both the “Almajiri” (a child who has travelled from his place of birth to reside in another place for learning) and the resident children he met used “Allo” (slate) for their studies. In order to castigate and degrade the Islamic Religion, the “Almajiri” name has now been transformed to refer to every “beggar” in the streets of Nigeria (the children, the youth, the elderly, the disabled, etc).

Islam places great premium on knowledge; therefore seeking for knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim male and female; the child and the adult, the young and the elderly. As Islam is not only a Religion, but a complete way of life, it is obligatory for every Muslim to acquire Islamic Education from childhood to death. Indeed, Islamic Education has no final “certificate, diploma or degree” as it covers daily spiritual and worldly affairs and therefore necessary as long as a Muslim lives! This perhaps accounted for the emergence of the **Almajiri Education System**.

History books of Muslim and Western origins have documented that Islam had spread from Mecca and Medina to North Africa, to Al-Andalusia (Spain), to the Middle East, to many parts of Arabia, to Yemen, to Sudan, to China and to many other States on

the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea shores within the first century of the Islamic calendar, i.e., 1 to 100 After Hijrah (622 to 722 AD). History books also document that trading between West African States on the one hand; and North African and Sudanese States on the other hand, had been on for hundreds of years before Islam and the trading continued unabated despite the establishment of Islamic States in North Africa, Andalusia and the Sudan. Medieval maps have been drawn showing the routes of such trade some centuries before Islam. Even the merchandises have been mentioned as salt, glassware, clothing, livestock, slaves, etc. The presences of African Black slaves in the Courts of the rulers and the wealthy in Arabia and North Africa and the constant mention in the Glorious Qur'an and the Hadith of the great reward from Allah awaiting those who free their slaves justify these slave and trading assertions.

West African students taking History Paper of the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) have a good source of material at <https://wasscehistorytextbook.com>. This website hosts e-textbooks on history and was designed by historians based in Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, who work with Nigerian Scholars in the Diaspora, together with colleagues selected for their particular expertise from King's College London. According to these experts, Africa was the first Continent that Islam spread into out of Arabia in the early seventh Century AD. Almost one-third of the World's Muslim population resides today in the Continent. Islam has a large presence in North Africa, West Africa, the Horn of Africa, South-East Africa and among the minority but significant immigrant population in South Africa. The first West Africans to be converted were the inhabitants of the Sahara, the Berbers, and it is generally agreed that by the second half of the tenth Century AD, the Sahara had become "Dar al-Islam" that is the Country of Islam.

The Berbers' were credited with the spread of the Religion of Islam into the Western Sudan areas from the closing decades of

the tenth Century AD. First, Islam spread into the Regions West of the Niger River Bend (Senegambia, Mali), then into the Chad Region, then into Hausaland and finally into Nupeland and Yorubaland. The first Black Ruler to embrace Islam was said to be the King of Gao (in Mali) who had done so by 1009 AD. The Kings of Ghana, on the other hand did not embrace Islam until about the beginning of the twelfth Century AD after the Almoravid invasions. In the Chad Region, it appears that Umme Jilmi, who became the King of Kanem-Bornu in 1086 AD, was the first Muslim King. Islam was said to have first been introduced into Hausaland from either Kanem-Bornu or Air in the eleventh or twelfth Centuries AD.

There are thousands of publications and postings on the Almajiri Education System, its emergence, its collapse and its consequences on the Almajiri, the society and the Nation at large. Credit is given to two very interesting postings that have been referenced in this Chapter. One was a presentation by Professor Idris AbdulQadir during the 21st Convocation Lecture of Bayero University posted on gamji.com; and the other was by Almajiri Tsangaya Foundation Project posted on naijainfoman.wordpress.com.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE ALMAJIRI EDUCATION SYSTEM

During the pre-colonial era, the Almajiri Education System was established under the Kanem-Bornu Empire as an organised and comprehensive system of education for learning the Glorious Qur'an and the Hadith and their attendant Islamic principles, values, jurisprudence and theology. The System was a replica of Islamic Learning Centres in many Muslim countries such as the "Madrasah System" in Pakistan, Malaysia, Egypt and Indonesia.

Historically, this system was said to have started in the 11th Century AD in Kanem-Bornu Empire (now referred to as Borno Caliphate rather than an Empire because of the Islamic influence)

as a result of the involvement of Borno Rulers in Qur'an literacy. About seven hundred years later, the Sokoto Caliphate was founded principally through an Islamic revival based on the teachings of the Glorious Qur'an. Borno and Sokoto Caliphates ran similar Qur'an learning system, the “Makarantar Allo”, which over time came to be known as the Almajiri School.

Under the Almajiri system during the pre-colonial days most of the pupils lived with their parents for moral upbringing and many of the schools were located within the immediate environment from where the pupils came from. However, many other pupils were brought by their parents and handed over to a Malam (teacher) with an arrangement for their welfare. Since Islam instituted Zakaah (obligatory alms) and encourages charity to students and teachers, the community readily supported the Almajirai (plural for Almajiri) who came from faraway places, the resident pupils and their Malamai (plural of teachers). In return, the Almajirai offered services such as laundry, cobbling, gardening, weaving, sewing etc, as charity to the community that contributed to their well being; hence they gave to the society as the society gave to them. In addition, the Malamai and their Almajirai provided the community with Islamic Literary Education, i.e., reading and writing the Qur'an in addition to the development of “Ajami Literacy” i.e., writing and reading of Hausa Language using Arabic alphabets and numerals. Based on that system, the then Borno and Sokoto Caliphates were largely educated with the Religion of Islam providing a complete way of life, system of governance, refined customs and traditions, craft, trade and even the best practices in farming and livestock keeping.

The Sheikh Usman Dan Fodio revival brought with it an innovation, the establishment of an Inspectorate of Qur'an Literacy. The inspectors reported directly to the Emirs of their respective Emirates concerning all matters relating to the schools. It was argued that, that period was the height of Qur'an Education

in the Sokoto and Borno Caliphates, some parts of which make up today's Northern Nigeria. Broadly, the pre-colonial Almajiri Schools were jointly and severally maintained by the Emirate Authorities, the communities, the parents, Zakaah (obligatory alms) and Waqf (endowment) and supplemented by the Malamai and the Almajirai through farming. "Bara" (begging) in those periods by pupils as it is known today, was completely unheard of.

Let it be emphasised at this point that pre-colonial Emirs and their Emirate Councils administered their Emirates as absolute monarchs. They were the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary, all in one! Therefore it was very easy for the Emirs to ensure the funding of the Almajiri System by their Emirates because they had the absolute power and authority to use Emirate funds collected through legitimate and lawful taxes and Waqf (endowment). The Emirate Authorities also had powers to ensure that the wealthy paid the Zakaah (obligatory alms) on their monies, their livestock, their agricultural produce and all other items liable to Zakaah in accordance with Islamic Law. In addition, the Emirate Authorities had powers to make the parents and members of the communities to assist the Almajiri Education System within their means.

The Almajiri System of those days, even though funded as enumerated above, was not over dependent on the State or the Community. The pupils acquired vocational and occupational skills based on their age abilities in between their Islamic lessons and so were involved in farming, fishing, construction, masonry, food processing, commerce, tailoring, laundry, other small businesses etc.

The productivity and educational contributions of the Almajirai continued unabated up to the initial stages of colonialism. Many of the grown-up (adult) Almajirai were the farmers of the Northern Nigerian cotton and groundnuts that made up the famous pyramids all over the Region. Those Almajirai also

formed the majority of the traders in the commercial city of Kano. They were the leather tanners and leather shoes and bags makers in Sokoto. They were the dyers of cloths in Katsina. They were the cap makers and tailors in Zaria. They were recruited by the British as tin miners in Jos, which was at that time under Bauchi Emirate. Thus the Almajiri System provided the largest percentage of the community workforce (from very young apprentices to adult qualified skill-workers) that made significant contributions to the Northern Nigerian economy and the society before the introduction of colonial white-collar jobs.

The Almajiri System did not only produce the workforce, it also produced the Imams, the Alqalai (Judges), the clerks, the teachers and all those who assisted the initial colonial “Indirect Government System” that had the Traditional Rulers administering their Emirates under direct British colonial supervision. Indeed, up to the 1928 Native Authority Reforms, Arabic and Ajami writings were used in Northern Nigerian Administration with British personnel trained in Arabic at Morocco and the Sudan posted to serve as interpreters. In fact, the Almajiri Education System was a civilising agent that was second to none, before it was gradually replaced by Western Education System and phased out by Colonialists and finally neglected by the Local “Democratic” and “Military” Leaderships.

In a nut shell, the Almajiri System that was founded upon the teachings of the Glorious Qur’an and the Hadith was responsible for the literacy of hundreds of millions of Muslim children over a span of over ten centuries. The System made the British Colonialists to find the then Northern Nigerian areas to be largely educated with a complete way of life, governance, customs, traditions, arts, crafts, trade, etc. The Chronicles of travellers like the German Dr. Barth, documented that Borno and Sokoto Caliphates were administratively well organised with people living in walled cities, who were literate and devout in their Religion of Islam.

As Islam brought with it literary education using Arabic alphabets and numerals to Kanem-Bornu and Hausaland areas in the 1000s AD, the Southern parts of present day Nigeria gained Western literary education in the 1840s with the arrival of the Christian Missionaries who established schools in the Badagry and the Lagos areas. This places the present Nigeria's Northern Muslims about 800 years ahead of the Southern Christians in literary education.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE ALMAJIRI EDUCATION SYSTEM

As an Islamic form of Government was flourishing, with the Emirs and their Emirate Councils having absolute administrative power and authority, British Colonialists invaded Sokoto and Borno Caliphates in the early 1900s. They deposed many of the "uncooperative" Emirs and killed some of them.

The Emirs lost control of their territories and were forced to accept their new roles as "puppets" for the so called "indirect rule system" where they administered their "Native Authorities" as and how the British Colonialists directed. They were later transformed into mere "Traditional Rulers" with no visible official functions but with weighty titles of "fathers of the people"!

The new Traditional Rulers, under the indirect rule system, also lost fundamental control of the Almajiri System. The British deliberately abolished State funding of the Almajiri Schools arguing that they were mere religious schools.

The institution of Zakaah (obligatory Islamic alms) was made a voluntary private affair thereby eliminating a very good source of funding for the Almajiri Schools. With loss of support from the government, from Zakaah collections and from the helpless Emirs, the Almajiri System collapsed. "Karatun Boko" (Western Education) was introduced and government-funded instead.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE COLLAPSE OF THE ALMAJIRI EDUCATION SYSTEM

With the new Western Education made the compulsory means of administration, all the learned people who were at the helm of affairs in pre-colonial Borno and Sokoto Caliphates were considered as “illiterates” or “uneducated” by the new colonial government’s standards and therefore had no place in the new dispensation. That made them not only unemployed but unqualified to be employed despite being able to read and write. Muslim Scholars who were revered professionally for controlling the moral fabrics of the society gradually became neglected. An Imam who was the source of spiritual inspiration and social arbitration to the people of his community was relegated only to delivering sermons once a week at the local Friday Masjid (Mosque). That was because the same Imam was considered to be uneducated and an illiterate therefore not qualified to have a say in government or to sit in the Chambers of the House of Assembly to deliberate on the Laws and the affairs of the Emirate or the Region.

Disregard and neglect of the Almajiri System and the preference and care for the Western Education ignited animosity and antagonism from the Malamai, the Almajirai and the society at large. The scenario was worsened by the propaganda that, Western Education (Boko) was of Christian origin and therefore anti-Islamic. That bred the fear that a child with Western Education will automatically accept Western beliefs that will eventually make him to lose his Islamic identity and to embrace vices that negate the values and principles of Islam such as alcoholism, fornication, semi-naked dressing, abandoning Prayers, Fasting and Zakaah, etc. Those fears and beliefs were often reflected in the grievances vented out at those attending the Western Education Schools as echoed in a popular Almajiri song: *“Yan makarantar Boko, basu qaunar Allah, sai su qaunaci*

Shado"; meaning "*Students of Western Education do not love Allah, as they only love the Devil.*"

From around 1928, when the Colonialists landed the final blow on official funding of Almajiri Schools to around 1966 when the First Republic was terminated by the first Military Coup in Nigeria, the Almajiri Schools were catered for by the parents, some philanthropic members of the community and the local Malamai who deemed it a moral and religious duty to educate those pupils. The parents were contributing food stuff especially at harvest time in the form of Zakaah on produce; and the wealthy were giving out cash in the form of Zakaah on money and establishing Waqf (endowment). Community philanthropists were also giving out donations. The Malamai were engaging in some farming and livestock breeding, sometimes having the Almajirai to help on the farms. The Emirs and members of their Emirate Councils were ensuring the coordination of these activities with a view to sustaining the Almajiri Education System. During the 1928 to 1966 period, although there was scarcity of funds and an overwhelming number of Almajirai to cater for, the Almajiri System continued to flourish and begging in its present form was still not the norm at that time.

However, as the paucity of funds persisted in the 1970s, the situation of the Almajiri Education System worsened as begging set-in. The Almajirai began to swarm the society with no bearing, moving from one street to another, from one house to another and from one vehicle to another. They were everywhere - at the markets, at the car parks, at the restaurants, at the gates of public and private buildings, etc, etc. They became a burden as well as a nuisance to the society. They begged, appealing to the mercy and goodwill of the people. It is really sad when one sees these Almajirai - they are hungry, malnourished and sick. They rush for flies' infested leftover food and searching through trash cans for little morsels, just to stay alive. They consume all kinds of foods, fresh or stale. The Almajirai roam about bare footed in dirty and

tattered dresses; with malnourished and pale skins having flies pecking on their cracked lips, dry faces and bruised skins, which are filled with rashes or ringworms. Fifteen (15) Almajirai may be bundled in very small rooms or even in “zaure” (house entrance room) meant for two persons and such rooms normally do not have windows for cross-ventilation and the walls were so cracked that they look as if they would fall the next minute (and sometimes they actually fall on these unfortunate beings).

The Almajirai beggars are victims of neglect and also victims of exploitation. Some people give them a stipend or leftovers out of sympathy or after exploiting them for menial jobs. Other people abhor them, hold them with contempt and even blame them for their helplessness. It is common to hear many scold them by saying, “*go to school*” or “*get a job*” or “*go back to your parents*”.

It is clear that begging takes away all iota of dignity from a person, be he a child or an adult. This bastardising effect suffered by the Almajiri Education System subjected it to all forms of decadence. The Almajirai are being abused and disgraced, unscrupulous politicians use them as political thugs, child traffickers harness their susceptibility and most disheartening, the insurgency in the North East and the banditry in the North West are said to utilize the vulnerability of these indigent set of humans in perpetrating their crimes. The beautiful Religion of Islam that abhors laziness and begging and that institutionalised hard work and self-dependence under the provisions of the Glorious Qur’an and the Sunnah, is now the culprit. Islam is being blamed and is being castigated for the unfortunate plight of the miserable Almajirai.

CHAPTER TWO

BEGGING IS NOT PART OF THE ALMAJIRI EDUCATION SYSTEM

Nigerian beggars are in three categories. The first category is made up of young, helpless, malnourished and sickly children wearing tattered rags, holding small bowls and roaming the streets in an undignified manner begging for alms simply because they are pupils of the Almajiri School System.

The second category is made up of the destitute some of who are genuinely handicapped and cannot fend for themselves, while others profess to be engrossed in poverty.

The hangers-on are the third category and the worst group, which is made up of faceless and healthy adults who do nothing productive but traverse the towns and move from one house to another seeking for money and material wealth from others, especially from those in public office. If a political office holder “steals” money from public funds and greases their palms, he is the “good politician”. If he does not “steal” and therefore has nothing to give them, he is the “bad politician”. Funnily enough, such people are in the forefront of carrying rumours about on “the big thieves” in government! By the way, what is the difference between a thief and the receiver of stolen properties? If there are no receivers of stolen properties, there would be no thieves!

Because most beggars are Muslims, the “trade” is ascribed to Islam. Let it be made abundantly clear that Islam does not condone nor encourage idleness or unnecessary begging. There is no other religion that teaches human beings the ways to preserve their integrity, morality and honour as much as Islam does. In Islam, the honour and integrity of the community and its people are important and must be absolutely preserved. Therefore each Muslim in the community is responsible for the preservation of that valuable trust, by avoiding anything that will dishonour Islam.

Those begging without any need cause their honour and respectability and that of their community to decay and to fall into the pit of spiritual bankruptcy. For this reason, Islam, which strongly commands helping the destitute and the very weak, forbids those who are not gravely poor and who are not in dire need from begging.

Allah (SWT) made it incumbent upon people to strive to change their bad habits of indolence with the good habits of hard work and sincerity of purpose. It is only by so doing that Allah (SWT) shall change peoples' bad conditions into good ones. Allah states that,

Verily, Allah will not change the condition of a people as long as they do not change their state (of affairs) themselves (Qur'an 13:11)

In addition, Allah admonishes people to pray to Him seeking for His Bounties and at the same time work hard to actualise that prayer. He says,

And when the Prayer is finished, disperse (you people) through the lands, and seek the Bounties of Allah (by working hard, etc.), and observe the praises of Allah very much, so that you may be successful and prosperous (Qur'an 62:10)

That man can have nothing but what he strives for; that (the fruit of) his striving will soon come in sight: then will he be rewarded with a reward complete (Qur'an 53:39-41)

A good Muslim should always remain grateful to Allah and always remain contented with whatever he has got (whether little or much), and which ever state he finds himself in (whether good or bad). Begging people is akin to complaining to people that "Allah has denied me so and so". Why not work within your capacity and limits and seek the bounties of Allah? Why complain to humans what the Divine Creator has cast upon you? Gratitude to Allah is one of the most important aspects of the Islamic Faith. Muslims should always be thankful to Allah (SWT) for all the

blessings He has bestowed on them. Those who are grateful to Allah shall attract more bounties and those who are not grateful shall attract His wrath. Allah says,

And remember when your Lord declared that, "If you are grateful, I will add more (favours) unto you; but if you show ingratitude; truly My punishment is terrible indeed"... "If you show ingratitude, you and all those on Earth together, (remember that) Allah is free of all wants, worthy of all praise. (Qur'an 14:7-8)

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) directed Muslims to keep away from begging and instructed them to work diligently, as he wanted no Muslim to prefer the ignominy of begging to the honour of working for one's livelihood.

Anas Ibn Malik (RLA) narrated that, a man from the Ansar of Medina came to the Prophet (SAW) and begged him for sustenance. The Prophet (SAW) asked the man; *"have you anything in your house?"* The man replied that he has a piece of cloth, a part of which he covers himself with and a part of which he spreads on the ground, and that he also has a wooden bowl with which he drinks water with. The Prophet (SAW) said, *"bring them to me"*. The man brought the articles and the Prophet (SAW) took them in his hands and asked; *"who will buy these?"* One of those present said that he would buy them for one coin. The Prophet (SAW) said, *"who will offer more than one coin?"* Another man present said he would buy them for two coins. The Prophet (SAW) sold the items to that person for two coins and handed the coins to the owner saying, *"buy food with one of the coins and hand it to your family, and buy an axe with the other coin and bring it to me"*. The man bought the axe and brought it to the Prophet (SAW) who told him to go and gather firewood with it and sell and to continue doing so; and let him not come back to the Prophet (SAW) until after two weeks. The man went away and gathered firewood and sold it. When he had earned ten coins, he bought garments with some and food with the others.

When he came back, the Prophet (SAW), said to him, *“this is more honourable for you in this World and is better for you than begging to appear as a spot on your face on the Day of Judgment”*. (Reported in Sunan Abu Dawud).

Abu Huraira (RLA), one of the closest companions of the Prophet (SAW) and the most famous male narrator of the Hadith, narrated that Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said,

It is more desirable for one of you to take a rope and go to the forest to collect fire-wood and sell it, in order for Allah to guard his honour than for one to ask other people to assist him (with food, money or other things); whether they give him or not. In another narration, the Prophet (SAW) said, It is better for one of you to collect firewood, carry it on his back and make enough from it to give away some Sadaqa (alms-charity), hence becoming self-independent; than to ask someone who might give him or refuse to give him. Indeed, the upper hand (the hand that gives) is better than the lower hand (the hand that takes). The person should start (when giving charity) with those he is in charge of”. (Reported by Al-Bukhari)

Abu Huraira (RLA), narrated that the Prophet (SAW) said,

“Prophets of Allah had trades or professions”. He was asked, *“Including you O Messenger of Allah?”* He answered, *“Yes including me. I was a herdsman who was paid for it”*. The Prophet (SAW) also said, *“Prophet Dawud (David) AS, was living on what his hands produced (he was a black-smith) and Prophet Zakariya (Zachariah) AS, was a carpenter”*. (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Page 238 of the book, “Islam wal Idara”, reported that Al-Hakim (RLA) narrated that the Prophet (SAW) said,

Prophet Adam (AS) was a farmer (and hunter), Prophet Nuhu (Noah) AS, was a carpenter, Prophet Idris (AS) was a tailor and Prophet Musa (Moses) AS was a herdsman.

Asking for material things from people is not allowed in Islam if the act is being done just for the sake of accumulating wealth for personal gains. This is regarded as begging that is taken as an occupation, which is strictly prohibited in Islam. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said,

Whoever continues to beg people in order to accumulate much property, surely asks for a piece of fire, so let him ask a little or much... Some among you do not ever abandon begging; let them know that, finally, on the Day of Resurrection, such dishonourable persons will meet Allah with no flesh left on their faces (Reported by Muslim)

The above mentioned Verses of the Glorious Qur'an and Sayings of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), clearly explain the unacceptability of unnecessary begging in Islam. However, the beauty of Islam is that the Religion prohibits unnecessary indulgence in any dishonourable act, but allows special cases of necessities within reasonable limits. In these regards, asking for help is permissible for the one who is in dire need and does not have enough to suffice him and he has not been able to earn something despite his trying very hard. Such a person may ask people for as much as will meet his immediate needs only. As for the one who is not in dire need, or the one who is in need but is able to earn something by trying, it is not permissible for him to beg and whatever he takes from people in this case is prohibited in Islam. These are measured by the narration of Qabeesah ibn Mukhaariq al-Hilaali (RLA) who said that he incurred a debt in order to reconcile between two parties and he could not pay it. He therefore went to the Prophet (SAW) and asked him for help. The Prophet (SAW) told him to wait until the Zakaah (obligatory alms) came, and he will order that something be given to him. Then the Prophet (SAW) added,

O Qabeesah, asking for help is not permissible except in one of three cases: (1) a man who has incurred a debt in order to

reconcile between two parties is permitted to ask for help until he has paid it off, then he should refrain; (2) a man who has been stricken by a calamity that has destroyed all his property is permitted to ask for help until he gets enough to get by or he gets enough to meet his basic needs; and (3) a man who is stricken by poverty and three men of wisdom among his people acknowledge and affirm that he has been stricken by poverty, then it is permissible for him to ask for help until he gets enough to get by or to meet his basic needs. Apart from these cases asking for help, O Qabeesah, is illegal and the one who begs is consuming something illegal. (Reported by Muslim, Ahmad, An-Nasaa'i and Abu Dawood)

The above case has brought to fore the main reasons why begging was allowed only by three categories of persons. Then, one may be tempted to ask of the position of the destitute that are incapacitated and therefore cannot conveniently earn a living by themselves and persons with similar cases. The answer is simple. In of Islam, Allah (SWT) has instituted a mechanism in the Muslim communities to care for such persons through the institution of “Zakaah” (obligatory alms on wealth). Zakaah is one of the Five Pillars of Islam and a compulsory duty, which a Muslim must pay to the poor and those in need to cover their requirements and save them from the humility of asking others for help

ZAKAAH: THE PANACEA TO POVERTY AND BEGGING IN THE MUSLIMS COMMUNITY

In October 2017, this Author issued an Open Letter to Nigerian Muslims on the importance of Zakaah. This Author argues in the Letter (with facts and figures) that the major socio-economic problems of Nigerian Muslims are hinged on poverty and that Allah (SWT) has given Muslims the panacea over 1,400 years ago in Zakaah and Waqf (endowment). That Letter by this Author states the following in its opening paragraphs:-

If the “Almajirai” (child beggars) and the “Mabarata” (adult beggars) are the “Fuqara” (poor) and the “Masakin” (needy, destitute) mentioned in the Glorious Qur’an (9:60), then the following Zakaah that could be collected in one year in Nigeria would go a long way in cushioning the effect of their sufferings:-
Money:- 12.5 billion Naira; **Rice:-** 1.125 million tonnes (equal to 22.5 million 50 kg bags); **Maize:-** 540,000 tonnes (equal to 5.4 million 100 kg bags); **Sorghum:-** 490,000 tonnes (equal to 4.9 million 100 kg bags); **Millet:-** 360,000 tonnes (equal to 3.6 million 100 kg bags); **Cattle:-** 650,000 heads; **Goats:-** 725,000 heads and **Sheep:-** 413,000 heads.

Don’t brush aside the above and what you are about to read below as wishful thinking; it is not. It is based on careful and meticulous calculation using sound facts and figures. 12.5 billion Naira as Zakaah in one year in Nigeria may appear impossible to collect; but remember that the wealthiest African happens to be a Nigerian Muslim. In 2015, Forbes stated that this wealthy Nigerian Muslim was worth 15.7 billion Dollars. At that year’s exchange rate of about N400 to a Dollar, that was equal to 6.28 trillion Naira! Recall that the Federal Government’s Capital and Recurrent Budget operated by both Presidents Jonathan and Buhari for that year was 4.65 trillion Naira! This Muslim’s wealth includes cash and goods-in-trade, which are all liable to Zakaah. Just imagine what could be realised from this Muslim alone, of course minus bank loans if any! But the interesting fact is that, the above estimation of 12.5 billion Naira Zakaah was not based on this Muslim’s cash, it was based purely on figures of the currency in circulation in Nigeria between September 2016 and August this year (2017) as released by the Central Bank of Nigeria. Such was the factual basis of the calculations that led to the above Zakaah estimations, as detailed in the stated Open Letter to Nigerian Muslims.

Due to the multi-religious nature of Nigeria, it may not be possible for the Federal and all States Governments to establish

Zakaah Commissions; therefore the responsibility clearly falls on the shoulders of the Nigerian Muslim Leadership to establish a **National Zakaah Foundation** for the purpose. States that have Muslim majority populations (e.g. those that have Shari'ah Commissions) could give legal backing and assistance to the Nigerian Muslim Leadership for this important project. For the avoidance of doubts those who make up the Muslim Leadership are:- His Eminence the Amirul Mumineen, the Sultan of Sokoto and President General of the Nigerian Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), the Deputy President General of the NSCIA His Royal Highness the Shehu of Borno, the Vice Presidents General of the NSCIA Their Royal Highnesses Muslim Emirs, Chiefs and Obas, Distinguished Muslim Scholars and Honourable Leaders of the major Muslim Organisations. These Revered Leaders should not allow Nigerian Muslims to continue to wallow in abject poverty and only survive as paupers, and "Almajirai", while their shares of Allah's endowed wealth are denied them!

Why do Nigerian Muslims keep on groping in the dark for over 40 years looking for the "medicine" to cure the Almajiri, the poverty and the unemployment "diseases" while Allah (SWT) has prescribed **Zakaah** as the medicine over 1,400 years ago? Are there no trustworthy Muslims to administer the envisaged Zakaah Foundation? This Foundation should be a priority as it is one of the best ways to solve the myriad of Muslims' social and economic problems. If the Foundation establishes trust and builds confidence in the hearts and minds of Nigerian Muslims, it could add endowments (Awqaf), donations and other charitable activities to its mandate. Supposing only half of the estimated 95 million Nigerian Muslims would donate only 100 Naira each in one year as charity through the Foundation, 4.75 billion Naira shall be realised. Yes, 4.75 billion Naira in just one year! It is a pity that while adherents of other Religions in Nigeria have silently devised ways and means of funding their activities and

making sure their Faithful do not roam the streets as “Almajirai”, Muslims have left an Allah-ordained source of funds untapped and groping in the dark for solutions to the gross poverty of the Muslim Faithful!

MUSLIMS SHOULD ERADICATE BEGGING

If Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and ALL the Prophets of Allah (AS) never relied on begging anybody for sustenance and ALL of them had one productive trade or profession or another, who then would claim an Islamic licence to beg? In addition, ALL the Companions of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and all the great men of Islam (e.g. Sheik Usman Dan Fodio, the founder of Sokoto Caliphate who was a livestock farmer) relied on productive professions for sustenance. Therefore Islam does not condone, sanction or encourage laziness, idleness or unnecessary begging. Islam teaches hard work, dedication, honesty, sincerity of purpose, justice and fairness. Therefore those who are idle, lazy, dishonest, unjust and unfair should not ascribe begging or their misdeeds to Islam.

Muslim parents and scholars should train their children and pupils respectively on true Islamic injunctions pertaining to worship and hard work and the abhorrence of begging.

Muslim communities should be tutored on the virtues of self reliance and the payment of Zakaah and the institutionalisation of *Waqf* (endowment) as means of subduing poverty in Muslim Societies.

Muslim Leaders, on the other hand, should remember that they have the onerous task of ensuring that the people they lead live in progress and prosperity and not in degradation and poverty. Leaders should ensure that all citizens are given equal opportunities and the right environment to worship Allah and to live useful and responsible professional lives, with each tradesman supplementing the other (and not begging for alms!). *Amirul Mumineen* Sultan Muhammadu Bello, the son and

successor of Sheik Usman Dan Fodio who established the Sokoto Caliphate, wrote on this issue in his treatise, *Usul al-Siyasa* in 1808, which was written at the request of the Emir of Katsina, Malam Ummarun Dallaje. His authoritative views are still relevant today, therefore quoted as follows:-

The Leader should provide public amenities for the people of his State for their temporal and religious benefits. For this purpose, he shall foster the artisans, and be concerned with the tradesmen who are indispensable to the people, such as farmers and smiths, tailors and dyers, physicians and grocers, butchers and carpenters... The ruler must keep villages and the countryside in prosperity, construct fortresses and bridges, maintain markets and roads and realize for the citizens all what are of public interest, so that the proper order of this World may be maintained.

Let Muslims study and emulate the life and times of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), his Companions (RLA) and the good Leaders of Islam who lived exemplary lives through centuries. They learnt, taught and practiced Islamic tenets pertaining to worship and hard work. They were never lazy or idle. The leaders among them were just and fair to their followers; and the followers were obedient to their leaders and honest to their fellow citizens.

CHAPTER THREE

ALMAJIRI EDUCATION PROBLEMS ARE PRODUCTS OF NEGLIGENCE BY PARENTS, AUTHORITIES AND COMMUNITIES

In Islam, the responsibilities of parents, leaders (Authority), others in the community and indeed all persons are clearly spelt out in the Hadith narrated by Abdullah ibn Umar (RLA), who narrated that, the Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad (SAW), said,

Beware! Every one of you is a shepherd (guardian) and every one of you shall be questioned with regard to his flock. The Leader is a shepherd over his people and shall be questioned about all his subjects. A Man is a guardian over the members of his family and shall be questioned about all of them. A Woman is a guardian over the household of her husband and his children and shall be questioned about all of them. A Servant is a guardian over the property of his master and shall be questioned about all of it. Beware! Every one of you is a shepherd (guardian) and every one of you shall be questioned with regard to his flock (i.e., shall account to Allah SWT). (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

In the modern democratic context, all people (Muslims and non-Muslims) are bound by their National Constitutions and other State Laws on justice, fairness and good governance that make all persons to account for their deeds right in this World. The Constitution and the other Laws of the Land provide the do's and don'ts for the Leaders and the Citizens; and equally prescribe the benefits of obedience and the punishments for disobedience.

This Chapter shall discuss these entrenched parental, governmental and community responsibilities pertaining to children, the neglect of which led to the current myriads of Almajiri Education System's problems.

From around 1928 when the Colonialists landed the final blow on official funding of Almajiri Schools to around 1966 when the First Republic was terminated by the first Military Coup in Nigeria, the Almajiri Schools were catered for by the parents, some philanthropic members of the community and the local Malamai who deemed it a moral and religious duty to educate these pupils. The parents were contributing food stuff especially at harvest time in the form of Zakaah on produce. The wealthy were giving out cash in the form of Zakaah on money. Community philanthropists were giving out donations. The Malamai were engaging in some farming and livestock breeding, sometimes having the Almajirai to help on the farms. The Emirs and Members of their Emirate Councils were ensuring the coordination of these activities with a view to sustaining the Almajiri Education System. During the 1928 to 1966 period, although there was scarcity of funds and an overwhelming number of pupils to cater for, the Almajiri System continued to flourish and begging in its present form was still not the norm at that time.

Gradually however, some Malamai, especially those in the major towns and cities, saw the need to establish Western-styled Schools for Islamic Studies. Such Malamai had the support of the wealthy and the Western educated elites who, as youths, were pupils of the Almajiri Education System. That accounted for the springing up of “Islamiyya” Schools that were catering for the Islamic Educational needs mainly of the children and wards of the elites and those who could afford to pay some monthly fees.

At that point, the care of the Almajirai whose parents could not send them to the Islamiyya Schools became overwhelmingly burdensome for the Malamai who could not afford and did not have the support of the wealthy and the elites to establish the Islamiyya Schools. In order to make ends meet, some of these indigent Malamai began to impose what was called “kudin sati” or “kudin mako” (weekly education fees) on the Almajirai. The

Almajirai therefore resorted to begging so as to meet up with the payment of the fees believing that to beg was better than to steal.

The rot in the Almajiri Education System was setup at this stage as the parents, the Authorities and the communities shirked their responsibilities by neglecting the unfortunate young ones who were left to their unfortunate fates. The parents should have taken back their young children from the Malamai and sent them to Qur'an Schools in their immediate vicinities and at the same time taught them some trade - farming, handcrafts, etc. If the parents did not, the Authorities should have forced the parents to do so. In addition, the Authorities in the Muslim dominated areas should have forced the wealthy in the community to pay Zakaah as the Emirs did during the pre-colonial and the immediate colonial period up to the 1950s. The Authorities should also have provided the environment for all children to be educated and properly taken care of. A fundamental question being asked was, if post-colonial successive Muslim political and military leaders in Muslim dominated areas would use public funds to finance Western education and to send people on Pilgrimage to Mecca, why didn't they assist in modifying and funding (in addition to Zakaah) the Almajiri School System? After all, in Islam education and welfare come before Hajj, as Hajj becomes expedient only if there is the means to perform it, which includes education and personal (not public) capacity to fund it.

The emphatic statement here is, if the parental, Authorities' and communities' responsibilities had not been shirked, neglected and abandoned; the Almajiri problems wouldn't have been here today! But the problems are here, so what next?

For about a decade, from around 1973 to 1983, the problems of Almajiri begging escalated astronomically. There was a callous conspiracy between the parents, the Authorities and the communities that led to that escalation. The parents saw the Almajiri System as a means of getting rid of excess children that they could not cater for, while at the same time kept on

marrying additional wives and producing more children. The Authorities did not consider it as their problem as they adopted the definition of the colonialists that Almajiri Education was “a religious issue” and therefore they were relieved from making any budgetary provisions for it. The elites and the wealthy in the communities were not perturbed as their own children were not involved.

THE GUILT OF PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITIES

Chapter Four of this Book enumerates the clear parental responsibilities on children that have been grossly neglected, abandoned and ultimately thrown away thereby placing the major blame of the Almajiri crisis squarely on the parents of those unfortunate victims.

Chapter Two of this Book clearly explains the unacceptability of begging in Islam. The same Chapter attributes the abandonment of the payment of Zakaah (obligatory alms) and the establishment of Waqf (endowment) by the wealthy in Muslim Communities as key factors to the rise of poverty that leads some to begging. Community Leaders, particularly Muslim Traditional Rulers and Muslim Clerics have also shirked their responsibilities in educating and if possible sanctioning members of the communities who abandoned Zakaah and other Shari’ah ordained ways and means of eliminating poverty.

General Hassan Usman Katsina, GCON, the first and only Military Governor of Northern Nigeria, a Prince of Katsina Emirate who held the title of Ciroman Katsina and an elder statesman, started the dogged fight against begging with emphasis on that of the Almajirai as early as 1977. That was two years after his 1975 retirement that enabled him to see things in a proper citizen’s perspectives without the official paraphernalia shield, which normally shields leaders away from the true appearance of things. The General spoke strongly at uncountable number of forums against the begging practice, the blame of which he

heaved on the Hausa ethnic communities, as he argued that other ethnic nationalities the World over do not engage in child or adult begging the way the Hausa people do.

General Hassan Katsina made his final public call for the stoppage of this unwholesome act during the 30th Anniversary Celebration of Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria Kaduna in September 1992. In the tape-recorded call in the Hausa language, which is still in wide circulation in the social media, the General classified begging in Nigeria as purely an invention in the Hausa culture that has no iota of bearing on Islam. He called on the Hausa people to join hands with the government to find a solution to the menace. He specifically blamed parents of the Almajirai and called on them to enrol their children and wards into Islamiyya Schools where they would be taught the combined Islamic and Western education. General Hassan Katsina finally warned the Hausa people in particular and the Northern Region in general of the looming dangers of the Almajirai abuse, if it was not contained.

Exactly 40 years after General Hassan Usman Katsina's launch of the dogged fight against Almajiri begging, His Eminence the Sultan of Sokoto, the Chairman of the Northern Traditional Rulers' Council and the President General of both the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) and Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, CFR, mni, declared that street begging by children, popularly known as Almajiri System was un-Islamic. His Eminence the Sultan spoke on Sunday, 21st May 2017 while presiding over the pre-Ramadan meeting of JNI's Central Council, held at the JNI Headquarters in Kaduna.

His Eminence the Sultan lamented that the Almajiri practice of begging does not represent Islam, but represents hunger and poverty and must therefore be distinguished from Islam. This is because Islam encourages scholarship and entrepreneurship and frowns at laziness and idleness as being exemplified by the

itinerant Almajiri System; therefore all attempts must be made to stop the practice among the Muslim Faithful. His Eminence the Sultan charged the Governments to prioritise the welfare of their citizens to address hunger and poverty. He also charged the States Governments having Muslim majority populations to strengthen the Institution of Zakaah (compulsory Islamic alms) and Waqf (endowment) in order to assist in addressing the escalation of poverty within their States in particular and the Nation in general.

THE GUILT OF THE AUTHORITIES

President Muhammadu Buhari personally declared Government's guilt on the Almajiri System when he was inaugurating the National Economic Council (NEC) at the State House, Abuja on 21st June 2019. The NEC has the Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, as Chairman and all States Governors and other senior government functionaries as Members. President Muhammadu Buhari stated that it is a crime to keep children out of school and therefore stressed the need for the Federal and the States Governments to enforce very rigorously the statutory provisions on free and compulsory basic education. He stated that,

Section 18(3) of the 1999 Constitution as amended places on all of us here an obligation to eradicate illiteracy and provide free and compulsory education. Section 2 of the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act provides that every Government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age. It is therefore a crime for any parent to keep his child out of school for this period. In my view, when a government fails to provide the schools, teachers and teaching materials necessary for basic education, it is actually aiding and abetting that crime.

The President further said that, ensuring proper education during the first nine years of schooling means that the children shall start off their lives with some discipline and education thereby safeguarded from roaming the streets, and protected from all the

evil influences that assail idle hands and idle minds. The online Daily Trust Newspaper of 21st June 2019, reports that the National Security Adviser (NSA), Babagana Monguno, stated that the Federal Government is considering proscribing the Almajiri system to address the rising insecurity in the country. He stated this while briefing journalists alongside the Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Adamu, Adamawa State Governor, Ahmadu Fintri, Anambra State Governor, Willie Obiano and Ondo State Governor, Rotimi Akeredolu. Monguno said,

It is very important to proscribe certain groups ultimately running around under the guise of may be getting some kind of education that is not really formal and then begin to cause a lot of problems for society. Ultimately, government will have to proscribe this Almajiri phenomenon because we cannot continue to have street urchins, children roaming around, only for them in a couple of years, or decades to become a problem to society. We are not saying that they are going to be contained in a manner that you might think we want to do something that is harmful to them, no. What we want to do is to work with the States Governments to enforce the policy of education for every child. It is every child's right, his entitlement, so long as he is a Nigerian... Population is a very critical element of national power. It is from the population that you get a critical mass. So, when we look at population, as an element of National Security, don't be surprised if out of every 100 Almajiri, you have two neurologists, four architects, two lawyers, and so on and so forth. You can't carry this load and drop it on top of the Government, even government should not work as a one-legged tripod, it has to be three-legged. We have to deal with the issue of these children, Almajiri, regardless of how people feel about it. We must work in sync with the rest of the international communities. How many countries operate this kind of system? Let's be very, very sincere to ourselves, we have to look at this issue that we have been sweeping under the carpet.

In November 2009, the Honourable Minister of State for Education, Hajiya Aishatu Jibrin Dukku, took a swipe at the educational backwardness of the North, stating that they were taking a census of the Almajirai and,

We are yet to finish our compilation, but at the moment we have over ten million child beggars (Almajirai) in Northern Nigeria roaming our streets, and that is a conservative estimate. Many factors are fuelling the rise in numbers of Almajirai children, such as the Boko Haram crisis, farmers/herdsmen conflicts, diseases, natural disasters, domestic violence and rising poverty. These problems have torn families apart and increased the number of orphans and vulnerable children, estimated to be 17.5 million at the moment”.

This statement by the Honourable Minister of State for Education of the Federal Republic of Nigeria was made exactly 10 years ago! When the escalating statistics of the factors mentioned by the Minister are added to other new factors like banditry, kidnappings and rustling, one could best imagine the magnitude of the problems today. It is generally estimated that the current number of the Almajirai and similar vulnerable children is well over 20 million!

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN ON THEIR PARENTS IN ISLAM

In Islam, parents and children have rights and responsibilities over each other. However, this Book is concerned with the rights of the children over their parents, as that is what is relevant to the Almajiri Education System; therefore this Chapter is mainly dedicated to that.

The responsibilities of parents on their children are so numerous that they cannot all be listed here. However, a few of such responsibilities that are relevant to our discourse are mentioned below.

RIGHTS TO PARENTAL CARE IN GENERAL

Allah (SWT) instructs children in several Verses of the Glorious Qur'an to honour their parents, to abide by and to follow their lawful instructions and to always respect them. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) also issues similar instructions in several Hadith. These are regarded as the rights of parents over their children. Equally, Allah (SWT) and the Prophet (SAW) issued instructions to parents on the rights of their children. Therefore in Islam, family rights and duties are the two sides of the same coin. The rights of parents are the duties of children and the duties of parents are the rights of children. Therefore, those who attain parenthood have great responsibilities on their shoulders. Allah (SWT) states,

O you who believe! Protect yourselves and your families against a Hell Fire whose fuel is men and stones, over which are (appointed) Angels stern (and) severe, who do not disobey the Commands they receive from Allah, but they do exactly that which they are commanded to do (by Allah) (Qur'an 66:6)

Parents can only protect their families from Hell Fire by showing them the right ways and teaching them the differences between

right and wrong. These can only be achieved through education and parental care. Perhaps the most broadly stated responsibilities of parents and indeed every human being are contained in the Hadith narrated by Abdullah Ibn Umar (RLA) who stated that, Prophet Muhammad (SAW), said,

Beware! Every one of you is a shepherd (guardian) and every one of you shall be questioned with regard to his flock. The Leader is a shepherd over his people and shall be questioned about all his subjects. A Man is a guardian over the members of his family and shall be questioned about all of them. A Woman is a guardian over the household of her husband and his children and shall be questioned about all of them. A Servant is a guardian over the property of his master and shall be questioned about all of it. Beware! Every one of you is a shepherd (guardian) and every one of you shall be questioned with regard to his flock (i.e., shall account to Allah SWT). (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Another classical example of Islamic admonition on parents came from one of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. It was related that a man once came to Caliph Umar Ibn Khattaab (RLA) complaining against his son's disobedience to him. The Caliph summoned the boy and spoke of his disobedience and negligence to his father and about his father's rights.

The boy asked the Caliph: “O Ameerul Mumineen (Leader of the Faithful); *hasn't a child rights over his father?*” The Caliph replied that “*Certainly a child has rights*”. The boy asked, “*What are they O Ameerul Mumineen?*” The Caliph answered, “*He should choose a good wife to be the mother of the child, he should give him a good name and he should teach him the Qur'an*”. The boy said, “O Ameerul Mumineen! *My father did nothing of these. My mother is a Magian (fire worshipper). He gave me the name of Julalaan (meaning dung beetle) and he did not teach me a single letter of the Qur'an*”. Turning to the father, Caliph Umar (RLA) said, “*You have come to me to complain about the disobedience of your son. You have failed in your duty to him*

before he has failed in his duty to you; you have done wrong to him before he has wronged you.”

The Verses of the Glorious Qur'an, the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the acts of Caliph Umar Ibn Khattaab (RLA) mentioned above clearly define the rights of children on their parents. Children are their parents' hearts-delights, their parents' companions and their parents' comfort in their old age. Children are also a source of prayers for their dead parents. Therefore, children are the means by which parents earn the fruits of this World and the reward of the Hereafter. If parents fulfil their responsibilities towards their children, they will be free of the consequences on the Day of Judgment. Allah (SWT) says,

And those who believed and whose descendants followed them in Faith - We (Allah) will join them with their descendants (in Paradise), and We will not deprive them of anything of their deeds. Every person, for what he earned, he retains...” (Quran 52:21)

Are these rights protected under the current Almajiri System?

CHOOSING A RIGHTEOUS WIFE AND A RIGHTEOUS HUSBAND; TO BE A RIGHTEOUS MOTHER AND A RIGHTEOUS FATHER

The rights of a child begin even before marriage between the father and the mother, as Islam admonishes those who intend to marry to choose their suitable partners from honourable families and honourable backgrounds. In one such admonishing, Abu Huraira (RLA) narrated that the Prophet (SAW) said,

A woman may be married for four reasons: her wealth, her lineage, her beauty and her religious commitment. I admonish you to marry the one who is religiously committed. (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The right choice must be made before marriage because a mother's role is greater than that of a father in the case of babies and young children. While the children are young they are very close to her and dependent upon her, and they spend more time with her than with anyone else. There is a general saying that, "*The mother is the first school of a child*". She may be a good school, an indifferent school or even a bad school. She may even be unaware that she is serving as a role model in her behaviour, and her attitudes. Every mother should be conscious of her role and do her best to make it beneficial for the development of her children as they set out on their journey of life.

Are these rights protected under the current Almajiri System?

RIGHT TO CARE DURING PREGNANCY AND BIRTH

The pregnant or nursing mother should take care of her health and her nutrition so that she can pass good health to her child. She has been given the permission to even stop observing the obligatory fast of the Month of Ramadan if the fasting may cause her or the pregnancy or the baby some harm. Financing the feeding, the medical expenses, etc, rests on the shoulders of the father. When children are born, as babies, they automatically have the rights of feeding, clothing, health care, etc. Allah says of the responsibilities of the mother and the father to their baby that,

Mothers should breast feed their children for two whole years (that is) for those who wish to complete the suckling term, the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms is upon the father of the child. (Al-Baqarah 2:233)

The current World acclaimed scientific campaign being led by the United Nations Organisation on mothers to breast feed their babies for one and a half to two years has been instituted in Islam over 1,400 years ago! Of note here however is that the mother has the responsibility to breast feed and to take general care of the child, but the father has the responsibility to finance all these

within his abilities. Even in cases of divorce, fathers must be fully responsible for their children regarding food, clothing, schooling and health expenses according to the father's standard of life. Allah (SWT) says,

Let the man of means spend according to his means: and let the man whose resources are restricted to spend according to what Allah has given him. Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After a difficulty, Allah will soon grant relief. (At-Talaq 65:7)

Are these rights protected under the current Almajiri System?

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Chapter Three of this Book has been dedicated to the great premium Islam places on knowledge; therefore seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim male and female; the child and the adult, the young and the elderly. This certainly accounted for the emergence of the Almajiri Education System.

Children are not only to be well-fed, well-groomed, properly dressed, well-taken care of in terms of feeding and shelter; but they must be given a higher care in terms of religious and professional education along with moral and spiritual guidance and training. A child must be prepared for self sustenance in Worldly life and in seeking salvation in the Hereafter. Here comes the necessity of religious and professional education.

In Islam, education is not limited to reading and writing alone, as it includes moral and religious training, which leads to an excellent growth of the child's personality. And of course, parents should not forget or neglect imparting religious and moral training to their children. A little sacrifice on the part of parents will save children from moral decadence. Effective moral training comes not from sermons and advices alone but from parents' personal examples of good behaviour.

It is a famous Tradition of the Prophet (SAW) that acquisition of knowledge is a must for every Muslim boy and girl. Another Hadith says, *“The best of you is one who gives a good education (intellectual and moral) to his children”*. And a Hadith lays emphasis on the education of females where the Prophet (SAW) said, *“He who provides good upbringing to 3 daughters shall go to Paradise”*. A man asked, “What if one has only two daughters?” The Prophet (SAW) replied, *“He also shall go to Paradise”*. Another man asked, “And what if one has only one daughter?” *“He too”*, replied the Prophet (SAW).

In these regards, where does the current Almajiri Education System fall? Are parents educating their children by “throwing” them into the wilderness where they roam about in tattered dresses, sickly looking, sleep in dungeon-like rooms or even in the streets, and above all spend the whole day begging for food?

Are these rights protected under the current Almajiri System?

RIGHT TO EDUCATION IS NOT A RIGHT TO BEGGING

Education is the process by which children are nurtured as they grow up to develop an Islamic worldview and Islamic virtues.

Education means to look after, to nurture, to nourish, to help to grow and to flourish. It implies certain sensitivity towards the child, his emotional and physical needs and capacities. It implies the ability to inspire confidence and the courage to allow and promote creativity and innovation. It implies the ability to trust and not to fear, to be firm when needed and even to impose sanctions when necessary.

The starting point for education is the example of parents. Small children take their parents as models. If parents are lazy and careless, the children will also take laziness and carelessness as normal. If they tell lies, children will regard lying as normal and acceptable. The same applies to smoking, alcohol drinking, rude manners, swearing and all other bad habits or behaviours. There is

no way parents can motivate their children to practice the Islamic virtues if they themselves do not respect the values and try to practice them also. As children grow up, they will only perceive the inconsistency or even hypocrisy in their parents' approach. Parents should teach children all noble characteristics such as respecting others, putting others first, honesty, kindness, justice, and love to sacrifice. These cannot be achieved if the child is thrown into the streets as Almajiri.

It is important not to crush a child's spirit and joy about life by terrorizing him/her, whether physically or psychologically. Children must be taught to play. It is the way they learn, and is not in itself something bad. Parents should give the child opportunities to play and to experience the excitement of exploration, of learning and of growing up.

Parents should teach children Islamic manners and etiquette in accordance with the beautiful examples of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and those of the Guided Caliphs (AS) and those of their rightly guided successors. Such habits include truthfulness and honesty, gentleness, politeness, consideration for others, helpfulness, cleanliness and tidiness, loving religious and professional educational pursuits thereby being self reliant in this World and positively prepared for the Hereafter. Correct education should ensure that children develop a love for Islam, a love for Allah (SWT) and a love for Prophet Muhammad (SAW); and that they develop a feeling of pride in being Muslims and willingness to strive for the good of others. They need to realize the benefits of Islam, the foundations on which it is built and their need to value Islam and to live by Islamic values. It is the responsibility of the parents to experiment with various ways of achieving these goals.

If parents are to get the best results for their children in a modern school, they must know what and how the school teaches. Parents need to understand that while the school basically may be following a National Curriculum, the teaching approach may not

be holistic. Therefore it is not just a matter of teaching Arts and Sciences together with Islamic and/or other Religious Studies, but a matter of ensuring that no harm is done to the psyche of the child regarding his Islamic Faith. Note should be taken that the educational approach of a modern school, which may be operating in an environment which is not wholly Islamic (like Nigeria's), cannot be like that of Islamic education of the past or in a wholly Muslim society. Therefore care must be taken by parents to ensure that teaching in the schools they enrol their children in do not contradict Islamic Principles. If Muslim children are to grow up in a majority non-Muslim society, their parents need to teach them to understand the society they live in and to develop an objective approach, so that they can appreciate whatever is good in that society, avoid its evils and reach out to the non-Muslims, presenting the truths of Islam in a way they can understand Islam and relate to it.

Are these rights protected under the current Almajiri System?

RIGHT TO LOVE AND TO A DECENT LIFE

Allah (SWT) has entrenched in humans, animals, birds and all living things the love of fatherhood and motherhood. The love for children is built into parent's hearts even before the children are born. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) instructed parents to show love and kindness to their children and to teach the children to do the same to others. The Prophet said, *"He is not one of us who does not have mercy for children and respect for our elders"*. (Reported by At-Tirmidhi)

It was also reported that Al-Aqra' Ibn Habis (RLA) saw the Prophet (SAW) kissing his two grandchildren, Al-Hassan and Al-Hussain (RLA) and said, "I have ten children, but I have never kissed any one of them." The Prophet said, *"He who does not show mercy (towards children), no mercy would be shown to him"* (Reported by Al-Bukhari).

Also, a Bedouin man asked the Prophet (SAW), “Do you kiss your young ones?” The Prophet (SAW) replied, “*Yes, I do*”. The Bedouin said, “We do not.” The Prophet (SAW) said to him, “*What can I do for you if Allah has removed mercy from your heart?*” (Reported by Al-Bukhari)

Islam has given children the right to a good life and ordered the father to guarantee the resources that can make the family live well. Prophet Muhammad said, “The best penny a man spends is that on his children”. Even in cases of divorce, fathers must be fully responsible for their children regarding feeding, clothing, schooling and medical expenses according to the father’s standard of life. Allah (SWT) says,

Let the man of means spend according to his means: and let the man whose resources are restricted to spend according to what Allah has given him. Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After difficulty, Allah will soon grant relief. (Qur’an 65:7)

The father in particular is ordered to ensure equality and justice between his children in particular and other members of the family in general, so as to provide them with a respectable life devoid of misery and disgrace in the wider community.

Are these rights protected under the current Almajiri System?

RIGHT TO A LIFE THAT IS DEVOID OF BEHAVIOURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

In Islam, parents must ensure that their children do not fall victims of several behavioural problems and psychological disorders that befall children; some of which afflict them throughout their lives. Such problems and disorders include aggression and lying. Parents should therefore watch out for the fundamental causes of most of the behavioural problems and psychological disorders, which include bad role models, contempt and humiliation, family problems, excessive cruelty, spoiling

children, etc. Parents and guardians must contemplate on the real causes of behavioural problems and psychological disorders that have negative impact on the upbringing of children and contain them as much as possible. Parents should note that the young child has the propensity to do both what is right and what is wrong, but the child may not know the difference between them. Hence, the methodology of reward and punishment emerges as one of the most important means of achieving a sound upbringing. The purpose of this methodology is to teach the child how to do what is right and avoid what is wrong so that the child is motivated to do the right things, while avoiding the wrong things.

Are these rights protected under the current Almajiri System?

IF ANYONE HAS A RIGHT TO BEG, IT SHOULD BE THE PARENTS AND NOT THE CHILDREN!

Children have parental rights to be breastfed as babies, to be given food as youths; and to be clothed and protected. Protection means protection against physical harm as well as against moral decadence and intellectual bankruptcy. Parents are duty bound to see that their child's personality develops in all fields, educational and otherwise. Parents must instil discipline in their children and protect them from undesirable behaviours. In a nutshell, parents have the absolute responsibility to care for their children until they grow up to adulthood for males and until they got married for females.

These are the rights of children upon their parents and NOT the other way round. Therefore, if anybody has the “**right to beg**” to satisfy the children's rights, IT IS THE PARENTS WHO SHOULD BEG AND NOT THE CHILDREN! Unfortunately for such lazy and callous parents, Islam has not given them the rights to indiscriminate begging!

CHAPTER FIVE

THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND OTHER NIGERIAN CITIZENS TO EDUCATION

In addition to the security and welfare of the people, the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) spells out education as one of the primary purposes of Government.

Therefore it is gladdening and heart warming that the Federal Government itself issued a strong acceptance of its responsibilities in the provision of education to Nigerians, particularly the young ones. The acceptance of the responsibility was made public very recently by President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR when he was inaugurating the National Economic Council (NEC) at the State House, Abuja on 21st June 2019. The NEC has the Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo SAN, as Chairman and all States Governors and other senior government functionaries as Members. President Muhammadu Buhari stated that it is a crime to keep children out of school and therefore stressed the need for the Federal and the States Governments to enforce very rigorously the statutory provisions on Free and Compulsory Basic Education. He said,

Section 18(3) of the 1999 Constitution as amended places on all of us here an obligation to eradicate illiteracy and provide free and compulsory education. Section 2 of the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act provides that every Government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age. It is therefore a crime for any parent to keep his child out of school for this period. In my view, when a government fails to provide the schools, teachers and teaching materials necessary for basic education, it is actually aiding and abetting that crime.

The President further said that, ensuring proper education during the first nine years of schooling means that the children shall start

off their lives with some discipline and education thereby safeguarded from roaming the streets, and protected from all the evil influences that assail idle hands and idle minds. The National Security Advisor Major General Babagana Monguno briefed journalists after the NEC meeting alongside the Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Adamu, Adamawa State Governor, Ahmadu Fintri, Anambra State Governor, Willie Obiano and Ondo State Governor, Rotimi Akeredolu; where he stated that,

It is very important to proscribe certain groups ultimately running around under the guise of may be getting some kind of education that is not really formal and then begin to cause a lot of problems for society. Ultimately, government will have to proscribe this Almajiri phenomenon because we cannot continue to have street urchins, children roaming around, only for them in a couple of years, or decades to become a problem to society. We are not saying that they are going to be contained in a manner that you might think we want to do something that is harmful to them, no. What we want to do is to work with the States Governments to enforce the policy of education for every child. It is every child's right, his entitlement, so long as he is a Nigerian.

In order to comprehend the importance and the essence of the Statutory provisions, below are extracts from the relevant Sections of the 1999 Constitution and the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act that were mentioned by Mr President.

Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, Chapter II - Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy:

Section 13: It shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government, and of all authorities and persons, exercising legislative, executive or judicial powers, to conform to, observe and apply the provisions of this Chapter of this Constitution.

Section 18: (1) Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.

(2) Government shall promote science and technology

(3) Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide:

(a) Free, compulsory and universal primary education;

(b) Free secondary education;

(c) Free university education; and

(d) Free adult literacy programme.

Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004, Part I

Section 1: Without prejudice to the provisions of item 30 of Part II of the Second Schedule and item 2 (a) of the Fourth Schedule to the 1999 Constitution dealing with primary school education, the Federal Government's intervention under this Act shall only be an assistance to the States and Local Governments in Nigeria for the purposes of uniform and qualitative basic education throughout Nigeria.

Section 2: (1) Every Government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and Universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age.

(2) Every parent shall ensure that his child or ward attends and completes his (a) Primary School education; and

(b) Junior Secondary School education; by endeavouring to send the child to Primary and Junior Secondary Schools

(3) The stake-holders in education in a Local Government Area, shall ensure that every parent or person who has the care and custody of a child performs the duty imposed on him under section 2 (2) of this Act

(4) A parent who contravenes section 2 (2) of this Act commits an offence and is liable (a) On first conviction, to be reprimanded;

(b) On second conviction, to a fine of N2,000.00 or imprisonment for a term of 1 month or to both; and

(c) On subsequent conviction, to a fine of N5,000.00 or imprisonment for a term of 2 months or to both.

Section 3: (1) The services provided in public primary and junior secondary schools shall be free of charge.

(2) A person who receives or obtains any fee contrary to the provisions of subsection (1) of this section commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding N10,000.00 or imprisonment for a term of 3 months or to both.

Section 4: (1) Every parent shall ensure that his child receives full-time education suitable to his age, ability and aptitude by regular attendance at school.

Section 6: The Magistrate Court or any other State Court of competent jurisdiction shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine cases arising under section 2 of this Act and to impose the punishment specified.

Section 15: In this Act -

“Basic Education” means early childhood care and education and nine years of formal schooling;

“Child or Ward” means a person of primary and junior secondary school age who is between the age of 6 years and 16 years whether disabled or not;

“Junior Secondary School” means a school which provides a three year post primary course of full-time instruction suitable for pupils between the age of twelve years and fifteen years;

“Parent” in relation to any child means the person who has the lawful custody of the child and includes a guardian or a person having the care and custody of a child;

“Primary school age” in relationship to any person means any age between the age attained by the commencement of the school year after he attains the age of six years and the age attained by the

person at the end of the school year after he attains the age of twelve years and accordingly any person shall be deemed to be of primary school age if at the commencement of any school year he has attained the age of six years and a person shall be deemed to be over primary school age if at the end of the school year he has attained the age of twelve years ;

"Primary School" means a school, which provides a six year basic course of full time instruction suitable for pupils between the age of six years and twelve years;

"Public School", "Public Primary School" or "Junior Secondary School" means a school, primary or junior secondary school, as the case may be, which is assisted with funds provided by the Federal or State Government or a Local Education Authority or a Local Government or is maintained by a Local Education Authority or a Local Government ;

"Pupil" where used without qualification, means a person of any age for whom education is provided under this Act;

"School" means a primary or junior secondary school but does not include a Class for Religious Instruction, a Trade Centre, a Training College or any other institution intended solely for the education of adults ;

"Services" that should be provided free of charge are books, instructional materials, classrooms, furniture and free lunch;

"State" includes the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja;

"Universal Basic Education" means early childhood care and education, the nine years of formal schooling, adult literacy and non-formal education, skills acquisition programmes and the education of special groups such as nomads and migrants, girl-child and women, almajiri, street children and disabled groups.

CHAPTER SIX

LONG TERM SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE ALMAJIRI SYSTEM

This Book has chronicled all the issues pertaining to the Almajiri Education System in Nigeria. The Book has answered most of the questions being raised in discourses and has presented the true perspectives on the “Makarantar Allo”, the current infamous Almajiri School System, which has been allowed to become an eyesore and a time bomb that is exploding, but which has not yet fully exploded.

For about 40 years, the discourses on the Almajiri Education System kept on raging and the attendant problems of the System kept on increasing. Thousands of problems have been identified with the System and thousands of solutions have been proposed. Despite the agreements and disagreements pertaining to the Almajiri System, scholars, supporters, opponents and commentators seem to agree on several issues. Some of the issues agreed upon, as enumerated in this Book include the following:-

1. **Islam is a Religion of Scholarship, which places the greatest possible premium on Education and abhors ignorance and illiteracy.** Islam places great premium on education as even the first prophetic message by Allah (SWT) to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was to learn, as nothing can be achieved spiritually or otherwise without knowledge. No one can worship Allah in ignorance. No one can practice any trade or profession without knowledge. In short, no one can be a successful leader, teacher, farmer, trader, engineer, etc, without knowledge. Allah (SWT) says,

***Read!** In the Name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). **Read!** And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has **taught** (the writing) by the pen. He has **taught** man that which he knew not. (Qur'an 96:1-5).*

Al-Tirmidhi reported that the Prophet (SAW) said, “*There is nothing parents can bequeath to their children that is more precious and more important than adequate **education***”.

2. **Islam is a Religion of Entrepreneurship, which entrenches hard work and frowns at laziness and idleness.** Chapter Two of this Book deals with the importance of self-sustenance through hard work and also deals with the dangers of laziness and idleness. Allah (SWT) clearly admonishes people that He will not change their bad conditions as long as they do not change their bad habits. Allah (SWT) instructs people that, when they finish praying to Him they should disperse all over the lands and seek for His Bounties, so that they may be successful and prosperous. In summary, prayers and hard work go hand-in-hand, as one cannot be achieved without the other. Allah (SWT) says,

Verily, Allah will not change the condition of a people as long as they do not change their state (of affairs) themselves (Qur'an 13:11)

And when you finish the Prayer, disperse through the lands, and seek the Bounties of Allah (by working hard, etc.), and observe the praises of Allah very much, so that you may be successful and prosperous (Qur'an 62:10)

3. **Islam Outlaws persistent begging but only allows seeking for assistance in very special cases.** Chapter Two of this Book gives full accounts on begging and spells out why persistent begging is not allowed in Islam. Persistent begging takes away all iota of dignity from a person, be he a child or an adult. Even in the special cases where seeking for assistance is permitted, Islam limits it to the immediate needs of the person and that the person should only seek for assistance from people who would understand his plight and who would not disgrace him or put him to shame.

4. **Islam places the Burden of the Family on the Parents, the Burden of the Society on its Leadership and the Burden of Trust on those entrusted with such trusts.** Chapters Three, Four and Five of this Book spell out the responsibilities and the accountability of every human being, be he/she a Muslim or a non-Muslim. Every person is like a shepherd (a guardian) and every person shall be questioned with regard to his flock. The Leader is a guardian over his people and shall be questioned about all his subjects. A Man is a guardian over the members of his family and shall be questioned about all of them. A Woman is a guardian over the household of her husband and his children and shall be questioned about all of them. A Servant is a guardian over the property of his master and shall be questioned about all of it. Indeed every one is a guardian and every one shall account to people in this World and to Allah (SWT) in the Hereafter.
5. **Nigerians must always put the Multi-Religious, Multi-Ethnic and Multi-Cultural Nature of Nigeria into Consideration in all their utterances and their actions.** Chapter Six of this Book spells out the importance of making and implementing Laws to suit Nigeria's peculiarities. Nigeria is endowed with more ethnic nationalities than any other Nation in the World. Nigerians are blessed to be the followers of the two major Religions of Islam and Christianity. The religious, cultural, ethnic, social, etc, diversities in Nigeria should be the sources of her unity and not of her disintegration. Perhaps if Nigerian Christians and Muslims, who make-up more than 90% of the Nation's population, would live strictly in accordance with the dictates of the two Great Religions, 90% of Nigeria's problems would be wiped out!

Perusing the contents of this Book and taking the above listed Five Summary Points into consideration, it is crystal clear that the best solution to the problems posed by the Almajiri Education

System today is positive tripartite action by the Parents, the Authorities and the Communities.

These tripartite actions have been proven to have effectively worked in the smooth running of the Almajiri Education System long before colonialism in the Borno and Sokoto Caliphates. It is therefore imperative for the Governments at all levels to strive to implement all existing Laws pertaining to Education and Peoples' Welfare and to ensure the effective coordination of the involvement of all stakeholders in Education. The most effective ways of achieving these are for the Governments at all levels to garner the political will to ensure that the Almajiri Education System is completely overhauled and the best current methods would be:-

1. FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS ON EDUCATION

The Federal States and Local Governments should vigorously and meticulously ensure the implementation of the wordings and the letters of Section 18 (3) of the 1999 Constitution as amended, which provides that Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels; and that Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy.

This fundamental provision is under Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution titled, "Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy". Section 13 clearly states that, "It shall be the duty and responsibility of all organs of government, and of all authorities and persons, exercising legislative, executive or judicial powers, to conform to, observe and apply the provisions of this Chapter of this Constitution". It is therefore a crime not to implement this Constitutional Provision, as personally stated by Mr President on 21st June 2019. It is unfortunate that it took the Federal Government of Nigeria 20 years, after the return of

democracy in the country to realise the importance of this constitutional provision!

2. FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPULSORY, FREE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION ACT 2004

Governments at all levels should vigorously and meticulously ensure the implementation of the wordings and the letters of the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004, which provides that every Government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age in Nigeria. This important Act was enacted in 2004 and a Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) was established since then; and billions of Naira passed to the Commission annually for the purpose of implementing the Provisions of the Act. However, the fundamental Sections 1,2,3,4 and 6, which would have taken the Almajirai off the streets 15 years ago have not been implemented! It is a crime not to implement these fundamental Provisions, as stated by Mr President on 21st June 2019

3. STATES GOVERNMENTS TO IMPLEMENT THE ABOVE LAWS AND TO MAKE LAWS TO CATER FOR THEIR PECULIAR NEEDS

States Governments should ensure the implementation of the above listed Constitutional Provision and the UBEC Law; particularly Sections 13 and 18 of Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution as amended; and Sections 1,2,3,4 and 6 of the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004. In addition States should make State Laws to cater for their peculiar academic, socio-economic and religious needs.

For example, States with high Muslim populations should make Laws and set up Government Agencies to ensure the provision of both Western and Islamic Education to their citizens. Such States, most of who are in dire need of additional sources of revenue, should also legislate on Zakaah (obligatory alms) and Waqf

(endowment) in line with Islamic Principles; thereby securing additional funds and infrastructure. Isn't it a shame on Nigerian Muslims, for example, that Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is funding Muslim Girl-Child's Education and the eradication of child-diseases, when Nigerian Muslims could easily float a similar Foundation (Waqf)? This Book gives a sample Draft Law in Chapter Eleven, which if adapted and enacted would assist such States to eliminate the Almajiri Education System Problems within a very short time.

Federal, States and Local Governments should immediately set up mechanisms (Committees, Boards, Commissions, etc) to ensure the implementation of all the Laws listed above and all other existing and proposed Laws relevant to the Almajiri Education System, Begging, Destitution and all other related issues.

It would be most advisable and most appropriate to utilise the wide ranging inherent powers and authorities of the Traditional Rulers and the Religious Leaders in these regards. This is because the Traditional Rulers and the Religious Leaders are in the best positions to ensure the smooth implementation of the Laws and to douse any tension that might arise from so doing. They are, without any iota of doubt, the best "tools and avenues" to be effectively used in these circumstances.

WHAT ARE THE PROSPECTS OF IMPLEMENTING THE ABOVE STATED IMPORTANT LAWS?

The implementation of the provisions of Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution and the implementation of the provisions of the Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004 are classified in this Book as **Long Term Solutions**. This is despite the seriousness exhibited by President Muhammadu Buhari in his June 2019 Declaration on these Laws, it is doubtful if the Government can achieve the full implementation of these Laws within the next 25 years!

And Nigeria cannot afford to wait for another 25 years to take the Almajirai off the streets! The doubts on the feasibility of

achieving the implementation of these laws within the next 25 years are hinged on the following reasons:-

Constitutional Provisions on Education

The Constitutional provision for Government to provide adequate educational opportunities at all levels has been a permanent feature of all the Nigerian Constitutions from that of 1914 to those of 1922, 1946, 1951, 1954, 1960, 1963, 1979, 1993 and 1999. For example, **the 1979 and the 1999 Constitutions have EXACTLY the same Sections 18 as follows:-**

- (1) Government shall direct its policy towards ensuring that there are equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels.
- (2) Government shall promote science and technology
- (3) Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy; and to this end Government shall as and when practicable provide:
 - (a) Free, compulsory and universal primary education;
 - (b) Free secondary education;
 - (c) Free university education; and
 - (d) Free adult literacy programme.
- (d) Free adult literacy programme.

Therefore, for more than 100 years, the same Provision on Education kept on recurring in the numerous Constitutions enacted for Nigeria. In particular, the 1999 Constitution clearly copied (word by word and number by number) the provisions of the 1979 Constitution. In effect, this means that the word by word and number by number provision has been with Nigeria for exactly 40 years (1979-2019) and there isn't much to show for it. Most surprisingly, the Federal Government seems to tell Nigerians that it is only just now that it realised the existence of this very important constitutional provision!

Provisions of the Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004

This Act clearly states that Every Government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and Universal basic education for every child of Primary and Junior Secondary School age; and that every parent shall ensure that his child or ward attends and completes his Primary School Education and Junior Secondary School Education.

Section 2 (1) of the UBE Act 2004 states that, Every Government in Nigeria shall provide free, compulsory and universal basic education for every child of primary and junior secondary school age;

Section 3 of the same Act states that, The services provided in public primary and junior secondary schools shall be free of charge;

And Section 15 of the Act states that, In this Act “Services” that should be provided free of charge are books, instructional materials, classrooms, furniture and free lunch.

Are the Nigerian Governments at all levels anywhere near the implementation of the Constitutional and Universal Free Basic Education Act’s provisions? Certainly Not! Therefore some **short term** solutions to the Almajiri Education Problems must be found and implemented.

CHAPTER SEVEN

IMMEDIATE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE ALMAJIRI SYSTEM

It is commendable that President Muhammadu Buhari made the June 2019 Declaration on solving the Problems of the Almajiri Education System through the implementation of the provisions of Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution and the implementation of the provisions of the Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004. However it is abundantly clear that, despite the stern seriousness shown by Mr President, the Government cannot achieve the full implementation of these Laws even within the next 25 years! And Nigeria cannot afford to wait for another 25 years to take the Almajirai off the streets!

The Almajirai have swarmed the society with no bearing, moving from one street to another, from one house to another and from one vehicle to another. They roam about bare footed in dirty and tattered dresses. They are malnourished with dry faces and pale and bruised skins that are filled with rashes and/or ringworms. Fifteen (15) Almajirai may be bundled in very small rooms or even in a “zaure” (house entrance room) meant for two persons and such rooms normally do not have enough windows for cross-air-ventilation. The walls of these dwellings are so cracked that they look as if they will fall the next minute, and they sometimes actually fall on these unfortunate beings. The Almajirai beg, appealing to the mercy and goodwill of the people. It is very sad when one sees these Almajirai - they are hungry, malnourished and sickly. They rush for leftover food and search through trash cans for little morsels, just to stay alive. They consume all kinds of foods, fresh or stale.

The Almajirai beggars are victims of neglect and also victims of exploitation. Some people give them a stipend or leftovers out of sympathy or after exploiting them for menial jobs. Other people abhor them, hold them with contempt and even blame them for

their helplessness. It is common to hear many scold them by saying, “*go to school*” or “*get a job*” or “*go back to your parents*”. Begging takes away all iota of dignity from a person, be he/she a child or an adult. The bastardising effect suffered by the Almajiri Education System subjected it to all forms of decadence. The Almajirai are being abused and disgraced. Unscrupulous politicians use them as political thugs; child traffickers harness their susceptibility and most disheartening, the insurgency in the North East and the banditry in the North West are said to utilize the vulnerability of these indigent set of humans in perpetrating their mayhem. The beautiful Religion of Islam that abhors laziness and begging and that institutionalises hard work and self-dependence under the provisions of the Glorious Qur’an and the Hadith, is now the culprit. Islam is being blamed and is being castigated for the unfortunate plight of the miserable Almajirai.

In these regards, something fast must be done. **An immediate solution** is inevitable to save these poor souls from further torture and bastardisation; and to save the nation from the full explosion of the “Almajiri Time Bomb”; the clock on which is ticking fast! A general consensus is that, the following are fully responsible for the Almajiri menace and therefore should be fully responsible for tackling it:-

1. The Parents of the Almajirai

2. The Societies in which the Almajirai reside

3. The Governments

The Parents are normally placed first as they have the first and ultimate responsibility of their children and wards. The Societies are placed next as they have the duty to cleanse their communities. The Governments are normally placed last. But cognisance should be taken of the fact that the Government is the only one that can enforce Laws and ensure that the parents take responsibility of their children and wards and that the societies perform their social responsibilities, like the payment of Zakaah

in Muslim communities. Indeed the Government must provide an enabling environment for others to effectively perform their functions and duties as and when due.

As stated earlier, the Federal, States and Local Governments should endeavour to immediately commence the full implementation of the Constitutional Provision and the UBEC Law on Education; particularly Sections 13 and 18 of Chapter II of the 1999 Constitution as amended; and Sections 1,2,3,4 and 6 of the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004. But it must be recognised that these two Laws are meant to cover the whole Nigerian Nation that is habited by Muslims and non-Muslims. It must also be recognised that the two Laws can only serve as **long term measures**, as it would certainly take between 25 and 50 years to see to their full fruition. Therefore some States that have the preponderance of the Almajiri Problems and in particular have majority Muslim populations should enact Laws to provide for **an immediate response**.

In these regards, a **LAW** for the establishment of **ALMAJIRI RIGHTS AND DESTITUTION COMMISSION** should be enacted at Federal Level with provisions for the desiring States to domesticate the Law to serve their socio-cultural and religious peculiarities.

Note should be taken that there is a Bill for an Act of the National Assembly to provide for the establishment of the “**NATIONAL COMMISSION ON CHILD DESTITUTION IN NIGERIA AND FOR OTHER CONNECTED PURPOSES**”. It was sponsored by 27 Distinguished Senators. The Bill passed its Second Reading on 7th February 2018 and was referred to the Committee on Establishment and Public Service Matters to study and report back to the Senate in 4 weeks. It has not yet been reported back, seven years after!

REFERENCES

1. AbdulQadir I. A. (2003); *The Almajiri System of Education in Nigeria today*; (www.gamji.com) presented at the 21st convocation of Bayero University Kano.
2. Abdurrahman, M. And P. Canhan (1978), *The Ink of the Scholar*, Ibadan: Heinemann.
3. Ardo, G.V. and Junaid, M.I. (1990). *Education in the Sokoto Caliphate: Continuity and Change*, in A.M. Kani and HK.A. Gandi (eds.), *State and Society in the Sokoto Caliphate*, Zaria: Gaskiya Corporation.
4. Carra de Vaux in *The Philosophers of Islam*, Paris, 1921
5. Clarke, P.B. (1982), *West Africa and Islam: A History of Religious Development from the 8th Century to 20th Century*, London: Edward Arnold.
6. Encarta Standard Encyclopaedia
7. Encyclopaedia Americana
8. Encyclopaedia Britannica
9. Encyclopaedia Iranica, Vol. 11; Ed. Ehsan Yarshater, New York (2003)
10. Fafunwa, A.B. (1974), *History of Education in Nigeria*, London: Lowe and Brydon Ltd.
11. Fage, J.D. *A History of West Africa*, Cambridge University Press 1969
12. Gommen T. I & Esomchi, O. S (2017); *Nigeria: Breeding Future Terrorists: A Study of Almajiri of Northern Nigeria and Islamist Militia*; Conflict Studies Quarterly Issue 18
13. Guinness Book of World Records
14. Hart, Michael H., *The 100: A Ranking Of The Most Influential Persons In History* Originally published: New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1978 ISBN 0-8065-1348-8 and Revised by Carol Publishing Group Edition - 1993 Copyright © 1978, 1992 by Michael H. Hart
15. Hiskett, M. (1975), *Islamic Education in the Traditional and State System in Northern Nigeria* in G. Brown and M. Hiskett (eds.), *Conflict and Harmony in Education in Tropical Africa*, London: George Allen and Unwin.
16. Kano State (1988), *Report of the Committee on Almajirai* Kano Government Printer.

17. Khalid, S. (2002), *Institutional Support for Muslim Educational Reform in Nigeria*, a Paper presented at the International Workshop, organised by the International Institute of Islamic Thought (Nigeria Office), 22nd-23rd April 2002
18. Khalid, S. (2002), *Trends and Tensions in Religious Education: The Almajiranci System in a Modernizing Socio-Economic Order*, Paper presented at the National Workshop on Religious Pluralism and Democratic Governance in Nigeria, organised by Centre for Research and Documentation (CRD), held at Kano, 13-15th August 2002
19. Khalid, S. (2014) *Karatun Allo: The Islamic System of Elementary Education In Hausaland. Relevance, Balance and Integration of the Content of General Education: Achievements, Trends and Issues A Synthesis*. UNESCO Institute for Education (1990)
20. Lemu, S.A. (1994), *An Approach to the Development of Qur'anic Schools in the Contemporary Society*; Paper presented at the National Seminar on Qur'anic Education organised by NTIL, UNICEF, held at Kaduna.
21. Mones, H., *The conquest of North Africa and Berber Resistance*, in M. Elfasi, ed., *General History of Africa, Africa from the Seventh to the Eleventh Century*, UNESCO edition, Chapter 9, 1988
22. Sulaiman, M.D. (1992), *Towards a New Social Order in Kano: A Re-Examination of the Almariranci System*, in A.H. Yadudu (ed.), *The Conceptive and Implementation of A Social Policy: Kano State Experience*, Kano: B.U.K. Press
23. Taiwo, F.J (2013). *Transforming the Almajiri Education for the Benefit of the Nigerian Society*, *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, Vol.3 No.9
24. Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopaedia