

Building nurseries for Edo market women [AFRICA-NG] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

If you have been to the typical Nigerian market you will be conversant with the scene of the market woman trying to sell her wares and at the same time cater for her little toddler. These kids are often seen crying, with misty eyes and dripping noses. They might also be seen poopooing on the floor, rolling in dirt, or wandering out of their mothers' view and unto the pathway of unforeseen danger.

All too often, the market woman makes a poor effort at providing for the child's needs at the same time as she tries to make the little money that will help her meet the needs of her family.

The terrible things that are wrong with the Nigerian environment are leaving the children to grow up where there is generous amount of dirt to eat and rubbish to play with. Compare this with other countries where children have provision for healthcare and toys to play with and one begin to understand how a child's potential for greatness could become stunted in the Nigerian environment.

It is in realisation of this situation of need that the Edo State Women Association (ESWA) come up with an idea to build a Market Traders' Day Nursery.

ESWA plans to work with market women associations to set up and manage day care centres for children aged zero to four years old in markets in Edo State.

Says ESWA: "Markets are not child-friendly places. Traders and female porters who are mothers of young babies and toddlers cope as best as they can, but often to the detriment of the children. Vocal provision of childcare is often too expensive for many of market women, the hours are also unsuitable."

ESWA further observed that because many of the children are strapped to their mother's backs for long periods they are slow to meet their developmental milestones such as crawling, walking and running.

"On the whole, hygiene conditions in markets are not conducive for the health and growth of young children. Some traders and porters have resorted to leaving their babies at home or in the market in the care of under-aged girl-- children between the ages of 5 and 14. The implication for these girls -- children is that they are unable to attend school, with grave poverty implications for them when they grow up," ESWA said.

ESWA has held preliminary talks with leaders of the market women's association and they have agreed to pilot a small-scale nursery/creche for up to 40 children.

"Facilities will be basic to start with, but the project will be run to the highest health and safety standards in consultation with local authority and statutory service providers. This is to ensure that adequate healthcare and other services will be provided for the children on site," Ogbeide said of the project.

- reprinted from This Day

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