

**LEAD DEBATE ON A BILL FOR AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON CHILD
DESTITUTION IN NIGERIA (2017)**

Sponsored by: Senator Aliyu M. Wamakko (Sokoto North)

Mr President, Distinguished Colleagues, permit me to lead the debate on the general principles of the Bill for an Act to Provide for the Establishment of the National Commission on Child Destitution in Nigeria which I, along with 28 other Distinguished Senators, am sponsoring.

The Bill was read for the first time in this Chamber on Tuesday, 6th July, 2017.

Essentially, the Bill seeks to provide for an act to provide for the establishment of the National Commission on Child Destitution in Nigeria to serve as an intervention programme to eradicate, rehabilitate and prohibit the menace of Child Destitution in Nigeria.

Mr President, the need for an Act to establish the Commission cannot come at a better time, and it is in accordance with sections 16 (1) (d), (2) (d) and sections 17 (3) (e), (f) and 18 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

We are all living witnesses to the negative consequences of child destitution to the society, particularly over the last 10 years. The malady of child destitution in Nigeria, has aggravated the menace of Boko Haram, provided fodder for political violence and militancy, provided willing foot soldiers to ethno-religious crisis and acted as catalyst to a variety of other social problems.

Mr President, we can ill afford to look on while our society totters towards destructive tendencies as a result of destitute children who grow into adulthood with nothing to lose even if the society conflagrates. As the conscience of our democracy, we must ensure, without equivocation, every child destitute grows into adulthood, educated, ambitious, purposeful, and with a sense of belonging.

These destitute children are out of school, and according to available UNICEF statistics, there are over 10.5million out of school children in Nigeria. Of the 10.5 million children in the country who are out of school, 60 percent are in the North. It is no wonder then that given the ecological problem of desertification and rural-

urban drift in the North, groups like the Boko Haram have ceaseless army of uneducated, hopeless and rejected youths to recruit from.

A 2014 Special Report of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) titled 'Why Do Youth Join Boko Haram?' states that surveys, interviews, and focus groups conducted in Nigeria in 2013 suggest that poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and weak family structures make or contribute to making young men vulnerable to radicalization. Itinerant preachers capitalize on the situation by preaching an extreme version of religious teachings and conveying a narrative of the government as weak and corrupt. Armed groups such as Boko Haram can then recruit and train youth for activities ranging from errand running to suicide bombings.

Mr President, Distinguished Senators, an act to provide for the establishment of the National Commission on Child Destitution would address the maladies associated with child destitution. The Commission shall have powers to: draw up generally acceptable guidelines on how to eradicate child destitution; draw up an acceptable curriculum of activities for destitute children; disburse funds and monitor proper utilization; and, do anything which in the opinion of the Commission is necessary to ensure efficient performance of its functions under the Act.

Mr President, distinguished colleagues, the objectives and functions of this Commission which the Bill seeks to address are among others:

1. Formulate policy guidelines and strategies for the successful eradication of child destitution in Nigeria;
2. Organize mass sensitization campaign to enlighten the society on the dangers of child destitution throughout Nigeria;
3. Advise the Federal Government on the funding and orderly rehabilitation of victims of child destitution;
4. Identify and coordinate the activities of stakeholders who are directly involved in the practice of all forms of institutionalized child destitution with a view to reforming it;

5. Collate and prepare after consultation with States and Local Governments and other relevant stakeholders, periodic master plans for the total eradication of child destitution in Nigeria including areas of possible intervention in early childhood care and development centers; and
6. Recommend to the Federal Government the possibilities of co-opting identified Destitute Children Education Centers into the Federal Government Compulsory Free Universal Basic Education.

The commission, again, will create an avenue for rehabilitation and resettlement in terms of educational institutions, empowerment in skills acquisition etc. for these under privileged children who find themselves in this unfortunate situation.

Mr President, distinguished senators, other highlights of the Bill include the establishment and maintenance of a fund by the commission which shall consist of-

1. Initial takeoff grant from the federal government;
2. Annual subvention from the government;
3. States counterpart funding to be deducted at source at 0.5% of their statutory allocation;
4. 1.0% of the Education Tax Fund and UBEC Fund;
5. Subject to section 12 of the Act, all other sums accruing to the Commission by way of grants-in-aid, gift, testamentary dispositions, endowments and donations made to the Commission;
6. Such other sums as may accrue from time to time, to the Commission.

Mr President, distinguished colleagues, the continued existence of this menace is fraught with attendant social, educational, economic and legal implications for our society some of which are as follow:

1. Trafficking in children and exposing them to dangers of negative influence of the society;
2. Contravening the Child Labour Act by allowing these children take to menial jobs in socially hostile environments to make a living;
3. Contravening the constitutional provision for the Federal Government's Compulsory Free Universal Basic Education to enable these children become useful citizens to the nation;
4. Destroying the moral psyche of these children by exposing them to the negative influence of social vices. This makes them willing tools in the hands of Prostitutes, Robbers, Drug peddlers/addicts and other social miscreants, thereby adding the number of criminals in our society and the contravention of relevant sections of the Criminal and Penal Codes;
5. Exposing them to political violence and ready tools for mob action in the event of social unrest;
6. Multiplying the number of unemployed and retarding the Federal Government's drive for skills acquisition in the society.

Mr President, Distinguished Senators, establishing the Commission on Child Destitution cannot come at a better time than now when our beloved nation is battling with one social crisis or another. I implore you to, in good conscience, appreciate the gravity of the situation and consider this Bill for the good of humanity and our future generation.

In line with Order 77 (3) of our Standing Orders, the financial compendium for the establishment of this Commission is hereby attached.

I pray for an expedited consideration and thank you for your kind attention.

COMPENDIUM ON A BILL FOR AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON CHILD DESTITUTION BILL, 2018 (SB. 518).

In compliance with Order 77(3) of the Standing Rules of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with respect to the procedure of Bills, Compendium and Consolidation, which states inter alia that "On the introduction of a Bill, a compendium of background information and financial implications of such Bills if passed into Law shall be delivered to all Senators", the following compilation with regard to the aforementioned Bill is herewith presented for the general information of senators.

It is worthy of note that the compilation shown below is a summary of the anticipated recurrent and capital expenditure in the first twelve months immediately following the commencement of this Bill.

TOTAL PROJECTIONS/ESTIMATES FOR THE RCURRENT AND CAPITAL EXPENDITURE FOR THE COMMISSION IN THE FIRST TWELVE MONTHS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING COMMENCEMENT

	₦
1. Projected Recurrent Expenditure (Salaries and allowances of Personnel)	540,100,115.20
2. Projected Recurrent Expenditure (Maintenance of vehicles, management costs of offices and Other contingency)	175,700,000.00
3. Estimated Capital Expenditure (Office accommodation, furniture, etc.	300,000,000.00
Estimated Capital Expenditure (Purchase of vehicles)	274,000,000.00
Total Projected/Estimated Costs for First Year of Commencement of the Agency	₦1, 189, 800,115.20

SURMISES

The forgoing compilation proffers a fair approximation of the financial implications for the establishment of the Commission in the first year immediately following commencement.

To all intents and purposes, the financial outlay estimated and projected for the Commission is a modest one. Appropriate for the effective discharge and performance of the duties contemplated in the Bill.