

TEEN LIVES AROUND THE WORLD



A GLOBAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Karen Wells, Editor

Teen Lives around the World

A GLOBAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Volume 1: Australia to Nigeria

Karen Wells, Editor



An Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC
Santa Barbara, California • Denver, Colorado

Copyright © 2020 by ABC-CLIO, LLC

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review, without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Wells, Karen, 1961- editor.

Title: Teen lives around the world : a global encyclopedia / Karen Wells, editor.

Description: Santa Barbara, California : ABC-CLIO, [2020] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019014372 (print) | LCCN 2019016354 (ebook) | ISBN 9781440852459 (eBook) | ISBN 9781440852442 (set : alk. paper) | ISBN 9781440852466 (volume 1) | ISBN 9781440852473 (volume 2)

Subjects: LCSH: Teenagers—Social conditions—21st century. | Teenagers—Social life and customs—21st century.

Classification: LCC HQ796 (ebook) | LCC HQ796 .T41136 2020 (print) | DDC 305.235009/05—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019014372>

ISBN: 978-1-4408-5244-2 (set)
978-1-4408-5246-6 (vol. 1)
978-1-4408-5247-3 (vol. 2)
978-1-4408-5245-9 (ebook)

24 23 22 21 20 1 2 3 4 5

This book is also available as an eBook.

ABC-CLIO
An Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC

ABC-CLIO, LLC
147 Castilian Drive
Santa Barbara, California 93117
www.abc-clio.com

This book is printed on acid-free paper (∞)

Manufactured in the United States of America

Contents

VOLUME 1

<i>Preface</i>	ix
<i>Introduction</i>	xi
Australia	1
Bangladesh	13
Bolivia	25
Brazil	37
Canada	51
Chile	65
China	75
Colombia	87
Cuba	101
Egypt	117
Ethiopia	127
France	141
Germany	151
Ghana	163
India	175
Indonesia	187
Iran	203
Iraq	215
Italy	225
Japan	237
Kazakhstan	253

Kenya	265
Lebanon	277
Mexico	291
Morocco	303
Mozambique	317
Nigeria	329

VOLUME 2

Pakistan	341
Palestine	353
Peru	367
Philippines	381
Poland	397
Portugal	409
Russia (Siberia)	423
Senegal	437
Serbia	449
Singapore	461
Slovakia	473
South Africa	485
South Korea	497
Spain	507
Sudan	521
Sweden	535
Syria	547
Tanzania	559
Turkey	569
Uganda	579
Ukraine	591
United Kingdom	603

Nigeria

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Nigeria is a large and populous country in West Africa. It is bordered by Benin in the west, Cameroon, and Chad in the east, Niger in the north and the Atlantic Ocean in the south. It has three main ethnic groups: Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba. It is an important member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It gained independence from British colonial rule in 1960. Nigeria is a democratic state, following a long period of almost continuous military rule from 1966 to 1999. The current constitution came into effect in 1999 and established three levels of government: national government, state government, and local government and three branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial.

Nigeria is geographically, linguistically, culturally, and religiously diverse. It is a predominately young country with 41 percent of the population of over 193 million being under 15 years of age (National Bureau of Statistics 2018). The most important identifier of social life in Nigeria is religion. Islam and Christianity are the two predominant religions. The country is split almost equally between Muslims (mostly in the northern part of the country) and Christians (mainly in the south). The rest of the population follows African traditional religions. This religious division often leads to violent unrests and clashes not only between the two dominant religions but also within the Muslim groups. A serious manifestation of this religious instability was the emergence of an extremist Muslim group, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (People committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and Jihad). The group is popularly referred to as "Boko Haram," due to the group's rejection of Western education and lifestyle and its demand for the implementation of Sharia Islamic Law in Nigeria.

SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION

The Nigerian education system, which is free and compulsory, except for nominal levies in some states, is fashioned after the U.S. high-school system—a three-year junior high school and a three-year senior high school. These two schooling cycles cover the entire range of teen life in Nigeria, since the junior high school, referred to as Junior Secondary School, starts at age 13, while the senior high school, referred to as the Senior Secondary School, covers the 16–18-year-old range. University education is a minimum of four years, but can be more, depending on the program of study. Certification is provided at the end of each segment of study—a Junior Secondary School Certificate and a Senior Secondary School Certificate.

In 2015, enrollment in basic education dropped by (–8.24) percent but increased in 2016 by (6.74) percent. At the senior secondary level, there was an increase from 2013 to 2015, while in 2016 it dropped (–8.87 percent). The decrease in enrollment could be attributed to insurgency in the northeast and the inability of some states to submit data on private schools, among other reasons (FME 2017).

The Senior Secondary School Certificate is a certification of completion of secondary education. Students at this stage are still required to take exit examinations that would provide a bridge to higher education. There are two main examination bodies: the National Examination Council (NECO), established in 1999, and the West African Examinations Council (WAEC), established in 1952. The WAEC conducts the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (SSCE) in all West African countries, including Nigeria and was established in 1952.

Senior Secondary School students in Nigeria can choose to take either the WAEC or NECO examination, or both. The majority of Senior Secondary School students take both examinations and submit the better result or a combination of the best grades from the two examinations for their higher education progression.

After passing WAEC or NECO, students still need to pass a university entrance examination set by an agency called the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB), which was established by an Act of 1978, subsequently amended in 1989 and 1993.

The large number of students who apply for admission to universities and other tertiary institutions in Nigeria in relation to places available reveals the trauma Nigerian teens face in their quest for higher education. At any given year, the number of applicants through JAMB is always above one million; a total of 1.5 million students sat for the JAMB examination in 2016. This included both fresh graduates from secondary schools and those who have left secondary schools a few years but have not passed the JAMB. The paucity of jobs, particularly for teenagers makes getting admission to the university a desperate process for many of them. Nigeria does not have job training schemes offered by companies as in some countries that would absorb teenage high-school graduates and provide them with fundamental industrial skills and jobs.

Realizing the very high demand for university education among teens and seeking to provide more alternatives, the Nigerian government, through the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), encouraged individual entrepreneurs to set up Innovative Enterprise Institutes (IEIs) that would enable secondary school graduates to acquire skills in a variety of professions. These institutes are now included as a possible higher education choice in the JAMB application, but they do not attract large numbers of applications.

Education, as the main agency of individual development, provides Nigerian teenagers with the greatest challenge at this stage of their lives. Struggling against poverty and biting recession a looming background danger to the education of teenagers particularly in the 2010s was Islamicist insurgency. In 2009, a particularly violent Islamic insurgent group called Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād (Group of the People of Sunnah for Preaching and Jihad) emerged in the

north of Nigeria. In 2015, this group formed an allegiance with the ultraviolent Islamicist insurgency group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and changed their name to al-Wilāyat al-Islāmiyya Gharb Afriqiyyah (Islamic State West Africa Province, ISWAP).

Boko Haram carried out a series of attacks on secondary schools in their sphere of operations, which was mainly the northeastern states of Nigeria, most particularly in Yobe and Borno states. Their assaults on teenagers in secondary schools seemed to have followed the attack on a local Qur'anic school by Nigerian soldiers in June 2013. The Boko Haram militants retaliated mid-June by killing seven children, two teachers, and two soldiers in a local secondary school in Potiskum in Yobe state. They returned the following day killing nine students who were taking examinations. In July 2013, gunmen attacked a secondary school in Mamudo, Yobe state, killing at least 42 people. On February 25, 2014, 59 boys were killed at the Federal Government College at Buni Yadi in Yobe state, Nigeria. Nearly all the buildings in the school were burned down as a result of the attack. On November 10, 2014, at least 46 people were killed and 79 wounded, in a suicide bombing in Potiskum. The attack took place when students assembled in the hall of the Government Science Secondary School. The bomber entered the school wearing a school uniform.

While the brutal killings were so far targeted at teenage secondary school boys, the militants turned their attention to girls in April 2014 when 276 school girls were kidnapped by the insurgents while sitting for WAEC examinations. A secondary school in Chibok, located in Borno state, became a convening point for girls from other schools to take their final high-school examinations due to the closure of most schools in the state out of fear of Boko Haram attacks. Of the 276 girls, ages 16–18, 57 managed to escape from the insurgents. On May 5, 2014, the insurgents released a YouTube video, which signaled their intentions in kidnapping the girls—selling them as child brides. They also cited ideological opposition to the education of young girls. On October 13, 2016, about 21 of Chibok girls were released by the insurgents after intense negotiations between third-party negotiators on behalf of the federal government of Nigeria and the insurgents. A further 82 were released in 2017, but over 100 are still held captive by Boko Haram or have been killed.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES: ARTS, MUSIC, AND SPORTS

The overriding focus on examinations and desire to succeed and proceed to higher education leaves little room for extensive extracurricular activities for contemporary Nigerian teens. Arts, music, and sports are activities actively engaged in by the youth (those beyond teen years) who are more likely to have the money to pay for materials and tickets. With no means of income to enter into the cultural economy, extracurricular activities by teens in Nigeria are limited to occasional hobbies. Mentoring by government agencies in the area of cultural production, which is of

greatest interest to youth, is absent since government mainstream thinking is that teens should progress through conventional schooling and be trained as high quality manpower for the economy. Many large metropolitan megacities such as Lagos, Abuja, and Kano have parks and playgrounds, but mainstream tweens actually avoid going there as they consider them too “childish.”

Literature and visual arts constitute a creative focus for older teens. One of the initiatives of teenagers was the establishment of Society of Young Nigerian Writers in 2014, which aimed at enhancing, empowering, and promoting literary works, and artistic and other creative activities of teen writers in primary and secondary schools across the country. Lack of patronage or recognition from NGOs and government agencies stifle its development. Further, those in charge of the Society were either in their late teen years or young adults who eventually lost connection with teenagers the Society was created to serve.

A few Nigerian teens have become entrepreneurs in the creative industries. However, their entry and success were facilitated by having well-connected or wealthy parents who provided them with the necessary capital to pursue their entrepreneurship skills; for example, M. J. Ekeinde (b. 1998) is a successful commercial music producer. His career path was accelerated by the fact that his mother, Omotola Jalade Ekeinde, was a well-known Nigerian actress and singer.

Software development is another creative pursuit that has attracted Nigerian teenagers. This was illustrated by the case of two young boys, Osine Ikhianosime (b. 2001) and his brother Anesi Ikhianosime (b. 1999), both from Lagos, who designed a mobile web browser in 2014 that they called “Crocodile BrowserLite.” Osine wrote the code, and Anesi designed the site. They set up a company called BluDoors (inspired by Microsoft’s Windows). They made their software available free on Google’s Play Store. While such success may be unusual, an interest in software and technology is increasingly popular among Nigerian teens.

Teen girls were not left behind in the software development. In 2015, five Nigerian teen girls from Cross River State won \$10,000 in a Technovation International App challenge in San Francisco, with their creation, a community waste disposal app. The Technovation Challenge is an after-school program that gives high-school girls the opportunity to work with high-tech female mentors as they create their own mobile phone app using the Google App Inventor for Android. The competition challenged girls from the ages of 10–18 to build a mobile app that would address a community problem and submit it in the elementary or high-school category. The winning Nigerian teens used the MIT App Inventor platform to create their application on the Android operating system, which they called “Discardious.”

Music, however, receives the highest concentration of interest where Nigerian teens, as both consumers and producers—effectively becoming prosumers—engage in a variety of music forms. The most common and subscribed music by these teen prosumers is Rap. Influenced by foreign U.S. rap artists such as Snoop Dogg, Ice Cube, Tupac, and Queen Lateefah, Nigerian youth began to adapt the beat, the lyrics, and the flow in a localized form to create “Naija Hip-Hop,” a locally

flavored rap that combined pidgin English with local languages over layered with a rap beat.

Starting out in the mid-2000s, and straddling between hard-core rhythms of U.S. rap and African messages, Nigerian rap musicians that set the scene included Terry Tha Rapman, Modenine, Ruggedman, Eedris Abdulkareem, Phyno, 2shotz, Naeto-C, Olamide, Choc Boiz, Ice Prince, 2Face. While not themselves teenagers, they provided a template for teenagers who also started picking up the mic. Nigerian teenagers, born in 1990s in the Lagos area in southern Nigeria, also started forming as either duos or solo acts and combined schooling with music, creating a niche for the lower youth market. However, while still experimenting with demos, they established a hardcore following among teenagers. These teenage startups included Tjan (Tijani Fowosere), Phenom (Tope Onimowo), Lil Kesh (Keshinro Ololade), and the biggest by 2015—Davido (David Adedeji Adeleke) and Wizkid (Ayodeji Ibrahim Balogun).

Northern Nigeria, although predominantly Muslim, has produced a large number of teenage Rap artists. While southern Nigerian Rap was characterized by hedonistic lyrics centered on individual prowess and living the highlife, northern Nigerian Rappers tended to be more conservative, with lyrics focusing on sermonizing about life, parental obedience, and warning against drugs and wanton sexualities. A vivid example was K-Boyz, made up of four friends who formed the band while still in senior secondary school. Their first demo, “Kariya” (protection) was an HIV/AIDS awareness song. Other acts in the north of the country include Minor Mistake, X-Man, K-Arrowz, Kano Riders, Ziriums, Mixer Bash, Mic Flamer, and by 2016, Lil’ Ameer, a 13-year-old Rapper in junior secondary school at the time.

Of all the range of sports activities available to youth, Nigerian teens prefer soccer. This is evidenced by the sheer number of soccer fan clubs and the general fandom culture soccer generates among teens. Soccer is often played on the streets—with the ball weaving in and out of traffic—especially after school hours. While many of the teens do follow Nigerian soccer clubs, their overwhelming fandom focus is on the British football league. Soccer clubs such as Manchester United, Manchester City, Arsenal, and Chelsea compete with European football clubs such as Real Madrid and Barcelona for the ardent attention of Nigerian teens.

Although there are established adult female soccer clubs in Nigeria (e.g., the Nigeria national women’s football team, nicknamed the Super Falcons), girls do not engage in soccer with the same passion as their male counterparts. Basketball, however, would seem to be favored by both boys and girls, but more by girls, as the boys’ attention was often more engaged by soccer. However, female soccer stars such as Ugochi Emenayo (b. 1997) of Nasarawa Amazons and Mary Ologbosere (b. 1999) of Ibom Angels, provided role models for many young teen female Nigerians fascinated by female involvement in the game.

An increasing rediscovery of dancing seemed to have caught the fancy of teens in the mid-2010s, as more young people, perhaps ignited by the increasing availability of MTV and O stations on satellite TV channels, get tuned to rap and African music and form dance clubs. A rowdy mixed-gender affair, dance clubs provide

Nigerian teens, especially in the urban centers, opportunities for *swagger* (their term for urban cool) and display their dancing skills.

FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE

The family structure in Nigeria is patrilineal—basing its cohesion on the male head of the family. It is traditionally nuclear, with male and female parents in a socially, legally, and religiously recognized conjugal union, constituting the basic social unit that includes dependents, principally, children—whether biological or adopted. There are, however, three variations of this structure.

In the traditional family setting, gender roles are strictly defined, with the wife becoming a homemaker and staying at home to look after the household domestic ecology, while the husband is expected to go out to work and earn a living to sustain the household. Both the husband and wife may be educated in one form of education system (whether Islamic or contemporary Western), but nevertheless chose this mode of family structure.

A modification of this traditional structure is when a woman engages in an economic activity, such as trading, either at home, local market, or long distance, and helps out in running the family, although still carrying the bulk of household responsibilities. Children often help in this process by hawking whatever product the mother (or mother equivalent) sells in the neighborhood—a practice that is increasingly seen as a form of forced child labor by both government and nongovernmental organizations.

With increasing urbanization and rising cost of living, a third structure, the modern family, emerged; it is regulated by a modern notion of equality of the sexes. In this structure, both parents work, and children are often looked after by, usually a female, young house helper, who is often made to trade the relatively better life in terms of feeding, abode, and other amenities at the expense of attending regular school, since, barely a teen herself, she has to ferry the couple's children to school and back and look after their needs.

This broad structure differs according to religion. Among the Muslims, a husband—whether rich or poor—may be married to up to four wives. There is no socially or legally recognized facility for a woman to marry more than one man at the same time in the name of equality, as this structure is ordained by Islam. Most Christians tend to be married to only one wife. Although rare, single-parent families exist where either a lone father or a lone mother becomes wholly responsible for raising children from a previous relationship.

The social life of teens in Nigeria is gender defined, and gender in Nigeria is recognized as being clearly biologically male or female. Debates about transgender issues are extremely rare in Nigeria, and transgender Nigerians remain private. Similarly, punishing alternative sexual relationships with jail sentences and often death, LGBTQ teens are hardly out in the public space. That does not prevent LGBTQ teens from expressing their feelings anonymously on internet social network platforms such as Facebook, using often bawdy suggestive aliases and generic avatars, although freely giving out their phone numbers.

Rising levels of poverty limits social activities of both boys and girls. The social life of teens while attending schools is regulated by school authorities. Consequently, issues such as bullying leading to teen suicides, drug and alcohol use, sexuality, and peer pressure are not common, especially as some of these behaviors require money, which is not easily available to teens. Common miscreant behaviors are petty theft, especially of phones, snatching, and often getting caught up in gang turf wars in some large cities.

With hardly any constant running water, electricity, or health facilities, the focus is on survival. Access to technology is restricted almost exclusively to ownership of increasingly cheap Smartphones and competitively cheap data plans from the telecommunication companies that operate in the country.

Male teens tend to focus on playing football (soccer), regardless of the part of the country, providing an ironic social glue that politics has not been able to do in terms of the unity of the country. Female teens have a more restricted social life focused on remaining constantly visible or spatially accountable to their parents. Consequently, female teen life centers on home and conversations with family and neighborhood friends.

However, the affordability of Smartphones, especially cheap clones from China, liberated teens in Nigeria and enabled them to join social network and social media platforms on the internet and form social and cohesive groups. Like their counterparts in other parts of the world, the relative freedom of interactivity on the internet is a much-prized freedom.

From about 2010, the most critical point of concern in teenage lives in Nigeria most certainly was on young girls. These were the most vulnerable group of teenagers. The biggest threat to teenage girls in Nigeria was the very fact of being female. From being forced into child labor to survive, to rapes and early marriages, all these factors combine to deny the average teenage girl in Nigeria opportunities to lead a fulfilling teenage life.

For teenage boys, the most common social life especially for those out of school, revolved around urban migration and child labor. It was common to see teenage boys hawking a variety of goods at street traffic lights in most of Nigerian cities. These goods ranged from fruits to electronic items such as phone accessories, household accessories, substandard DVDs of latest American and Asian films and audio CDs of latest American musicians. In the rural areas, agricultural child labor prevented many teenage boys from attending schools; or in cases where they do attend schools, do so only on certain days while the rest of the days were taken up in farming. Rural teenage girls often get taken to large urban centers as nannies and house girls, often subjected to physical, mental, and economic abuse from their employers, who often, ironically, were somehow related to them.

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL RITES OF PASSAGE

Nigeria has two dominant religions—Islam, predominantly in the north, and Christianity, predominantly in the south. In between the two religions are indigenous religious practices that are organized around ancestral deities. The religious

divide, though, is not too sharp in some areas, particularly outside the core Muslim northern part of the country, since many adherents of each religion live together, both in mixed families, as well as in mixed communities, particularly in the north central part of the country called the Middle Belt, which forms a bridge between the south and the north of the country.

There are no common rites of passage in Nigeria due to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the country. Many ethnic groups have rites to mark transitions from one stage of growth and development to another. However, such rites of passage have faded in many communities or, if they still exist, are ceremonial pageantry rather than rites. Further, intercultural connectivity, global communication, and increasing self-awareness have all created new youth clusters that seem to shun such traditional rites of passage.

However, there are some ethnic groups who continue to mark the end of childhood with ritual cultural practices. The Fulani ethnic group—spread across the Sahara from Chad to Mali, cutting through vast swathes of Nigeria, for instance, located mainly in northern and central Nigeria—have retained the *Sharo* (test of endurance) rite of passage, especially in rural settlements. It involves a youth stripped to the waist standing in a circle of onlookers, while he is bullwhipped by another individual at least three times. His unflinching, stoic and unemotional endurance at the ending of the whipping certifies him a man. A related activity, *Shadi* (contest of endurance) is when two young males are competing for the attention of a single girl. Before the contest, the girl agrees that she will marry the winner. The unflinching winner will marry her and protect her as he has proven himself to be a warrior. This is necessary as they spend most of their lives as nomads, on the move and often hostile terrain and territories.

Fulani teenage girls also face a similar rite, but with facial tattoos (*Tchoodi*). During the painful tattooing on the face, the girl should not flinch or cry—if she does, she is deemed to have failed her transition to a woman, and the tattooing will be delayed until another time. Girls who have avoided or failed the *Tchoodi* are often the target of demeaning jokes from their peers.

In southern Nigeria communities of Efik and Ibibio of Cross River State a very familiar rite of passage is *mbodi*, or bride fattening. This is a rite of passage girls of marriageable age undergo. It is the process of body fattening, in which the girl or young woman is fed special food to make her fat. In these communities, it is believed that larger women are beautiful and more desirable to their prospective husband.

RIGHTS AND LEGAL STATUS

In 2003, the then Nigerian President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo signed the Children's Rights Act 2003 (CRA). The Act consolidated all laws relating to children into one single piece of legislation, as well as specifying the duties and obligations of the government, parents and other authorities, and organizations and bodies. Key areas include the right of every child to freedom of association and freedom

from any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of their birth.

However, this act is more honored in the breach than in the observance, considering the variety of ways teens are exploited and abused in Nigeria. An example of a rampant abuse is the use of both teenage boys and girls in domestic labor, often by educated women who employ, for instance, child nannies to take care of their children while they attend a class in a higher education facility or go to office to work. The child nanny is denied access to education in this way.

Another area of violation of Children's Rights is early child marriage that mostly affects girls who are married to older men in an arranged marriage without their knowledge or consent. By 2014, some of the child brides forced into this situation had started fighting back, although in a particularly violent manner that illustrated their frustrations. For instance, in the Muslim northern Nigerian State of Kano, a 14-year-old child bride from a rural poor family sprinkled rat poison in her much older husband's dinner, killing him and two guests. Arrested and sentenced to death under Sharia law, she was later acquitted due to massive pressure from human rights lawyers in Nigeria and abroad.

In 2009, the Nigerian government implemented the National Youth Policy with the general objective of approaching youth problems comprehensively.

INEQUALITIES

Girl child labor in Nigeria has remained a consistent social problem despite the Child Rights Act of 2003, whose opening paragraph states: "In every action concerning a child, whether undertaken by an individual, public or private body, institutions or service, court of law, or administrative or legislative authority, the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration legislation in the country." Yet debilitating poverty and ignorance, in both urban and rural areas of Nigeria prevent this from being achieved, and this can be attributed to main reasons behind girl child labor. Faced with the choice of educating a boy or a girl, parents in rural areas inevitably chose to send the boys to school and forced the girls into hawking various products as part of their domestic economy. Not only does this deny the girls the opportunity for schooling, it also exposes them to dangers of sexual assault.

In a survey of 347 children, it was discovered that cleaning the house, washing plates, cooking, washing clothes, fetching water, taking care of employer's children constitute some of the most frequent indicators of female child labor. And most of the girls were pupils of junior secondary classes age 12 to 15. Girls are often preferred by employers for these chores because of the domestic nature of the activities, which merely entrench the stereotypes of domesticity on the girls, creating a docile mindset. The study also discovered that many of these child laborers have some familial connections to their employers, often escaping the raw poverty of their rural villages and being given away to various relatives living in towns for a chance of at least decent meals, if not education (Gankam 2014, 154).

In northern Nigeria, where the median age of first marriage is 15 years—the lowest in Nigeria and virtually unchanged over the past 30 years—forced marriage is seen as coterminous with child marriage. For this category of teenage girls, the biggest health challenge was Vesicovaginal Fistula (VVF), resulting from marriage at an age when the body has not fully developed enough to give birth to a child. VVF is one of the main problems that concern girls' and women's advocates in northern Nigeria (Eltantawi 2016).

The cultural practice of marrying off Muslim girls before they reach physical maturity is so entrenched that it has continued all these years, despite the medical trauma wrought on the victims. Northern Nigerian Muslim scholars often take the cautious path in keeping silent about the fact that forced marriage is not a particularly recommended Islamic practice.

In southern Nigeria, one of the most vivid social problems affecting teenage girls was being kept in “baby factories.” The term was coined by the Nigerian media to reflect a situation in which child trafficking criminal networks establish homes—often disguised as maternity homes—where young teenage girls, made pregnant out of wedlock and facing ostracization from their parents and communities, are taken in by the proprietors of these illegal homes. Due to the large number of pregnant girls at any given time in these homes, they are deemed to be baby production centers. When the children are delivered, the young mothers surrender them to the criminal network and leave the home. They may be given little money as compensation. The babies are then sold to a series of buyers—ranging from childless couples to cultists who want to use the babies for ritual purposes.

ISSUES TODAY

Teen life in Nigeria is as diverse as the country itself. Each cluster of teens, either within a tight social ecology, or as a lonesome manifestation, reflects a variety of feelings, attitudes, and mindsets that are increasingly converging to a concept of “global” that is not clearly defined—following the current of the electronic river that drives contemporary communication infrastructures.

The internal ethnic and religious divisions in Nigeria, as evidenced by the Boko Haram insurgency, which started in 2009 in the north and which sought to institute a stricter form of Islamic Sharia in the country, and militancy in the Niger Delta in the south over control of resources, paint a picture of a socially fractured nation; yet the lives of teens in Nigeria—aspirations, inspirations, hopes, and nightmares—remain the same, regardless of this diversity. The Nigerian teen in 2016 has certainly socially evolved rapidly from the same teen painted by Ikechukwu Enwemnwana (2004). The sweeping transformations of the African social landscape brought about by the easy availability of new forms of communication have radically altered the way Nigerian teens define themselves and social interactions.

Caged by the institutional requirements of schooling or in the case of street children, mired in absolute poverty, Nigerian teens prove resolute in struggling to survive in a nation characterized by social divide. Whether battling a series of

examinations that serve as pathways to the next stage of their lives, washing dishes in roadside restaurants or washing windcreens of vehicles in traffic in cities, or selling live catfish, bread, phone recharge cards, newspapers, or bootleg DVDs, they project a spirit of survival in either celebration of life or just living through life.

Abdalla Uba Adamu

Further Reading

- Busari, S., J. Hanna, and F. Karimi. 2016. "Boko Haram Releases 21 Chibok Girls to Nigerian Government." Accessed May 20, 2019. <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/10/13/africa/nigeria-chibok-girls-released/>
- Dell, P. 2008. *Teens in Nigeria*. Minneapolis, MN: Compass Point Books.
- Eltantawi, S. 2016. "Between Strict Constructionist Shari'ah and Protecting Young Girls in Contemporary Northern Nigeria: The Case of Child Marriage (Ijbar)." In *Women's Rights and Religious Law: Domestic and International Perspectives*, edited by F. Banda and L. F. Joffe, 91–107. New York: Routledge.
- Enwemnwā, I. 2004. "Nigeria." In *Teen Life in Africa*, edited by Toyin Falola, 175–204. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- FME (Federal Ministry of Education). 2017. "Digest of Statistics 2017." Abuja: FME.
- Gankam, T. I. 2014. *Child Domestic Work in Nigeria: Conditions of Socialization and Measures of Intervention*. Münster: Waxmann.
- National Bureau of Statistics. 2018. "Demographic Statistics Bulletin 2018." Accessed May 20, 2019. <http://nigerianstat.gov.ng/download/775>
- Walker, J. 2016. "Between Global Standards and Local Realities: Shari'a and Mass Marriage Programmes in Northern Nigeria." In *Marriage by Force? Contestation over Consent and Coercion in Africa*, edited by A. Bunting, B. N. Lawrence, and R. L. Roberts. Athens: Ohio University Press.