

State, Governance, and Insecurity in Nigeria: Issues, Perspectives and Challenges

Edited by

Hassan A. Saliu, Ph.D.
Fatai A. Aremu, Ph.D.
Abadulrasheed A. Muhammad, Ph.D.
Joshua O. Durojaiye

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Published by Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin, Nigeria
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ISBN: 978-978-984-494-4

PREFACE

This book is the output of our 2nd National Conference held on the 23rd November 2016. Deeply concerned about happenings in our society and in fulfilment of our role as academics, the Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, organized a National Conference on the theme 'State, Governance, and Insecurity in Nigeria' in order to brain-storm on the challenges confronting the Nigerian state with regard to governance and insecurity. We believe, in not just identifying the source(s) of challenges but proffering solutions as a step in moving our country forward because the issues that were engaged with at the conference are germane to the corporate survival of the Nigerian state. The conference, which were held on November 23rd, 2016, was declared open by the Vice-Chancellor of University of Ilorin, Professor Abdulganiyu Ambali, OON. He was represented by the Deputy Vice-chancellor (Academic), Professor (Mrs) N. Y. S. Ijaiya who gave the opening remarks. A keynote address was given by the President of Nigerian Political Science Association, NPSA, Professor Shuaibu Ibrahim while the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor B. Salawu, represented by Professor G. T. Arosanyin, gave the welcome address.

In his welcome address, the Acting Head of Department of Political Science, Dr. A. A. Muhammad, noted that the conference was timely considering the series of complexities in Nigeria's governance environment that require attention from both the state and the citizens. The conference thus, drew participants from across the entire nation comprising academics and policy practitioners. Students were not left out and as such, the conference was all-inclusive. The lead paper was delivered by Professor E. Ezeani while keynote papers were delivered by Professors R. Ayo Dunmoye and H. A. Saliu and they all engaged the theme of the conference from different perspectives. Thereafter, the conference broke into panels to discuss different sub themes. The conference came to a close with a communique calling on all stakeholders to be alive to their responsibility.

Several papers were delivered at the conference. However, a few of the papers are published in this edited volume. This is because the papers at the conference went through a phased review process to arrive at the ones

that are published now. First, paper presenters were asked to incorporate observations and comments they received during the presentation of their papers and re-submit them to the organizers. Not all paper presenters re submitted their papers. Thereafter, the papers that were re submitted were sent out for anonymous review by two reviewers for each paper. Those adjudged publishable after the review were sent back to the author(s) to effect corrections. The papers in this book are the ones that were returned by the authors. It is after this that the editors did the editorial work before bringing out this publication.

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2nd February, 2017.

DEDICATION

To all staff and students of the Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin and to all individuals that are committed to the attainment of good governance and security in Nigeria

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the process of bringing this project to fruition, God has been wonderful to us as a department. But there are also individuals whose efforts should be acknowledged because without their inputs in one way or the other, this project may not have seen the light of the day. We are grateful to the University administration for their moral and financial support right from the planning stage to the point of execution. These include the Vice-chancellor, Deputy Vice-chancellors, Registrar and other principal officers of the University. We thank the Dean of our faculty, Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor B. Salawu, and other Professors in the faculty for their commitment to the success of this project. Academic and non-academic staff of the Department of Political Science, particularly, Prof. H. A. Saliu and Mr. J. O. Durojaiye who demonstrated uncommon commitment to this project. are also appreciated. We are grateful to other departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences most especially, the Acting Head of Department of Sociology, Dr. (Mrs) D. S. Adekeye. We are also grateful to other departments and units outside our Faculty; Dr. I. A. Jawondo of the Department of History and International studies, Mr. U. A. Saliu of the University Library and Mr. Mohammed of Educational Technology Department, we thank you all for your various roles.

Professors E. Ezeani, R. A. Dunmoye and H. A. Saliu, we shall remain grateful to y[redacted]

presenters. Your various presentations led to this output. We thank our audience at the conference especially our students for being good listeners and asking thought provoking questions. The assistance of Members of the Press (print and electronic) is well noted. We thank you all.

Lastly, reviewers of the papers and editors of the book must be appreciated for their efforts in reading and proof-reading the manuscripts in order to ensure a qualitative output.

Abdulrasheed Alada Muhammad, Ph.D.
Acting Head, Department, 2016 - 2018

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Professor H. A. Saliu is a scholar of international repute whose articles have appeared in several local and international outlets. He is a Professor of Political Science of many years standing, with a bias for Foreign Policy. He has been teaching in the department of Political Science, University of Ilorin for decades and has taught several undergraduate and postgraduate students. For several years, he has been teaching courses in the field of International Relations and Research Methodology. His students, among whom are Professors, are making waves in their various fields of endeavour. Professor Saliu has served as Dean of Faculty of Business and Social Sciences and as consultant to many national and international organizations. He is the current Vice-President of Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA).

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Welcome Address by the Acting Head, Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, on the occasion of its Second National Conference Held at the Business Lecture Theatre, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ilorin, Nigeria on the 23rd November, 2016 with the theme: State, Governance and Insecurity in Nigeria.

On behalf of the Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin, I welcome all participants to this conference. This is the Second in the series of our National Conferences. The first, which was held in 2003 was titled 'Nigeria under Democratic Rule'. This Second Conference with the theme of **'State, Governance, and Insecurity in Nigeria'** examines, in a broader context, what democracy has done to Nigeria and vice versa after many years of its practice. No doubt, there are series of complexities in Nigeria's governance environment that require attention both the state and the citizens. This is the vacuum which this conference hopes to fill. By addressing various issues confronting the Nigerian state in their specifics under the broad theme of **'State, Governance, and Insecurity in Nigeria'**, scholars and policy makers present at this conference have succeeded in extending the discussion on how to solve the multifarious challenges confronting the Nigerian state. I, therefore, urge us all, to see the opportunity provided by this conference as a way of making our own valuable contributions towards making Nigeria a better state.

At this point, let me thank individuals who have made this day a reality through their assistance and support to us. First is our Vice Chancellor, Professor Abdulganiyu Ambali, OON, who graciously agreed to declare this conference open and give opening remarks. He also sponsored both lunch and cocktail for conference participants, among other assistance he gave to us. The Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor Bashiru Salawu has really been supportive. All staff of the Faculty and sister departments in the Faculty of Social Sciences also contributed in no small measure to the realization of this day. More importantly, efforts and cooperation of all staff and students of our Department cannot be underestimated, especially members of the organizing committee and those among us whom we have christened 'the young shall grow'. It shows that where there is cooperation, the sky is the limit.

We also thank the Chief of Staff to the Governor of Kwara State, Alhaji Abdulwahab Babatunde; Clerk of the Kwara State House of Assembly, Alhaji Muhammad Katsina;the Personal Assistant to the Kwara State Governor, Alhaji Rafiu Olanshile Aliu; a Director in the Government House, Ilorin, Alhaji Garuba Yusuf; our alumni in the Department and a host of others who have provided assistance in one way or the other, we are indeed grateful.

Lastly, I must thank our lead paper presenter, Professor Emmanuel Ezeani and our Keynote Speakers, Professors R. Ayo 'Dunmoye and H. A. Saliu who were all my teachers.I also thank the President of the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA), Professor Shaibu Ibrahim and other members of the NPSA executive for conceding that we should tap from their wealth of experience by being part of this conference. I also thank all Professors and senior colleagues here present for giving our junior colleagues the opportunity to learn from them

I thank every participant at this conference and wish you all a successful deliberation.Thank you

Abdulrasheed Alada Muhammad, Ph.D.
Acting Head of Department
23 November, 2016

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SECURITY AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN THE EASTERN NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA: THE MENACE OF THE *SKOLOMBO* BOYS AND THE *LAKASARA* GIRLS

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Introduction

Security and economic challenges in the Eastern Niger Delta Region of Nigeria has become worrisome as a result of the activities of the *skolombo* boys. The Eastern Niger Delta is known for peaceful nature. Recently, that reputation is threatened by the fast growing insecurity in the area. The concept of security has been rooted firmly among other factors, in the idea of the rights and freedom of the people, but this has not been the case in the Eastern Niger Delta area since 2003 when this security threat started smouldering. Security is a situation which provides national and international conditions favourable to the protection of a nation state and its citizens against existing and potential threats (Timothy Onimisi, 2014, 81). *Skolombo* is a slangy expression used to describe criminals, dangerous and lawless boys roaming the streets of Calabar the Capital of Cross River State of Nigeria. *Skolombo* boys also literally means a mindless gang of destitute or streets boys that are roaming the streets freely. Calabar is believed to be the headquarters of this notorious gang.

Lakasara girls are a group of girls also roaming the streets of Calabar without care from their parents. The *Lakasara* girls can be said to be the female arm of the *Skolombo* boys. The issue of the *Skolombo* boys and the *Lakasara* girls have become very worrisome in the Eastern Niger Delta area. *Skolombo* boys and *Lakasara* girls refer to those that have been abandoned or sent away from home for various reasons by their families

(Child Rights Awareness Creation Organization, 2015) In this light, the government should put in place the basic needs for these children. Implementation of skill acquisition programs and vocational training, good governance, provision of social infrastructure and comprehensive rehabilitation could be the panacea to this menace.

The Origin of the Skolombo Boys and Lakasara Girls

The origin of the *Skolombo* boys and the *Lakasara* girls could be traced as far back as 2003, with children mainly identified as street boys. Initially these children were harmless but later in 2007 they metamorphozed into the Skolombo boys known for various crimes and criminality in the area. The evolution of this group could be looked at from at least two perspectives. The first is that their emergence can, to some extent, be traced to the churches and families of the *Skolombo* boys and the *Lakasara* girls. In some churches, children are seen as witches and wizards through the spiritual pronouncement of their pastors or spiritual heads. So, some parents abandoned their children because of allegations of witchcraft (Akpan, 2015).The children most times are alleged to have been bewitched and are so labelled by the new generation spiritual churches. Such children are said to bring evil omen to their parents and families and are therefore sent away from the home into the streets. Some of these children grow up and do not go back to trace their parents and family members. The second perspective is that some of these children were given away as house maids or house boys, but they were maltreated and untrained by their masters and so they ran away from home, wandering and roaming the streets for survival. (http://thenationonlineng.net).

The boys and girls have their biological parents, but have left their homes to unknown destinations, becoming homeless and have refused to go back to their parents because of one reason or the other. This group of children has been on the streets of Calabar for years and at the initial stage the boys were harmless, but as they grew older they became notorious and dangerous to the public. This situation degenerated during the 2015 general elections when older leaders of the street urchins recruited their younger ones to commit atrocities and electoral violence. These boys, most of the times, are given large amounts of money, food

and alcoholic drinks as inducements by the politicians (Ibanga Isine, 2016).

The *Skolombo* boys were initially called the *Isakaba* boys and this was as far back as 2007. According to an eye witness in Calabar, the *Skolombo* boys also emerged from "Area boys", "skylo" and "backskin" among others(Offiong Bassey, 2015).This social menace and the gang became noticeable when girls began to join in their activities in 2009. They lived in the streets and uncompleted buildings and from there they perpetrated their criminal activities (The Guardian, 2016).

The *Lakasara* is a gang of girls found in the streets of Calabar, and like their male counterparts, they live on the streets and are also involved in perpetrating criminal activities in the area. These girls have constituted a social menace in Calabar and their activities have threatened the social life and the economy of the area. The most worrisome aspect of the activities of these boys and girls is that they are alleged to have godfathers. Thomas Okon, a community leader, revealed that during the 2011 general elections in Calabar, politicians used them in causing violence in exchange for money and most times these *Skolombo* boys were encouraged and organized for criminal activities by the "Area boys" in Calabar (Okon, 2017). "Area boys" is another notorious and dangerous group of young men involved in criminal activities and violence in Calabar. They are the godfathers of the *Skolombo* boys and the*Lakasara* girls. The Area boys are adults who are generally older than the *Skolombo* boys and the *Lakasara* girls and are said to be involved in teaching the young ones how to handle arms and operate dangerous weapons (Victor Okon, 2016).

The Activities of the *Skolombo* Boys and the *Lakasara* Girls in the Niger Delta

The street children that eventually metamorphozed into the *Skolombo boys* and the *Lakasara* girls have been in existence for years. This group of teenagers is made up of boys and girls and they are in the age group of 7-19 years. These young girls and boys have flooded the streets of Calabar and they are adept at snatching hand bags, phones, wallets, jewelleries and they carry guns, cutlasses, and other dangerous weapons. They operate in very deceptive manner such as begging of

alms, hanging around the streets, and most times, their mode of operation begins by playing football on the streets while waiting to rob their victims. Recently, they terrorized the people by carrying dangerous weapons and they are also known to be involved in armed robbery attacks on various roads within the area. Most security agencies have been unable to checkmate the activities of these *Skolombo* boys and the *Lakasara* girls.

It is also important to note that, the *Lakasara* girls are exposed to social vices like, prostitution and the consequent acquiring of HIV infection among other sexually transmitted diseases. These diseases have also affected the lives of these girls negatively. Financial inducement, poor grooming, and lack of social support have resulted in the girls being exposed sexually very early in life. The various criminal activities of the groups have created insecurity and fear in the minds of residents. The level of insecurity has compelled the residents to avoid keeping late nights because of attacks from these boys (Utang Bassey, 2016).

Factors Responsible for the Activities of S*okolombo* Boys and *Lakasara* Girls

Lack of parental care: some of the boys and girls came from single parents, which could be as a result of bereavement. Some of these children eventually end up being involved in different forms of criminal activities. Most times because of the poor psychological state of some single parents, appropriate care and grooming of the children is lacking. Some of these children are from poor backgrounds, where poverty has denied them basic livelihoods. These children move about with tattered clothes, loitering about motor packs and also are seen in traffic begging for alms.

Lack of education: education is a key factor in the social, economic, and physical growth of any child. Poverty and ignorance have led some parents not to enrol and encourage their children to go to school. Some children at the age of 14, loiter around the streets as a way to fend for themselves without even the knowledge of their parents.

Lack of skilled acquisition and Lack of good governance: over the years, the government has not really paid much attention to children in the area. Man power development has not been encouraged in the educational curriculum and even in the family circle. This has really led

to a breakdown of the family life, because some of these children engage in petty thefts and other forms of criminality instead of acquiring skills. The crime rate can be drastically reduced among young people if they are able to acquire skills (Uchendu. C. C., 2015).

True Confession of Some of the Boys and Girls

Fifteen year old Raymond Godswill, an indigene of Ebonyi State, stated in an interview that he never knew his parents (from birth) and that he grew up with his maternal grandmother in Amasiri because his mother was said to have died shortly after his delivery. He claimed have found his way to Calabar because he wanted to earn a living in the city. He also said that there were boys with different talents he is group and he was good at playing football. Some of his friends in the group, according to him, were interested in music, singing, dancing and other skills. John Eteh who hails from Akwa Ibom State and is twenty five years of age also agreed that they roamed the streets of Calabar to commit crimes to eke out a living for themselves and that uncompleted buildings and undeveloped plots in the area were their shelters (Fuad Lawal, 2015).



Fig : 1 one of the boys drown. Vanguardngr.com

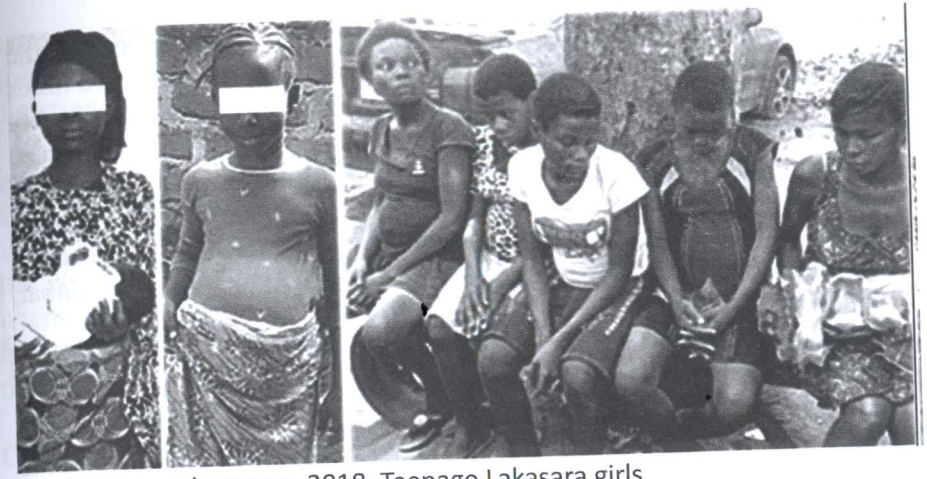


Fig: 2 Vanguardngr.com, 2018. Teenage Lakasara girls

According to Essien Offiong, one of the boys had a great interest in the repair of electronic gadgets and out of curiosity he always dismantled his father's electrical gadgets. When the step mother accused him of being a witch, he was sent out of the home by his father. He eventually join this group of young boys. In an oral interview with Etta Bassey, one of the boys in Calabar, he said that life has been a nightmare, because he was seen as a witch and was denied access to food in the house. His father decided to take him to church for counselling, prayers, and deliverance. In the process of the deliverance he was starved for days and was also flogged and punished for several days. After about 15 days of special prayers, Bassey was taken home.He then ran away from home and eventually joined a group of children living in an uncompleted building (*Skolombo* Epidemic,2016).

According to Chi Okafor, "my parents rejected me when I was seven years of age. I am involved in petty crime for a living. Every morning, I move to most streets in Calabar to commit petty crime to enable me meet up my daily needs, but my permanent address is Flour Mill Junction, by Muritala Mohammed High Way" (Chi Okafor, 2016).

In an interview with a pastor of a new generation church, Pastor Okon Edem, he was of the opinion that the majority of the *Skolombo* boys and *Lakasara* girls were possessed by evil spirits and that their parents have not lived up to expectation in the children's upbringing. He was of the view that the solution should be spiritually sought (Okon Edem, Calabar, 2016).

In an interview with another pastor, Pastor Akpo Bassey, he claimed that the menace of the *Skolombo* boys and *Lakasara* girls is a sign of the hard times that families are going through in Nigeria. The insecurity and criminality that has become rampant in the Eastern Niger Delta can be readdressed through proper religious education and up bring of the children. The use of force by the security agencies, he emphasized, would not yield the desired results in the society because the children after going through physical and mental maltreatment become hardened criminals (Akpo Bassey, Calabar, 2016).

The Eastern Niger Delta Economy and the *Skolombo* Boys

The economic landscape of the Eastern Niger Delta has been blighted to some extent by the endemic criminal activities of the *Skolombo* boys and the *Lakasara* girls. The criminal activities of these boys and girls in Calabar have brought negative effects on the economy. Calabar that was generally known for its peaceful atmosphere and night out is now threatened by this hydra headed monster. Kidnapping, cultism, terrorism, militancy, and other criminal activities have brought fear to most investors and some of them are relocating their business to other areas for safety. Most of the security agents appear incapable of handling the situation (Adeleke Adegbami, 2013).

Over the years Calabar has been a global destination in tourism, attracting a lot of guests all over the world. But because of the activities of the *Skolombo* boys and the *Lakakasara* girls in recent times, the Eastern Niger Delta has been facing insecurity challenges which have negatively affected the tourism industry. The insecurity has changed the trend and perception of night crawlers, making economic activities to slow down. (Lawal, 2015),

The criminal activities of these notorious groups have affected the economic activities of the area, because these dreaded gangs (which include girls), carry dangerous weapons, collecting money and valuables from traders, making it difficult for their business to flourish, and posing a threat to their lives. Most traders find it difficult going about their usual business, because over the years the boys have graduated from snatching bags and cell phones to other social vices. With time, the number of the boys and girls kept increasing as a result of other abandoned children who were able to find their way to Calabar. Children from Ebonyi, Akwa–Ibom, Rivers, and Benue

states and other neighboring states made their way to Calabar metropolis to join the groups. The boys and girls are mostly found at the Flour Mill Junction, along the Murtala Mohammed high way in Calabar.

It is pertinent to note that these young boys and girls have been exposed to extreme social vices and criminal activities such as prostitution and robbery among others. These groups have become synonymous with violence and are increasingly exploiting the people and causing insecurity in the area (Unah, 2017). Lack of skills, low standard of education, unemployment, poor government attitude to development, corruption, and break down of the traditional family life have been identified as causes of this menace (Chinwokwu, 2014).

Some measures were put in place by the immediate past governor of Cross River State to address this menace when a taskforce was created for their rehabilitation. Efforts were also made in 2012 by the then governor's wife, Mrs Obioma Imoke who tried to rehabilitate some of these boys and girls by establishing a rehabilitation centre. Some of the boys and girls after about two years in the centre were able to reunite with their families (The Guardian, 2016). The challenge keeps increasing as the number of these boys and girls keeps rising as a result of other abandoned children coming into Calabar from neighboring states like Akwa- Ibom, Rivers, Ebonyi, and Abia among others. The Eastern Niger Delta seems to be losing its enduring peace and its economic viability because of these gangs (wwwpillar.com.ng.news, 2016).

The governor of Cross River State, Ben Ayade in an effort to rescue the state from the miscreants laid down some modalities empowering the security agencies to achieve effective operation for maximum security of lives and property in the state (News Express Nigeria Global Voice, 2015).The governor also rebranded the intervention in the state by changing the nomenclature to "Operation *Skolombo"* and to further ensure security in the state, the Army is complimenting the police and other security agencies in the effort to end this menace. All these modalities are to ensure peace in the state and to encourage economic development.

Way forward

Over the years, some measures have been put in place to curb this menace. During the period of Liyel Imoke as the governor of Cross River State, his wife Mrs Obioma Imoke, established a home for the rehabilitation

of the children called, Mothers Against Child Abandonment (MACA). She later renovated the building and renamed it as Destiny Child Centre (DCC). The centre was opened mainly to deal with the problem of street children in Calabar. This Centre also provided the means for them to acquire good education and proper grooming. This Centre succeeded in rescuing many vulnerable children from the streets and engaged them in skill acquisition programs. Ironically, some of the children left the Centre while some acquired skills and were able to start some business with little amount of loans (www.tori.ng, 2016).

Some measures have been put in place also by the Cross River State Government such as establishing a taskforce to empower them, yet these *Skolombo* boys and the *Lakasara* girls are still found in most areas of Calabar (Nicholas Kalu, 2016). Some people are however of the opinion that these measures have come very late after the children have become criminals.

The Social Welfare Office of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Welfare has also rendered care and assistance to these children. Government has also been giving regular yearly subvention to the orphanage. The current governor of Cross River State, Ben Ayade, set out a new security outfit, the "Operation Skolombo" to completely free the streets from miscreants. He also empowered the security agencies to achieve effective operation in the state.

Skill acquisition gives the young people the opportunity to develop themselves and earn a living. The governments of Cross River and Akwa-Ibom states should therefore intensify efforts to establish different skill acquisition opportunities for the benefit of the young people. This will help these boys to attain a meaningful development and to identify their strength and even attain their potentials.

The Akwa-Ibom state government has specifically put in place skills Development Centre office to assist in the training of idle young people. This office, with its various initiatives, has fashioned out a program named "Ibom Skill Development Initiative". It is aimed at training and engaging the young people to build capability in the different skills (Ibomskills.org.ng, 2017). The Youth Resource Centre in Cross River State is to assist the youth with different skill acquisition. These centres were designed to equip and empower the young people in the states (www youleadnigeria.org, 2016).

Conclusion

In conclusion the menace of the street urchins in Calabar popularly called the *Skolombo* boys and the *Lakasara* girls is a time bomb waiting to explode. This is because the number of the urchins keeps increasing as the number of homeless children are on the increase, travelling from various neighboring states to join the groups. The boys and girls are getting matured physically, emotionally and psychologically in crime and therefore appearing to pose a greater danger to the society and its economy with time. Government efforts are coming rather late and not comprehensive enough to put an end to this great social menace in the country and enable these children to attain their full potentials in life. It is essential for the government to establish centers for the implementation of skill acquisition programs, vocational training and comprehensive rehabilitation of the children.

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