



VOICE OF THE CHILD
LAW CENTRE

REPORT ON THE STUDY OF THE TRAINING AND TREATMENT OF CHILDREN IN THE LAGOS STATE APPROVED CHILDREN'S INSTITUTIONS

Presented by:

Professor Iyabode Ogunniran

Founder & Executive Director - VTCLC



Opening Thoughts



“Childhood, the time between birth and reaching the age of 18 years, is when children develop their personality, their emotional relationships with others, their social and educational skills and their talents. Children should grow up in a family environment, if they cannot, for whatever reason, States shall ensure that they are cared for in a family-type environment”

UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty, 2019.



Background



- ✓ My PhD programme accentuated my research interest in children's rights, child protection, child/juvenile justice and children and the family – beginning from 2007.

- ✓ Commenced as the Lagos Coordinator of the National Baseline Survey on Child Protection Issues conducted by UNILAG/NBS/ILO/UNICEF in 2005.

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- ✓ As a Visiting Scholar at University of Pretoria, South Africa in 2011/2012, I audited Child Law with Prof Ann Skelton (Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child 2003)

04

- ✓ On Sabbatical at the University of Reading, England 2013/2014 – Deepened my research on Children and the Law.
 - ✓ Initiated contact with Prof Carolyn Hamilton of CORAM International, London – the beginning of a an enduring and fruitful partnership.



A journey of almost two decades...

Background (Cont'd)



- 05 Since 2012, I had written and published extensively in reputable journals - national and international on diverse areas of child law- child marriage, child protection from sexual exploitation, children's right to education, child trafficking, children and armed conflict, etc.
- 06 Facilitated several training across the country
 - ✓ UNICEF Child Protection and Child Justice Reforms (2015-2018).
 - ✓ Worked with CORAM International and co-trained Judges, Magistrates, Social Workers in Family Courts across the country - Cross Rivers State, Benue State, Plateau State, Kaduna State and Lagos State
- 07 Member of the Lagos State Child Rights Implementation Committee – involved in contributing to the reform agenda for the State.
- 08 Facilitated training and retreat programs of the Ministry of Youths and Social Developments for social workers and participants in that ecosystem.
- 09 With my diverse knowledge and experience, I designed the curriculum for Child Law I and II at the University of Lagos.
 - ✓ The Department of Public Law started teaching the course in 2020/2021 Session. About 65 students offered the course this Semester.

Background (Cont'd)



In 2013, funded by the Central Research Committee of the University of Lagos, we conducted an Exploratory Study of the Lagos State Child Justice Administration in conjunction with Professor Chinwe Nwanna of the Department of Social Work, UNILAG.

The study covered the police, courts, social workers, NGOs, NBA, OPD, Family Courts and four of the Approved Children's Institutions.

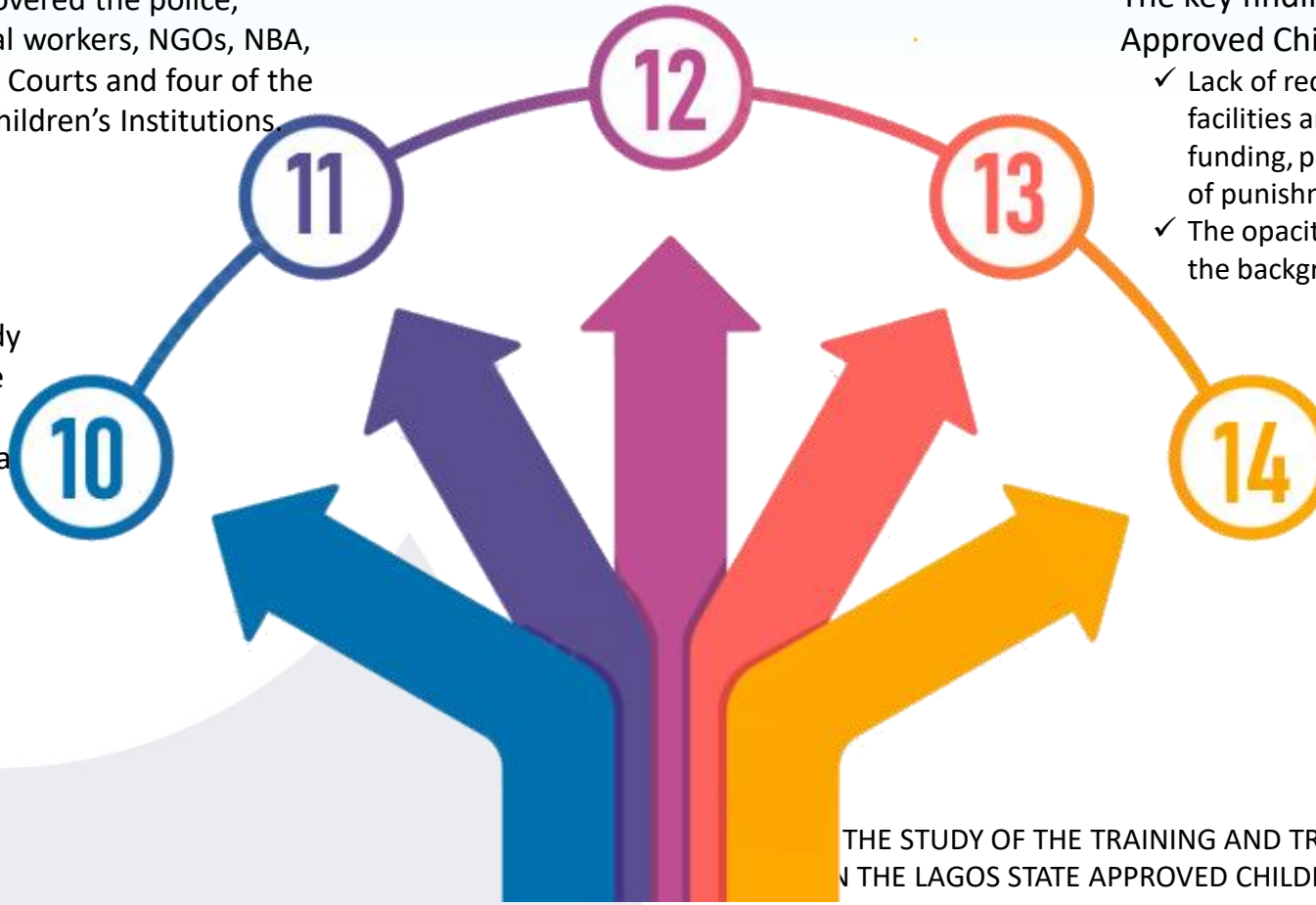
The findings were published and formally presented to the public under the auspices of the then Attorney General of Lagos State, Adeniji Kazeem, SAN.

The key findings of the as they relate to per the Approved Children's Institutions include:

- ✓ Lack of recreational activities, inadequate medical facilities and insufficient dormitory; inadequate funding, paucity of staff and use of caning as a form of punishment.
- ✓ The opacity of activities and general relegation to the background....

Our key recommendations included:

- ✓ Training of Judges, Magistrates, Police Officers, Social Workers etc. on the findings
- ✓ Implementation of some of the recommendations.



Pre-Child Rights Act 2003

- ✓ Remand Centres
- ✓ Approved Institutions
- ✓ Borstal Institutions
- ✓ Prisons (now Correctional Centres)

Boys' Remand Home, Oregon was renamed the Special Correctional Centre for Boys, Oregon

Junior Boys' Approved School, Birrel House, Yaba was designated as Correctional Centre for Junior Boys, Birrel, Yaba.

The former Children Centre remains the Children Centre.

Child Rights Law 2007, Lagos State...

- ✓ Approved Children's Institutions
 - ✓ Children Attendance Centre
 - ✓ Children Centre
 - ✓ Children Residential Attendance
 - ✓ Children Correctional Centre
 - ✓ Special Children Correctional Centre

Girls Remand Home, Idi-Araba became the Special Correctional Centre for Girls, Idi Araba, Mushin.

Approved School for Senior Boys, was changed to Correctional Centre for Senior Boys, Isheri

Approved School Schools for Girls, Idi Araba was renamed the Correctional Centre for Girls, Idi-Araba.



01

“Child, Juvenile”

- ✓ A juvenile is “a child or young person who under the respective legal systems may be dealt with for an offence in a manner which is different from an adult. Beijing Rules 1985
- ✓ A “juvenile” includes a child and a young person. Further, a “child” is a person under the age of fourteen years whilst a “young person” is a person who has attained the age of fourteen years and is under 17 or 18 years. Children and Young Persons Laws (CYPLs) of different States regulate the treatment of young offenders in Nigeria.
- ✓ A child is “ a person who has not attained the age of 18 years. Child Rights Law (CRL) of Lagos State 2007.

“Training and Treatment” ...?

- ✓ Training
 - ✓ Education
 - ✓ Vocational
- ✓ Treatment
 - ✓ Individual and group counseling
 - ✓ Visitation
 - ✓ Medical care
 - ✓ Feeding and bedding
 - ✓ No corporal punishment, disciplinary isolation

02

Current Objectives



Research Questions



01 How are the children trained at the Approved Children's Institutions?

02 How are the children treated at the Approved Children's Institutions?

03 What can be done to enhance the capacity of the Officers at the Approved Children's Institutions?

04 What are the current challenges of the Institutions and the way forward?

05 The scope research questions were cleared with the MYSD and approval was duly granted after making some inputs

Expected Outcomes



Developed the full potential of the children in the Institutions to become useful members of the society.

01

Improved conditions of the children in such Institutions to positively impact society.

02

Enhance the capacity of the officers involved with the children so as to effectively discharge their duties.

03

Expand law, institutional and policy reforms

04



Conceptual Framework of the Study

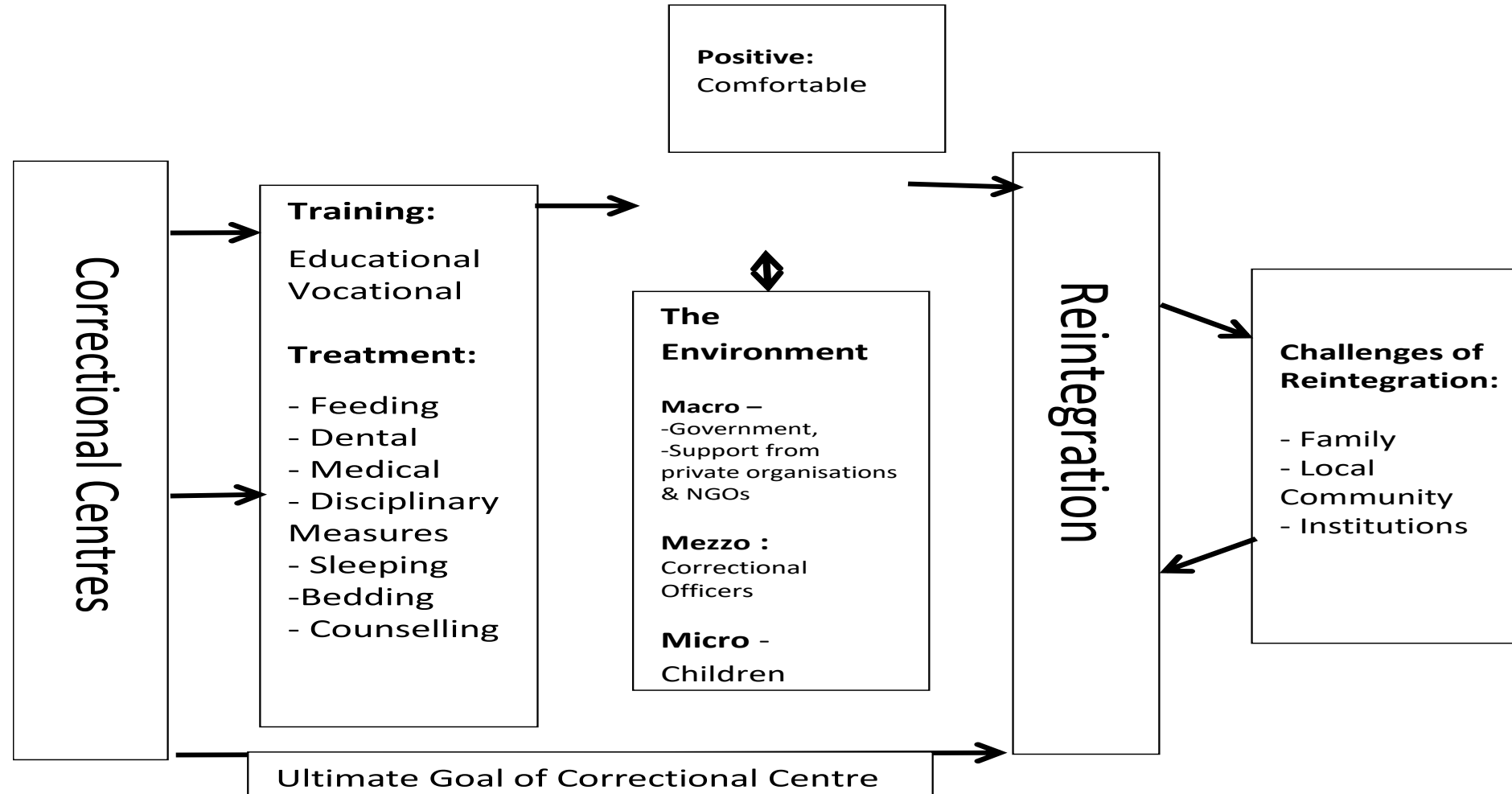
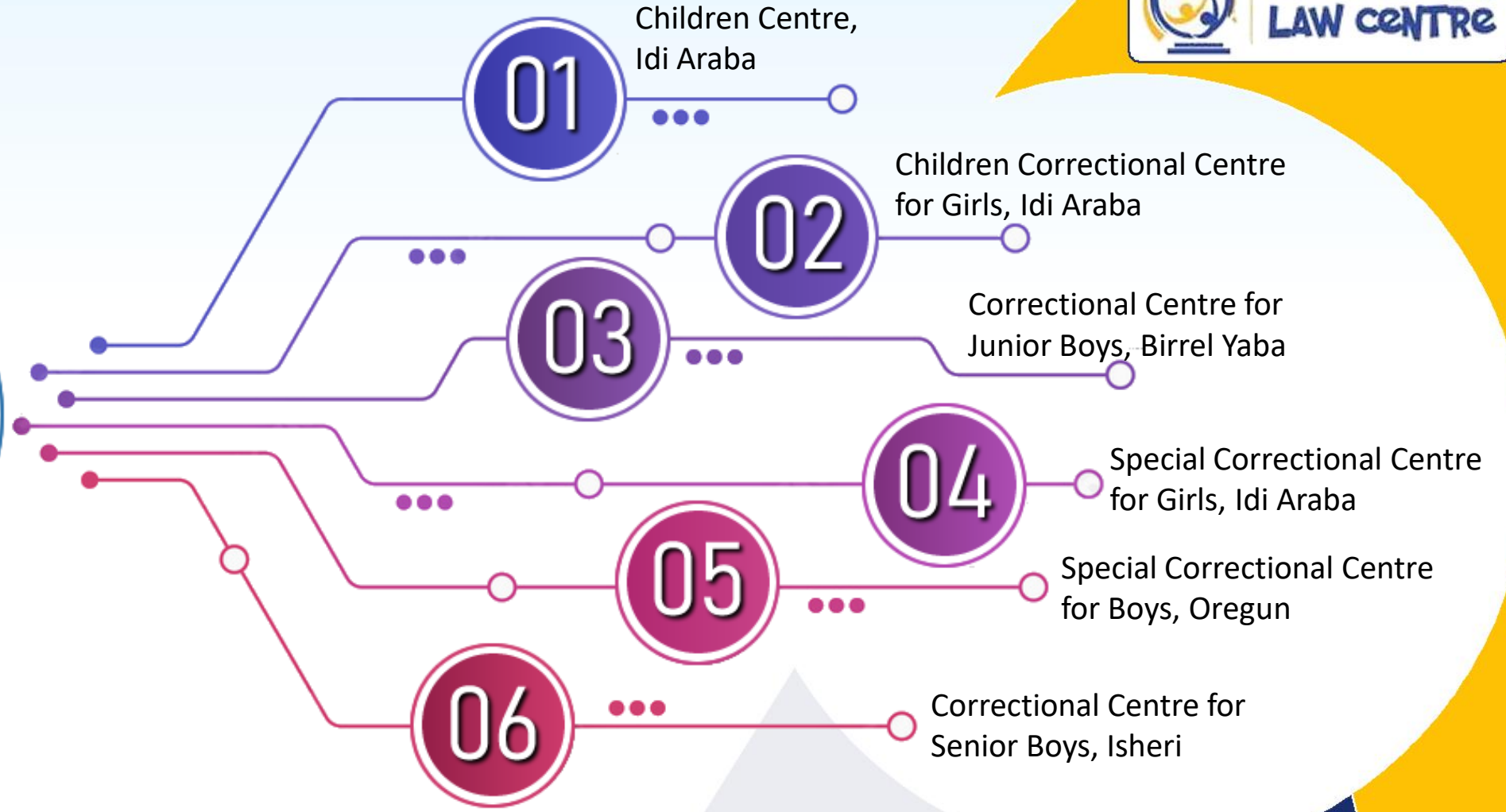


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework on the Connection between Correctional Centres, Outcomes of Training and Treatment, and Successful Reintegration adapted from Princeniko Correctional Framework (Chenge et al, 2020).

Methodology



Cross-sectional and qualitative research



Triangulation Method of:

- ✓ Key Informant Interviews (KII)
- ✓ Participant Observation.

An interview schedule was constructed for the Principals, Social Welfare Officers and support staff.

Completed by:

- ✓ Asking the some of the children questions and
- ✓ Observing them as they answer and narrating their experiences.

Fieldwork took place from 2021 to March, 2024

- ✓ Supported by an experienced Research Assistant (RA) volunteer
- ✓ The RA was trained for one day to enhance the quality of the data collected
- ✓ Ethical Issues were observed.
- ✓ KII were transcribed
- ✓ Data was analyzed
 - ✓ Secondary data were analyzed using content analysis of extant literature.
 - ✓ The data of KII was analyzed qualitatively.
 - ✓ Adopting the inductive approach, the responses from the KII and observation generated themes that were analyzed

The capacity utilization of the Centre from 2019-2023 depicted as follows

S/N	NAME OF CENTRE	CAPACITY	UTILIZATION & REMARKS
1	Children Centre Idi Araba	60	Half of the number was taken in 2023, hence operating below the minimum level.
2	Children Correctional Centre for Girls Idi Araba	50	But in the five year period, the Centre has operated below capacity despite the increase in the number of children to 35 in 2023.
3	Children Correctional Centre for Junior Boys, Birrel Yaba	75	In the five year period, placement of children was between 48 (highest) to 39 (lowest).
4	Special Children Correctional for Girls Idi Araba	50	In 2019, 67 children were admitted; 40 children were at the Centre in 2023.
5	Special Children Correctional Centre for Boys, Oregun	120	Whilst it recorded the highest number of children in 2020 at 190, it has dropped to 63 in 2023.
6	Correctional Centre for Senior Boys, Oregun	60	It recorded the highest number of children in 2021 at 79, it has dropped to 49 in 2023.

Findings & Recommendations - Children Centre, Idi Araba

Findings:

- ✓ Four categories of children i.e. (child offenders, children in need of care and protection, children who are rescued, children who are for shelter) are lumped together.
- ✓ No specific training or treatment tailored to meet the individual needs of the children in the various four categories.

Recommendations:

- ✓ The function of the Children Centre as stipulated in the CRL should be followed. It should basically be for child offenders. A Care Centre should be established for other categories of children.
- ✓ In the short term, a structured plan should be in place for the Needs Assessment of the children in the various categories – so that training and treatment interventions will be specific and targeted.



Findings & Recommendations – Children Correctional Centre, Idi Araba

Findings:

- ✓ Children with disability are ‘lumped’ with other children at the Centre.
- ✓ It was difficult to access up-to-date data as the respondents offered to provide the data of when they started working at the Centre.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Children with disability should be transferred to appropriate schools or centres in the state for specialized care.
- ✓ Apart from the Central Data Base at Alausa, there is need for structured record keeping at the Centres.



Findings & Recommendations – Children Correctional Centre for Junior Boys, Birrel, Yaba

Findings:

- ✓ Formal training in private schools is facilitated by outsiders.
- ✓ Vocational training is also very limited unless there are private sponsors.
- ✓ There is no internet connectivity. During COVID 19 period, many children could not join their schools for online lessons.

Recommendations:

- ✓ There is need for awareness creation about the function of the Centre so that more private individuals can sponsor formal and vocational training.
- ✓ Immediate installation of internet connectivity.



Findings & Recommendations – Correctional Centre for Girls, Idi Araba

Findings:

- ✓ Children from the Centre come from different states across the country.
- ✓ The sexually abused children would need trauma-informed counseling which is also non-existent.
- ✓ Delay in getting the Director of Public Prosecution (DPP)'s advice.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Individual counselling for sexually abused children should be facilitated.
- ✓ The DPP's Office should fast-track the process of advice for quick dispensation of justice.



Findings & Recommendations – Special Correction Centre for Junior Boys, Oregon



Findings:

- ✓ Stealing is the most rampant offence amongst child offenders.
- ✓ Delay in getting DPP's advice for child offenders, so they stay longer than necessary at the Centre.
- ✓ A limited number of lawyers are available from OPD, which is the main Agency representing them in court.
- ✓ A female Counselor is designated to a male Centre.

Recommendations:

- ✓ The Police or the Court can use Diversionary Measures such as restitution and compensation of the victims without placing such child offenders at the Centre.
- ✓ The DPP's Office must prioritize cases of child offenders – and give necessary advice(s) timeously.
- ✓ There must be more lawyers designated from OPD to represent the children. This may be complemented by pro bono services by the Nigerian Bar Association.
- ✓ Counselors should be of the same sex as the children at the Centre.



Findings & Recommendations – Correctional Centre for Senior Boys, Isheri

Findings:

- ✓ Some of the children do not have textbooks to read or for their school assignments.
- ✓ There is no internet connectivity.
- ✓ Though the children learn vocational training as a skill, there is no financial aid to set them up post-training.
- ✓ There is no structured Discharge Plan, hence some of the children are above 18 years old but cannot be released into Society. They may not have finished their education or have no money to set them up in a vocation.

Recommendations:

- ✓ Awareness creation to members of the public about the Centre to complement the efforts of the State in terms of private sponsors for educational purposes.
- ✓ Provision of a viable Discharge Plan encompassing entrepreneurial set up and support.



Progress Achieved



- ✓ It is noteworthy that there is no overcrowding at any of the Centres - which is particularly gratifying.
- ✓ The training and treatment framework is broadly in line with best practices as the conditions of the facilities accord with generally accepted decency standards.
- ✓ The Centres deploy mild punishments and the basic facilities, especially beddings are largely adequate. Feeding is accorded top priority in all the Centres.
- ✓ Churches, Mosques, NGOs and some private individuals visit the children and provide spiritual guidance and basic needs like food, clothing, etc.
- ✓ The Centres are reasonably well-resourced with diverse categories of Social Welfare Officers deployed with many support staff such as Cooks, Carers and other ancillary staff.

Major Challenges





Data Collections and Information Management

- ✓ Digitalization of information and creating a platform/Registry at MYSD. A format should be developed for monthly uploading of information by the different Centres to the Registry. Thereafter, MYSD can have quarterly reviews with the Centres - on clearly defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Strategic Public Private Partnerships

- ✓ We saw the example of Fidelity Bank providing resources to train the children on shoe making in one of the Centres. This is however far and in-between. In our experience, looking at the position in other jurisdictions, this should be a matter of strategic imperative by the Government. MYSD must strategize to have more collaboration with the private sector companies on a regular and consistent basis.

Public Enlightenment

- ✓ Intensive awareness creation on the functions of the Centres to enable more children in conflict with the law to take advantage of the facilities – rather than languishing in police cells and other unsuitable holding points.

External Liaison

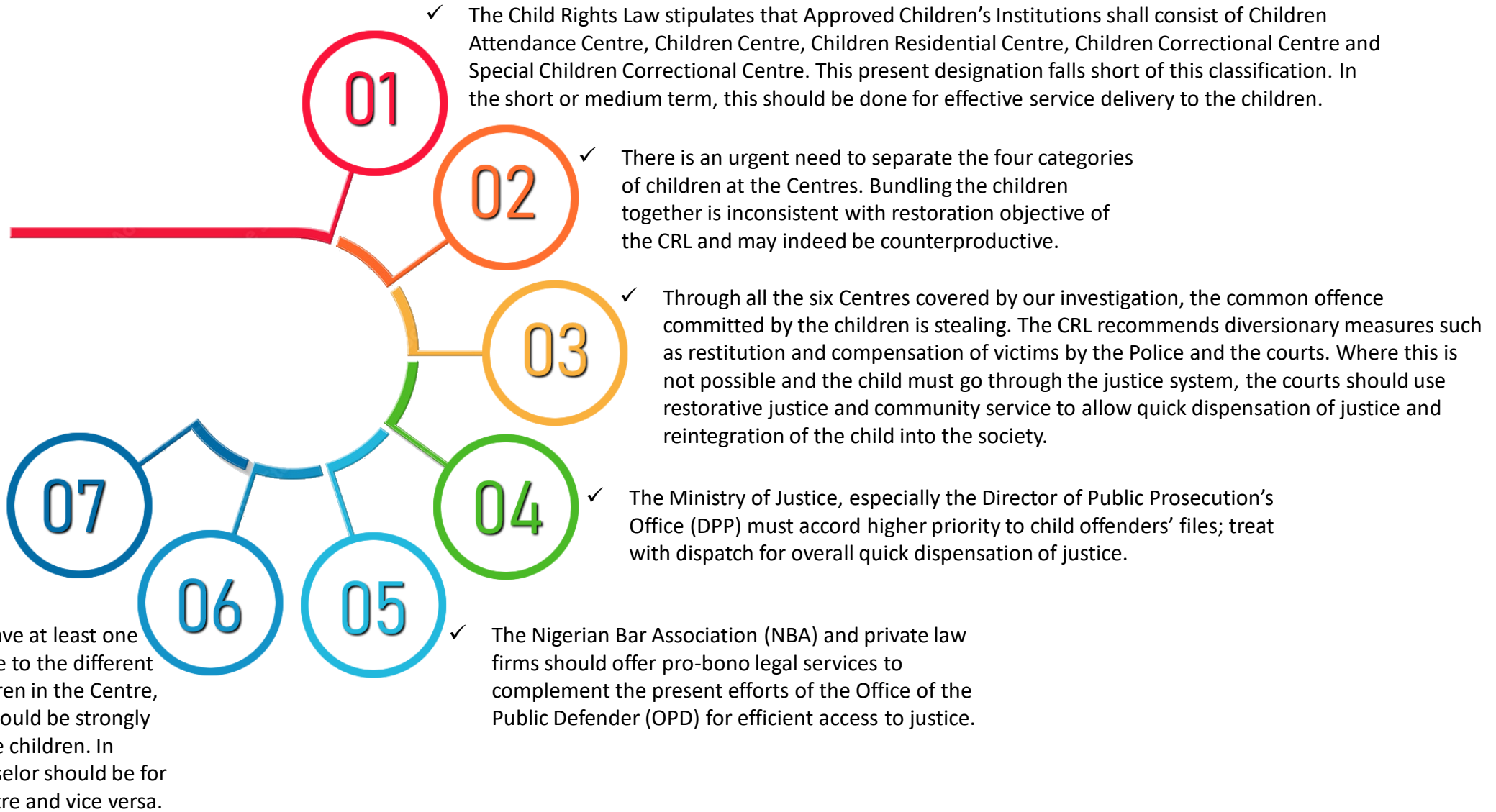
- ✓ Stronger relationship with Liaison Offices of the various States/countries to facilitate the smooth return of children to their states and neighbouring countries upon the completion of their term and the Centre.

Building Collaborative Platforms

- ✓ Collaboration with other relevant international Agencies apart from UNICEF, (e.g. Save the Children International) to foster a richer pool of resources to leverage upon from time to time.

Leveraging MYSD's Publicity Initiatives

- ✓ Projection of the activities of the Institutions through the MYSD's websites and social media handles.



Special Recommendations – (Cont'd)



Closing Thoughts



“The question is not whether we can afford to invest in every child; it is whether we can afford not to”

Marian Wright Edelman

“Children are the world’s most valuable resource and the best hope for the future”

John F Kennedy

“The future is not something we enter. The future is something we create.”

Leonard Sweet



Thank
you