



NIGERIAN JOURNAL OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Volume 2, Numbers 2

October 2003

ISSN 0189 - 5958

In this issue

Notion of Sustainability of Development: A
Relevance to Short
Onyukwu E. Onyukwu

Consequences of Fertilizer Subsidy Remo
Local Government
Mgbada J.U

Emergent Factors in Women's Labour F
Environments
Ngozi Egbue

Social Correlates of Malnutrition: A Case Study of the Under-fives in Park Lane
Hospital, Enugu
Flora O. Ntunde

Challenging Traditional Research Assumptions in Industrial/Organisation Psychology as
Applicable in Nigeria
Bernard Anikene

✓ Child Survival as a Factor in National Development: Problems and Prospects
Alexander Aniche

Socio-Cultural Role of Body Beauty Arts in the Education Process
Rosemary O. Igbo.

The Social Correlates of Supports for State Laws: Analysis of Some Variables
Eddiefloyd M. Igbo

Women and Political Participation in Enugu State
Emma Chukwuemeka

Psychosocial Stress and Adolescents' Drug Use
Leonard I. Ugwu

CHILD SURVIVAL AS A FACTOR IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS.

Aniche Alexander¹

Child Survival has to do with programmes designed to sustain the efforts made towards a drastic reduction in the child mortality in a nation. It is a veritable instrument, which guarantees the total elimination of childhood diseases and an assurance for the future and steady growth of the children. A nation with a vibrant child survival scheme has a lot to reap from such a scheme because it creates a veritable avenue for future development of human resources, which is one of the most propelling factors in the development of a nation.

In Nigeria, many child survival programmes are geared towards the attainment of total eradication of disease that affect children at the early stages of their lives. The eradication of the childhood diseases in Nigeria is an on going exercise and immunization protects the children from the attack of diseases, especially the six deadly diseases.

Thus, the importance of child survival programmes for the welfare of the children cannot be over emphasized. There is need to examine child survival as a factor in national development. This will enable us have more insight into the problems and prospects of the programmes and suggest ways for improvement in order to ensure meaningful national development.

Introduction

Human development starts from the on set of conception and at this stage, it appears that the responsibility of the child survival is left with the mothers. Also the growth to adulthood is allowed to the parent to manage but in all, one cannot isolate the fact that for any nation to develop the manpower need of that nation must be guaranteed. This cannot be done without measures aimed at protecting the young ones from every death and disease affliction. This brings to focus the need for an effective child survival programme in any given society, Nigeria inclusive.

An aggressive child survival programme creates an avenue for the future development of human resources for national development. Eradication of childhood diseases in Nigeria is an on going exercise. Immunization protects the child from the attack of such diseases as diarrhea, poliomyelitis etc. Many attempts have being made by the successive administrations in Nigeria in this regard, the success or otherwise are what is agitating the minds of every body. Thus, the need for this work to examine the problems and prospects of child survival programmes and their role in national development.

A nation's future development and progress is assured when that nation has programmatic programme for her child survival. Child survival has to do with those programmes that are designed to ensure that child mortality is grossly reduced to smallest level within a given society. There is no gain saying that a nation with a vibrant child survival scheme has a lot to reap from such a scheme because it creates a veritable avenue for future development of human resources, which is one of the propelling factors in the economic and social growth of any nation.

In this regard, Nigeria is not left out in the struggle to save her children from early death and disease afflictions. Many programmes geared towards the attainment of total eradication of diseases that affect children at the early stage of their lives are ready in place. These programmes include immunization programme, campaign to creates awareness on the method of child nutrition application as well as the creating of clean environment for proper up bringing of the children.

¹ *Lecture Department Of Sociology/Anthropology, Enugu State University Of Science And Technology, Enugu*

Immunization and child nutrition play an important role in the survival of a child. For instance, if this case of nutrition is considered, one will discover that nutrition is important to a child as early as when the child is still in the mother's womb. The intending mother is expected to have a balance diet while expecting her baby. The mother is expected to know what is good for her body and what will be adequate for her and her unborn child. Also important at this at this stage is the immunization against certain diseases, which the mother is expected to undergo while expecting a baby. Such immunization as anti-tetanus injection or tetanus toxoid (T.T) is administered to the expectant mothers. This vaccine protects the mother from being attacked by tetanus, which will have a direct effect on the unborn baby. It became an obligation for any expectant mother to undergo such immunization exercise to ensure an early protection for her child.

At birth again nutrition and immunization come in as important factors for the future survival of the child. Proper nutrition will help the child to grow mentally, physically, intellectually and otherwise. It will also help the child's immune system to fight diseases such as diarrhea and other childhood diseases. A child who is on a perfect diet does not sick often. On immunization, the UNICEF, a United Nation Organization, whose primary role is to ensure the survival of the children of member countries has lined up a number of programmes aimed at protecting children from early childhood diseases such as poliomyelitis, whooping cough, measles etc. These preventive vaccines are administered to the baby from the day the baby is born to prevent these diseases from attacking the baby.

In order to facilitate the effectiveness of these vaccines, UNICEF established in each of the local government areas in the federation a national programme on immunization (NPI) offices with a trained public health officer as the NPI manager. These offices undertake the periodic immunization of children against deadly diseases. The office also undertakes enlightenment campaign to rural areas to educate them on the need and importance of immunization programmes. The UNICEF launched the Expanded Programme on Immunization in Nigeria. The programme was launched on the 14th December, 1984, as a measure to arrest the occurrence of six deadly diseases that are disturbing the children of 1-2years of age. The diseases are whooping cough, measles, diphtheria, tuberculosis, tetanus and poliomyelitis. In the urban areas, health centers are located in various parts, making it available to any nursing mother to be able to utilize the facilities without paying any money. The NPI office maintains statistics on the extent of coverage attained within a given immunization exercise and as well ascertain the outstanding area coverage. Therefore, this work examines the need for the child survival programme at the first instance and the problems and prospects of the programme for concrete national development

According to Onwudiwe (1981), child survival programme is defined as "programmes designed to sustain the efforts made towards a drastic reduction in the child mortality in a given society". Delivering a key note address in a workshop organized for local government health workers responsible for the execution of national immunization programme in Enugu state, the state mass program on immunization manager, Mr. Akpa described child survival scheme as "a veritable instrument which guarantees the total elimination of childhood diseases that give an assurance for the future and steady growth of the young ones. Any nation without a scheme that focuses on the survival of their children, cannot expect miracle to occur in the area of development of human resources, since the children of today are the adults of tomorrow".

Similarly, Ezedano (1997) sees child survival programme as the orbit upon which any other health programmes revolves; for a child must survive first before encountering any health problems, for if he dies, any health arrangement for him is wasteful. Kuti (1989) described child survival as "an obligation a nation owes to her citizenry and must strive not to fail in meeting

with such an obligation because it is considered as the right to every child of that nation. He emphasized that every adult should concern himself with the necessary steps taken to ensure that their children live, because we cannot guarantee the future growth of Nigeria if we neglect these all important and vital scheme". Ibekwe (1996) described child survival programme as "The only guarantee a nation can give to her unborn children" and that any nation with vibrant child survival programme enjoys a brighter and prosperous future in term of national development.

Nutrition as a Factor of Child Survival

Ibekwe (1996) defined nutrition as "the process of giving or receiving nourishment to a child or children. It has to do with those food items that make the child grow well when adequately provided. He further emphasized that nutrition is one of the earliest problems that a child encounters, nutritional problems start from the time the baby is in the mother's womb". The type of food the mother eats determines the health standard of the child in the womb. This is so because the baby depends on what the mother feeds on for its development. If therefore, the mother feeds on non-nutritious food, the baby will, at the same time, get a non-nutritious food from the mother and may end up facing a malnutrition problem even before the baby is born. But on the other hand, if the mother's feeding pattern is adequate and balanced, the baby will enjoy a balanced and adequate food through the mother and will not encounter any problem on delivery. Problems encountered on delivery are more dependent on nutrition alone.

Writing on the benefits derivable from proper nutrition, Madubukwe (1996), emphasized that the proper development of a child has a serious link with the standard of food or diet being introduced to the child. If the child will assume a diet, the growth of the child will assumed a proper balance and will not be easily attacked by early childhood diseases as the body immune system will always protect the child. An instance could be given on this point, if child is born, the mother should place it on breast feeding for the next six months without even water, by this arrangement, the child will be protected from the attack of the usual childhood diseases, this is so because the mother's breast milk contains the essential ingredient a baby requires for him to grow normally. At the end of six months a complementary food will be introduced as the breast milk can no longer sustain the baby, such as corn pap with red oil, grinded groundnut, grinded crayfish etc.

Nutrition is understood to form a greater part of the proper development of the child. According to Ajayi (1997) "Good nutrition ensures sustainable development in the life of a child. Growing child demands a balanced and adequate nutrition to be able to have a proper mental and physical development, for if any child has no proper nutrition, he will not have a good mental development. Ajayi (1997) went further to emphasize that "the problems with most homes today with regards to nutrition are sub divided into two; first for those at the rural areas, they suffer the problem of ignorance on the basic nutritional values around them and secondly those at the urban suffer from chronic problem of poverty and inadequate nutritional values".

Also prominent is the need for education and the enlightenment of the populace on the need for every parent to be aware of the importance of nutrition. Ibekwe (1996) emphasized the need for such enlightenment when she stated, "every body, be you at the rural area or at the urban center ought to know everything about nutrition.

The Importance of Breastfeeding in Child Survival and Development

Nwafor (1995) described breastfeeding as "a very advantageous way of feeding a new born baby because it is dependent both on the composition of the breast milk which remains relatively constant and in a perfect condition for a baby whether the mother is ill, pregnant, menstruating

or malnourished. That is to say that the variations in composition of breast milk during pregnancy, menstruation or malnourishments in the mother is so insignificant that it would not warrant discontinuation of breastfeeding for any reasons. Nwafor further emphasized that breastfeeding and breast milk have the following benefits:

- I. Breast milk is clean and free of such bacteria as can make a baby ill, because the breast milk goes directly from the nipples into the baby's mouth and on to the stomach. There is no opportunity for it to be contaminated by disease causing organisms.
- II. Breastfeeding babies have less diarrhea, respiratory and middle ear infection. Infections generally set babies back in growth both directly and indirectly through causing malnutrition.
- III. Because breastfed infants have fewer infections, they grow better and more steadily, gaining weight appropriately.
- IV. Breastfeeding is cheap and so can be afforded by even the poorest person in any community.
- V. The art of breastfeeding when carried out on demand provides the mother a fairly reliable degree of contraception. Most mothers who breastfeed more than 8-12 times within 24 hours do not get pregnant especially when the baby is on exclusive breastfeeding, etc. It is noteworthy that these benefits of breast feeding increase with increase exclusiveness of breastfeeding".

Immunization, a Tool for an Effective Child Survival Exercise

According to Akpa (1996) "Nigeria is a signatory to the declaration of the survival, protection and development of children which was articulated by the World Health Assembly in 1988 and reinforced by the World Summit for the Children held in New York in United States of America in 1990. Akpa (1996) explained that this declaration established challenges for the global immunization, which includes eradication of deadly diseases such as poliovirus, whooping cough, measles and tuberculosis from the world by the year 2000". He emphasized that to meet with the set out target, the following strategies were packaged:

1. Every nation should organize National Immunization Days (NIDS)
2. Put in place a strong routine immunization programme.
3. Should place a high quality surveillance to detect all cases of acute flaccid paralysis and confirm whether they are polio or other related deadly diseases.
4. Mopping up immunization when poliovirus a very deadly childhood disease is circulating only in focal areas"

Ezeano (1997) outlined the strategies in Nigeria to protect the child right from conception about a year after delivery, and these includes:

- i. Anti-tetanus vaccine administered to an expectant mother
- ii. B. C. G, (Bacilli Calmate Guerine), which is vaccinated at birth to a baby against tuberculosis.
- iii. 1st triple vaccine six weeks after birth
- iv. 2nd triple vaccine 10 weeks after birth
- v. 3rd triple vaccine 14 weeks after birth.
- vi. Anti-measles at the 9th month etc.

These precautions are taken to save the child from the attack of the known childhood diseases, which are prevalent in Nigeria today

Ezeano (1997) concludes that immunization programme is considered as one of the prominent programmes by any government, be it at the federal, state and local government levels, aimed at

making sure that a greater number of children are injected with disease preventive vaccines to guide against their early death”.

Problems Of Immunization

It is generally understood that with a complete immunization in our children the degree of survival of these children are usually high, but these laudable programmes have been facing a lot of set back which is as a result of militating problems. It is easily observed that most people do not make use of the basic nutritious food. Some parents do not take their children to immunization centers during the period of programme, poor execution of the programme leading to unattainment of the expected coverage level. There are uncovered cases of malnutrition and out break of deadly diseases, which attack the children. Delivering a lecture in a seminar organized for local government managers of Mass Programme on Immunization (MPI) in Enugu State, Akpa (1997) lamented “Executive of MPI programme in the state and attainment of the target percentage coverage for the state is facing the following problems:

1. Funding: According to Akpa (1997) “in spite of the fact that most of the drugs and vaccines used in the programme are obtained free, lack of fund for the procurement of essential materials and equipment such as refrigerator to preserve the vaccines, coolers to carry them to locations of the immunization, vehicles, etc. is a problem. He urged the government to make enough funds available for effective implementation.
2. The next important problems here are lack of workers, transportation and fund. The transportation and the fund to reach the people in the rural areas constitute a lot of problems that many rural areas have never efficiently schooled on this programme.
3. Trained health officers: he also pointed out that lack of trained health officers in most local governments and states have been a major constraints to sponsor training programmes to enhance the performance of the staff in the implementation of immunization programme which will give the much desired result”.

Problems of Administration of Proper Nutrition in Nigerian Families

Ibekwe (1996) identified the problems of nutrition in Nigeria in two broad categories:

- i. Those families residing in the urban cities.
- ii. Those living in the rural areas.

According to Ibekwe (1996) those at the urban cities have poverty as their problems. The awareness of what to do or eat is usually available, but the money to buy them are not there due to poor remunerations and income which is the off-shoot of the poor nature of the national economy. The urban dwellers have the potentialities and knowledge to select the best diet for their families.

For those at the rural areas, the story is different. According to Ibekwe (1996) lack of the basic knowledge of what constitute a proper diet is their own problem. Ibekwe (1996) asserted an instance where a woman from rural areas carry a basket full of green vegetables to market, only to come back with a small tuber of yam. There are other women who trade on *okpa*, sell out the entire wares without leaving any behind for their children, claiming that other women will make mockery of them without knowing the nutritious values of *okpa* and the given vegetable”.

Going through the observation of Ibekwe (1996) one will come to conclusion that for an effective application of nutritious meals to our growing children, extra efforts should be made to enlighten and educate our rural dwellers on basic diet to administered to their children. To the urban dwellers, some of the affordable food are cheap to get complete diet. To carry out these assignments, Ibekwe observed that her unit has a lot of setbacks, principally lack of mobility to

go at the rural areas and carry out the enlightenment programme at various parts. She promised that if adequate logistic facilities are provided, her unit is capable of carrying the campaign to every part of the state no matter how remotely situated.

Prospects of Child Survival Programme in Nigeria

The survival of Nigerian child is of great importance to every body in Nigeria today. The complete and effective child survival scheme in Nigeria is possible but not without stronger and greater efforts than what it used to be in the past. Without prejudice, the programmes have achieved a lot of progress this time compared to 1985 to 1986. Child survival programme are very important and will continue to play a crucial role in saving the lives of the children who are the leaders of tomorrow. There is likelihood that child survival will continue to gain ground as parents become aware of the importance of the programmes and make use of them for their children. People are now responding to child survival programme and government should see that they continue to play a crucial role for the success and progress of the programme.

Conclusion

In conclusion, for an effective child survival programme in Nigeria, positive steps must be taken to educate the populace on the benefits of giving their families nutritional food, what constitutes a balanced diet and what to be taken at every meal and how to take it.

Awareness campaign should be mounted to tell people the various nutritious foods around them, which are cheap and affordable. Efforts should be made towards enlightening the people on danger of not immunization a child at every stage of the child's development or taking the children to immunization centers for immunization during immunization days for preventing one deadly disease or the other. Government on their part should try to fund immunization programme, provide the necessary human and material resources to enable the exercise to be carried out effectively.

Attempts should be made to persuade the notable United Nations bodies such as UNICEF to put up more programmes in order to enhance the effective and proper implementation of the child survival programmes in the country. This they can do by making provision for such materials as the drugs at a subsidized rate, equipment, organizing the staff to carry out programmes etc. Health workers also should endeavor to equip themselves with necessary knowledge to be able to know what to teach or educate others, this will eliminate the problem of giving wrong information to the ignorant people. Parents on their part should take the issue for child survival serious because the lives of children are entrusted to them. National Development cannot succeed without human resources. Thus, the welfare of the children who are leaders of tomorrow should be given adequate attention.

References

- Akpa, G. (1997). "The Need for Proper Execution of National Immunization". A Paper Presented during the Workshop on Immunization for Local Government Health Workers, March 17, Enugu
- Anyaji, E. (1997). *Problems of Poor Nutrition in Nigerian Homes*. Enugu: Five Senses Printing Press.
- Bowlby, J. A. (1962). "Deprivation of Maternal Care: A Reassessment of its Effects". *W.H.O. Public Health Paper*. No. 14
- Ezeano, P. (1997) *Effective Child Survival Programme in Enugu State*, Enugu: Fourth Dimension.
- Ibekwe, N. (1996). "Nutrition": *A Basic Necessity For Human Existence*. Enugu: Liberty Press.
- Kuti, A. (1989). "Child Survival Strategy": *A Way out*. John and May Printing Press.
- Macualy, J. (1994). *Motherhood and Childcare*, Tien: Ghana Publishing Co.
- Madubukwe, I. (1996). *The Benefits of Proper Nutrition*, Nsukka: Liberty Press
- Nwafor, F. O. (1994). *Successful Breastfeeding*. Onitsha: Liho Prints.