

CARE CONTINUITY CHALLENGE INITIATIVE

DISCUSSIONS ON THE CHILD – PART ONE



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CHILD?

At Fair Life Africa Foundation, we are concerned for the empowerment of all people, particularly the less privileged in society. Through our Care Continuity Challenge Initiative for street children, we are focusing on those young persons, youths under 18 years of age, who have found themselves homeless on the streets for one reason or the other.

Often, when we hear the word 'child', we are compelled to feel a number of things... It may be care, sympathy or concern. It sometimes is annoyance and burden, depending on our experience of and with children. But usually, there is a sense of responsibility among adults in the company of children. We feel the need to protect and provide for them, because we know they need us to care for them. But is that what it means to be a child?

For a child, their experience of being called a child is completely different. They may have a positive perception of childhood as a time of play, fun, attention and carefreeness. Or they may see it as a derogatory label of inferiority, helplessness and inadequacy, when they are often told they can't do one thing or the other that they believe they can and want to do. No wonder many children want to grow up too fast, want to be seen as 'grown ups', and even play with dolls and teddies who they themselves 'baby'.

All that being said, childhood is a condition neither children nor adults can help. And adulthood is one none can avoid, if they are to live long! There are benefits in childhood, but also disadvantages too. One obvious disadvantage is that children are never independent. Even if they wanted to work for themselves, and look after themselves, the law and the social framework do not allow it. They are prone to abuse and exploitation, by the very nature of their youth, which they cannot help. That is why the law makes every effort to protect the child against the abuse of his or her rights.

For the law to be enforced, a legal age must be reached for a child to cross into adulthood. That universal age is 18 years, even though the age of consent for many things concerning children and adults (including marriage and criminality) varies from 10 years to 21 years in various lands. In Nigeria, the Child's Right Act 2003 says that a child is a person who is under 18 years old. In the Act, which was made law in Lagos in 2007, children have several rights and responsibilities. One of their principal rights is to be educated. They are also to be protected from abuse and exploitation, and have a right to life, as every human does.

Childhood is a time many of us run through in our haste to become adults, but often look back on wishing we had taken the time to play, learn and experience more. Unfortunately, many don't have positive memories of their childhood, due to poverty and disadvantage. At Fair Life Africa, we seek to redeem the lost childhood of the child on the street, opening them up to a world of opportunities.

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At Fair Life Africa Foundation, we are supporting homeless and runaway children to redeem their childhood, empowering them with skills and opportunities that will enable them to survive and thrive in a competitive world. We are looking for like-minded, passionate friends, who are willing to give a little of their time, money and skills to impact their world more positively. You can be the change you seek. Change a child's life today.

Call: **08058711125** Email: contact@fairlifeafrica.org

