

## Almajiri Child Rights Initiative

1st June 2023

### PRESS STATEMENT

#### **Establishment of New Commission Marks a Turning Point in Addressing Almajiri and Out-of-School Children Crisis in Nigeria"**

The Almajiri Child Rights Initiative (ACRI) and all undersigned partners, and individuals express profound gratitude to former President Muhammadu Buhari for signing the NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR ALMAJIRI AND OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN EDUCATION BILL 2023 into law. This landmark Act, and the establishment of the commission, marks a significant step toward addressing the long-standing issue of Almajiri children and out-of-school children in Nigeria.

We extend heartfelt congratulations to all stakeholders and citizens who have contributed to this extraordinary feat, ensuring justice, equity, and inclusiveness in education. This achievement signifies that no child, Almajiri or not, shall ever be left behind again. We especially thank the Hon. Dr. Shehu Balarabe Kakale, who pledged to take action when elected during the 2019 Almajiri Child Rights Day event in Sokoto, and all of the House of Representatives members who tirelessly worked to ensure the bill's passage. Their dedication and commitment to the cause have been instrumental in bringing about this positive change.

For context, a 2018 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) report estimated that Nigeria had about 13.2 million out of school children after rising from 10.5 million in 2010. Of this number 69% were estimated to be from Northern Nigeria. It is also estimated that 9.5 million Almajiri reside across the country, with the highest concentration in the north (Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), 2010).

The Almajiri children experience severe violations of their rights before and during their time on the streets and in the hands of their caregivers. They are faced with multiple deprivations including lack of access to basic services, violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation, as well as vulnerabilities to alcohol and substance abuse.

**BOARD CHAIR: Sheikh Nurudeen Lemu // MEMBERS: Sheikh Nura Khalid // Frank Nweke Jnr  
Mohammad Bello Tukur // Fatima Ibrahim Murtala // Abubakar Abdullahi // Mohammad Sabo KEANA**

**📍 No 19 , Shoidende Street, Utako , Abuja Nigeria 📞 +234 8060029996  
✉️ [almajirichildright@gmail.com](mailto:almajirichildright@gmail.com)  
[www.almajirichildrights.org](http://www.almajirichildrights.org) 📱 @almajirilife 📺 @almajirichild 📧 @Almajirichildrightsinitiative**

Under the Sustainable Development Goals, every single child has the right to quality education, food, clean water, good health and well-being, as well as protection from violence and exploitation. Since Nigeria has pledged, along with the rest of the world, to implement the SDGs by 2030, addressing the rights of all children must remain a priority. For this reason, a genuine pathway and sustainable solution to the future of Almajiri children is critical to achieving the ambition of securing education for all.

The establishment of the new National Commission for Almajiri and Out-of-School Children is therefore a significant step forward. While existing MDAs such as the Ministries of Education, Women Affairs, and Universal Basic Education Commission, have made efforts to tackle the problem, the sheer number of out-of-school children and the unique nature of the Almajiri issue necessitates the creation of a dedicated commission to address this pressing challenge.

Importantly, antecedence to this exists. In 1949, the United Nations General Assembly established the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which stands as a UN agency specifically supporting the relief and human development of Palestinian refugees, despite the presence of the UN Refugee Agency. Similarly, the establishment of the National Commission for Almajiri and Out-of-School Children Education acknowledges the need for a specialized body to focus on the unique circumstances faced by Almajiri children and out-of-school children in Nigeria.

ACRI and our partners are committed to forming a community of practice to provide technical support and assistance to the newly established commission. We understand the importance of ensuring that the commission remains focused on delivering real solutions to the problems faced by Almajiri and out-of-school children, rather than merely serving as another avenue for employment. We are confident that through diligence and sincerity of purpose, this can lead to lasting change.

As a collective, we suggest that the commission adopts a specific timeframe for its existence, enabling expeditious work and timely achievement of milestones. This time-bound approach will reinforce the urgency required to address the Almajiri issue and ensure that tangible outcomes are achieved within a specified period. We also suggest that staff of the commission should be drawn from existing MDAs and agencies to reduce overhead cost and to ensure effective utilisation of funds meant for real interventions.

Furthermore, we call on new governments at all levels to prioritize the issue of out-of-school children and fully implement the Child Rights Act to safeguard the rights and protection of both boys and girls. It is imperative that every child in Nigeria has access to quality education, regardless of their background or circumstances.

In conclusion, the establishment of the National Commission for Almajiri and Out-of-School Children Education is a significant milestone in our collective efforts to address the Almajiri issue in Nigeria. We remain steadfast in our commitment to ensuring that no child is left behind, and look forward to witnessing positive change in the lives of Almajiri and out-of-school children.

Signed

1. Mohammed Sabo Keana - Executive Director , Almajiri Child Rights Initiative ACRI
2. Fati Murtala-Ibrahim – Board Chair, ACRI
3. Sheikh Nurudeen Lemu – ACRI
4. Shiekh Muhammad Nura Khalid - ACRI
5. Frank Nweke II – ACRI
6. Abubakar Abdullahi - ACRI
7. Abiodun Bairewu - Global Rights
8. Maryam Augie-Abdulummini - Illmi Children’s Funds
9. Laylah Ali Othman - Laylah Initiative for Boys and Girls
10. Hamzat Lawal - Connected Development
11. Murtala Adogi Muhammed - System Strategy and Policy Lab
12. Dr Mikail Ibrahim -
13. Emediong Akpabio- Child Solidarity Group
14. Tunde Onakoya- Chess in Slums Africa
15. Abubakar Sadiq Muazu - Center For Advocacy, Transparency and Accountability Initiative (CATAI)
16. Nura Ahmad Muhammad - Mufarka youth development initiative

17. Amina Abubakar - Flexisaf

18. Amrah Aliyu- Salmah Attah Foundation

19. Illiasu usman salihu - Almajirin is also a child

20. Jemila AbdulAzeez- Community Aid and Girl Child Initiative Founder