

**MARGARET BELCHER AND THE CALABAR REMAND HOME:
'SAVING' TRAFFICKED CHILDREN IN COLONIAL NIGERIA
1950s**

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Abstract

This article explores the manner by which the British Social Welfare Office (BSWO) dislocated numerous children from their trading activities, where at times, no criminal activity existed, in the name of 'saving' them. As a continuation of the reform and rehabilitation work done in Southwestern Nigeria, the creation of the Juvenile Court and Remand Home in Southeastern Nigeria sought to identify child delinquents in need of reform and children in need of care and protection. The examination of colonial documents, newspapers, and Margaret Belcher's personal papers presents a new interpretation of juvenile reform. I argue that the British Colonial Office ultimately denied children and their guardians certain forms of economic agency by deploying child labour in ways aimed to 'save' the colonial economy through agricultural reform.

Keywords: Child Labour, Trafficking, British Social Welfare Service, Colonialism, Nigeria

Introduction

As numerous children found semi-permanent residence at the Calabar Remand Home, a juvenile correctional institution in Southeastern Nigeria, throughout the 1950s, it merits considering how and why the British Social Welfare Office (BSWO) remanded them.² As part of the growing effort to manage the activities of children, the Colonial Office assigned Margaret Laurie Belcher to the BSWO in Calabar from 1949-1958. Among others, the Igbo, Efik, Qua, Arochukwu, and Ibibio comprised the groups with

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² Kingdom Sunday Mboho and Tahirih Emmanuel Udousoro, "A Comparative Analysis of Juvenile Justice System in the Northern and Southern Part of Nigeria," *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*, 29 (2014), 17.

whom Belcher worked.³ She investigated individuals who trafficked children and used children to assist with trade activities. Belcher also attempted to identify underage brides and took children into her care whom she believed to be in the custody of improper guardians. Once in custody, the BSWO housed the children in the state sponsored reform home while the Juvenile Court representatives attempted to locate their legal guardians.

Analysing Belcher's work, as a welfare officer, provides insight into the movement of children, generally up to the age of sixteen, outside of their natal villages and how adults utilized their labour in various ways. In doing so, the limitations of the international and local efforts to establish protections for Nigerian children at a time when their economic activities maintained their livelihoods, and the use of their labour ensured the economic solvency of their parents or guardians are revealed. Belcher's history working with children throughout the continent of Africa also highlights a trend among Europeans who established clubs, such as the girl guides, boy scouts, and others whereby adults mediated the leisure and productive activities of children.⁴ Reformists, scholars, and clinicians asserted that youth had to be managed through reform and indoctrination in order to avoid delinquent behaviours.⁵

Colonial case studies show that children and youth presented an imagined threat whom officials believed could possibly lead to an "insurrectionary unemployed class."⁶ However, Alcinda Honwana and Filip De Boeck contend that children and youth should be considered both "makers and breakers" of their environments. They describe "youth" as a social category that exists as a time in a young person's life when agency and deviance can have nuanced meanings and results.⁷ For instance, the colonial administrators denounced children's hawking activities (selling

³ Margaret L. Belcher, Social Welfare Officer to Dot Sansom, 5 August 1955, Papers, 1954-1958, 110, MSS. Afr. S.1343, Rhodes House, Oxford.

⁴ Abosede A. George, *A History of Girlhood, Labor and Social Development in Colonial Lagos* (Athens, OH: 2014), 177-8.

⁵ W.R. Bett et al., "Abstracts and References," *The British Journal of Delinquency*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (January, 1955): 244-252.

⁶ Andrew Burton, "Raw Youth, School Leavers and the Emergence of Structural Unemployment in Late-Colonial Urban Tanganyika," *The Journal of African History* 47, No. 3 (2006), 365-6.

⁷ Alcinda Honwana and Filip De. Boeck eds., *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Postcolonial Africa* (Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2005), 2.

goods in the street), but Adam Paddock argues that Nigerian parents believed that hawking taught children “basic business skills...and allowed children to contribute to the family income,” whereby they learned “communication skills and responsibility.”⁸ Yet, colonial authorities determined that certain types of child labour and migration patterns remained unacceptable.

Recent scholarship on children in Africa includes studies on child migration, trafficking, fosterage, child slaves, pawns, domestic servants, and sex slaves.⁹ Within each of these statuses, children worked in various capacities, including, but not limited to agriculture, petty trade, domestic work, porters, forced prostitutes and as assistants to short and long distant traders. Using the Calabar Remand Home as a case study offers a new examination of juvenile welfare reforms, which integrates the birth of social welfare programs, Belcher’s efforts to end child trafficking, and children’s work in Remand Home as a way to extend the colonial administration’s call to introduce agricultural reform throughout the Colony.

To date, the majority of scholarship on juvenile reform programs during the colonial period has focused on western Nigeria. For instance, the development of urban areas and the lack of employment opportunities in the post-war era led to an increase in attention on children who were not

⁸ Adam Paddock, “A World of Good to Our Boys: Boys Scouts in Southern Nigeria, 1934-1951” in *Children and Childhood in Colonial Nigeria Histories*, ed. Saheed Aderinto (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 126.

⁹ See E. Alber, J. Martin, and C. Notemans, *Child Fostering in West Africa: New Perspectives on Theory and Practices* (Boston, MA: Brill Publishing, 2013); S. Aderinto, ed., *Children and Childhood in Colonial Nigeria Histories* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015); Saheed Aderinto, *When Sex Threatened the State, Illicit Sexuality: Nationalism, and Politics in Colonial Nigeria, 1900-1958* (Chicago, 2015); Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph C. Miller, eds., *Children in Slavery Through the Ages* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009); Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph C. Miller, eds., *Child Slaves in the Modern World* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2011); Abosede A. George, *A History of Girlhood, Labor and Social Development in Colonial Lagos* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2014); Benjamin N. Lawrance and Richard L. Roberts, eds., *Trafficking in Slavery’s Wake: Law and the Experience of Women and Children in Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2012); and Elodie Razy and Marie Rodet, eds., *Children on the Move in Africa: Past and Present Experiences of Migration* (Rochester, NY: James Currey, 2016).

in school or who did not engage in legitimate work. Abosede George demonstrates how Lagosian children in western Nigeria became “subjects of contestation” between the elite and working class, and the colonial administration and its subjects.¹⁰ The Colonial Office sought to create systems whereby boys and young men received training in an attempt to create “a path toward the breadwinner form of masculinity,” a notion produced by “British cultural ideals.”¹¹ The desire to train young men as productive family men was meant to decrease the number of undesirable delinquents. Similarly, Paddock provides a comparative analysis of Igbo (South-eastern) and Yoruba (Western) children’s participation in the Boys Scouts as “African subjects who would become the future British colonial employees.”¹² However, grooming boys to become the future breadwinners of their households did not mean they had immediate access to legitimate employment. Children created their own micro-economies as petty traders, and petty thieves as they attempted to support themselves and their families who suffered from economic insecurity.¹³

Colonial officials asserted that the government had to intervene if the child lacked appropriate parental supervision.¹⁴ Laurent Fourchard’s examination of the Penal Reform system (1930s - 1960s) in Western Nigeria provides insight into how Lagos Social Welfare Officer Donald Falkner and his assistant Alison Izzett sought to control juvenile rural to urban movement, which they believed often led to juvenile delinquency. The reform efforts, which included reformatories, the juvenile court system and industrial schools, aimed to “rehabilitate children rather than to punish them.”¹⁵ Likewise, Simon Heap has described the work of Salvation Army administrators who focused on building reform institutions, such as the Boys Industrial School in Lagos and elsewhere, in order to monitor children’s activities. Heap explains that the creation of these reform institutions, and the application of the term “juvenile delinquency” as a “social construction reflecting the disquiet and fear of society toward

¹⁰ George, *A History of Girlhood*, 2.

¹¹ George, *A History of Girlhood*, 171.

¹² Paddock, 137-138.

¹³ George, *A History of Girlhood*.

¹⁴ Laurent Fourchard, “Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria, 1920-60” *Journal of African History* 47, Iss. 1: 526. Alison Izzett was the first female social welfare officer in Lagos.

¹⁵ Fourchard, “The Limits of Penal Reform,” 519-520.

children...” became part of the developing psychological analyses of children’s behaviours in Nigeria.¹⁶ John Iliffe briefly discussed the development of social welfare programs in Onitsha and Calabar by noting that the colonial office wanted to eliminate cruel forms of child labour, child delinquency, and poverty.¹⁷

This article extends the discussion of social welfare efforts by examining how practitioners and colonial officials imagined and defined social welfare and why child trafficking in Southeastern Nigeria presented a particular kind of problem that the Colonial Office could not easily eliminate.

The Birth of Social Welfare Programs

Children who lived in Nigeria in the years leading up to Independence experienced increased attention from the colonial government, reform institution leadership, as well as from the international community of humanitarians. The League of Nations Advisory Committees on the Traffic of Women and Children, and the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People pressured British colonial officials to investigate the welfare of Nigerian children. Attention to colonial Nigerian children did not occur in a vacuum. In part, this effort can be attributed to the international organization, Save the Children Fund, whose work later encouraged the adoption of the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child.¹⁸ In June 1931, Save the Children International Union held the International Conference on African Children in Geneva. Some of the conclusions set forth by the Union, and presented to W. A. MacKenzie, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, encouraged authorities to investigate child labour abuses, and advised that children should remain with their families and that

¹⁶ Simon Heap, “Processing Juvenile Delinquents at the Salvation Army’s Boys’ Industrial Home in Lagos,” in *Children and Childhood in Nigerian Histories*, ed. Saheed Aderinto (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 50-2.

¹⁷ John Iliffe, *The African Poor: A history* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 201-202.

¹⁸ Paul G. Lauren, *The Evolution of Human Rights: Visions Seen, Third Edition* (Philadelphia, 2011), 111, 120. English school teacher Eglantyne Jebb believed that children had inalienable rights and created the Save the Children Fund.

the development of recreation centres would “prevent children from becoming vagabonds.”¹⁹

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the formalization of social programs to monitor the well-being of children began to take shape around the globe. Practitioners and activists alike joined efforts to produce concrete ways by which children should be monitored and trained, and their living and working environments inspected.²⁰ As a result of the Industrial Revolution, the rise of colonialism, the Great Depression, and the aftermath of World War II, children inhabited spaces wherein they worked for themselves or where adults deployed their labour in order to survive the economic conditions of the time. As children from poor families sought ways to survive in colonial Nigeria, the colonial office and the juvenile justice system also pursued programs that aimed to shift juvenile activities considered delinquent to legitimate ones.

Social Development, as outlined by the British colonial government, encompassed two spheres of community engagement. The first included Community Development and Welfare, which mainly dealt with community development projects, clubs for adults and children, recreation, adult education, housing schemes, industrial workers and missionary work. The second, Social Welfare, mainly focused on individuals. Services included, probation guidelines, children’s care and protection, delinquency issues, infant, maternity welfare and family, health visits, Remand and Approved Schools, mental health care, prison visiting and relief for the poor.²¹ While these services were not mutually exclusive, the British Social Welfare Office imagined that separating services would be more effective.

The colonial administration appointed its first social welfare officer to Lagos, Nigeria in 1941, and as services expanded, the administration appointed an officer to Calabar in 1949. In part, the administration

¹⁹ Letter from J. C. Van Notten to W. A. MacKenzie, Secretary of State for the Colonies, July 23, 1931, Congress on Children of Non-European Origin International Conference on African Children, COMCOL 1/999, 24, NNAI.

²⁰ Patricia T. Rooke and Rudy L. Schnell, “‘Uncramping Child Life’: International Children’s Organisations, 1917-1939,” in *International Health Organisations and Movements, 1918-1939*, ed. Paul Weindling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 176-8.

²¹ C. J. Mayne, “Ten Year Plan: Social Welfare Report,” December 6, 1950, Social Welfare Service, CADIST 3/3/363, Nigeria National Archive Calabar (NNAC).

developed the Social Welfare Office system as a way to deal with juveniles whom they believed to be delinquents.²² The Office also outlined the types of welfare services that should be afforded to eligible children deemed in need of “care and protection.”²³ In October 1950, the Senior Resident of Calabar Province, C. J. Mayne outlined the BSWO’s Community Development and Welfare Ten-Year Plan and defined social welfare as,

... dealing with social casualties, the handicapped and the unfortunate in the community. It has a constructive or community side (generally performed by voluntary bodies) in attaching the underlying social ills which are responsible for the casualties. In this latter field the roles of community development and social welfare overlap.²⁴

It is through this lens that the BSWO’s social welfare efforts become apparent.

New approaches to monitoring juveniles developed during the 1940s and 1950s. After World War II, the Nigerian Colonial Welfare Office introduced measures, which led to the passage of the *Children and Young Persons Ordinance* of 1943.²⁵ The British expanded Social Development and Welfare services beyond Western Nigeria in order to ensure that the *Ordinance*, which formalized the juvenile justice system in Nigeria, remained effective.²⁶

Colonial administrators and those committed to social welfare issues viewed some forms of child labour as suspect and believed that diverting children’s attention to colonial approved activities decreased social problems, enhanced colonial efforts to improve food production and

²² Laurent Fourchard, “Lagos and the Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Nigeria, 1920-60,” *Journal of African History*, 47 (2006): 115.

²³ K. S. Mboho and T. E. Udousoro, “A Comparative Analysis of Juvenile Justice System in the Northern and Southern Part of Nigeria,” *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*, 29 (2014): 15.

²⁴ C.J. Mayne, “Ten Year Plan: Social Welfare Report,” 6 December 1950, Social Welfare Service, CADIST 3/3/363, NNAC.

²⁵ Laurent Fourchard, “The Limits of Penal Reform: Punishing Children and Young Offenders in South Africa and Nigeria, 1930s to 1960,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Sept. 2011): 517.

²⁶ Abosede George, “Within Salvation: Girl Hawkers and the Colonial State in Development Era Lagos,” in *Children and Childhood in Colonial Nigeria Histories*, ed. Saheed Aderinto (Palgrave MacMillan, 2015), 202.

infrastructure, and increased nationalistic fervour. Saheed Aderinto highlights the expectations that the British had of children throughout colonial Nigeria by claiming that, “Children owed a civic duty to the British empire and must show their appreciation for their imperial citizenship, or their privileged status as a ‘British-protected person.’”²⁷ In turn, their labour must benefit the state. Therefore, instances of child trafficking and the use of child labour not sanctioned by the state became a point of contention between Nigerians and colonial administrators.

Ideal Conditions for Child Trafficking

Southeastern Nigeria’s geographical location along the Atlantic coast, and its inland region surrounded by waterways through which various forms of travel and trade occurred provided child traffickers the perfect landscape through which to move children. In the aftermath of the transatlantic slave trade, attempts to control child labour increased throughout Africa and resulted in an escalation of child dealing.²⁸ For example, David Imbua explains that the Efik in the Cross River region, “abandoned fishing, farming, hunting, and other traditional occupations” in order to participate in the lucrative slave trade, among other child trafficking practices.²⁹

The tradition of pawning practices, child marriages, and child apprenticeships in the trading canoe houses along the coast pre-existed colonial rule and extended through the era. Child traffickers and non-biological guardians transported children along roads, across creeks and rivers, and to surrounding islands. Some travelled to northern Nigeria, west to Ghana, east to the Cameroons, and south to Fernando Pó where the high demand for plantation labour attracted those looking for employment. The

²⁷ Saheed Aderinto, “Empire Day in Africa: Patriotic Colonial Childhood, Imperial Spectacle and Nationalism in Nigeria, 1905-60,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 46, No. 4, 732.

²⁸ Richard L. Roberts, “The End of Slavery, “Crises” over Trafficking, and the Colonial State in the French Soudan,” in *Trafficking in Slavery’s Wake: Law and the Experience of Women and Children in Africa*, eds. Benjamin N. Lawrance and Richard L. Roberts 65.

²⁹ David Imbua, “The Politics of Abolition at Calabar, 1805-1858,” in *Calabar on the Cross River*, eds. David Imbua, Paul Lovejoy and Ivor L. Miller, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press 2017), 149.

Consequently, global economic realities directly influenced children's lives in the Colony. Trevor Getz explains that slave owners "developed strategies of negotiation, evasion, and opposition," while "Europeans administrators learned to balance the demands for increased commercial productivity, potential threats to the political and economic integrity of the colonies from African opposition to anti-slavery legislation, and the stringent demands of the abolitionist lobby."³¹ British colonial representatives and Nigerians understood that the deployment of child labour was necessary to maintain family incomes and the colonial economy.

Pawnship and Child Marriage

The British Colonial Office attempted to understand the porosity among the various subordinate statuses in which children lived and mainly focused on child pawning and child marriage throughout their territories.³² If a child's guardian (parent or otherwise) needed a loan in Southeastern Nigeria, he or she offered the labour of a dependent to pay the interest on the loan. The moneylender took guardianship of the child until the debtor repaid the debt.³³ Taking into consideration that some moneylenders sold children into slavery when the debt went unpaid, colonial officials throughout West Africa then focused on the care given to children when pawned.³⁴

When debtors failed to repay a loan where a moneylender received a girl pawn, the moneylender often took the girl as a wife, understanding the

Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra: An African Society in the Atlantic World (New York, 2010), 178-9.

³¹ Trevor R. Getz, *Slavery and Reform in West Africa: Toward Emancipation in Nineteenth Century Senegal and the Gold Coast* (Athens, OH: 2004), 28.

³² Robin P. Chapdelaine, "Girls Pawns Brides & Slaves: Child Trafficking in Southeastern Nigeria, 1920s," in *Children on the Move in Africa: Past and Present Experiences of Migration* (Rochester, NY: Boydell, 2016), 55.

³³ Toyin Falola and Paul E. Lovejoy, "Pawnship in Historical," in *Pawnship, Slavery, and Colonialism in Africa* (Trenton, NJ: 2003), 1-26. Paul Lovejoy contends that people pawned dependents in order to avoid enslavement.

³⁴ Cati Coe, "How Debt Became Care: Child Pawning and its Transformations in Akupem, The Gold Coast, 1874-1929," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 82, No. 2 (May 2010), 299-300.

loan would represent the bride price payment, or the lender offered the girl as a child bride to another man or child trafficker. Officials found that enforcing restrictions, which limited the transfer of young children based on age was impossible. As Jessica Cammaert highlights in her study of the transfer of young girls in Ghana, it remained a challenge for British authorities to identify the proper age of girls.³⁵

The Juvenile Court had a difficult time preventing girl marriages because marriage by proxy remained legal under *Native Law and Custom* during the early 1950s.³⁶ For example, an agent would travel to various villages with £100—the average bride price ranging from £10 to £60 if she was educated—with the intent of accumulating several girls at a time.³⁷ He paid the required bride price with the pretence that he would take the young girl to a suitable man for marriage. However, agents habitually received stolen children and sold them as slaves. By 1956 the Eastern House of Assembly passed the *Age of Marriage Law* making it illegal to marry a girl under 16 years of age.³⁸

British cultural norms influenced the way colonial welfare officers dealt with issues related to sexuality. Saheed Aderinto explains that the BSWO sought to police “girlhood sexuality” as part of their modernizing efforts during the 1940s and claims that, “sexuality has played a significant role in molding the idea of statehood and progress.” Influenced by British ideals, anxiety about morality, child marriage, child prostitution, notions of “childhood innocence,” and the medicalization of sex shaped the way in which the BSWO defined and treated children. As a result, the British raised the age of consent for a child from 13 years old to 16 years old in 1958 as a way to protect young girls from sexual predators.³⁹ The colonial attempt to administer such control is evident when considering Belcher’s work at the Remand Home.

³⁵ Jessica V. Cammaert, “‘I Want to Follow Kwaku’: The Construction of Self and Home by Unfree Children in the Gold Coast, ca. 1941,” *Journal of African History*, Vol. 56 (2015): 375.

³⁶ Belcher, Personal Papers, 41.

³⁷ Belcher, Personal Papers, 50.

³⁸ “Child Marriage Abolished in Eastern Nigeria,” *The Daily Times*, March 31, 1956, 11, Nigeria National Archives, Ibadan (NNAI).

³⁹ Saheed Aderinto, *When Sex Threatened the State, Illicit Sexuality: Nationalism, and Politics in Colonial Nigeria, 1900-1958* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 34, 95.

Margaret Laurie Belcher's Social Welfare Mission

Margaret Belcher, a South African woman of English descent, had long history of working with children, primarily girls, throughout Africa and the Middle East.⁴⁰ During the 1920s she dedicated herself to the Child Life and Protection Society in South Africa, which mainly dealt with white children, and also worked as a leader in Girl Guide Movement during the 1920s and 30s.⁴¹ She served as a Social Welfare Officer in Palestine between 1945 and 1948 and in 1952 she received the General Service medal and clasp honouring her work.⁴² The British Colonial Office transferred her to Port Harcourt, Nigeria, in 1948 where she began to make plans to construct a Remand Home in 1949.⁴³ Shortly thereafter, the Colonial Office reassigned her to Calabar where she continued her work with the Girl Guide movement as she managed the Remand Home.⁴⁴

Belcher first introduced the BSWO and its services to the local headmen after which she spoke with the women of Calabar.⁴⁵ She reprimanded villagers about the practice of giving children to strangers, and emphasized what she believed to be its dangers.⁴⁶ In one instance, Belcher noticed several young girls, non-natives to the region, who

⁴⁰ Georgine Clarsen, *Eat My Dust: Early Women Motorists* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 140.

⁴¹ Margaret L. Belcher, *Cape to Cowley Via Cairo* (London, United Kingdom: Methuen & Co. LTD, 1932), 3, 152. Girl Guides remains part of the World Association of Girl Scouts today. See also "South Africa's Guiding History," <http://girlguides.org.za/about-us/>; Internet; accessed April 25, 2018. Before 1936 black children participated in a similar but separate group, the Wayfarer Association. In 1936 the Wayfarer Association was combined with the Girl Guide Association and black girls were called Wayfarer Guides.

⁴² K. Cattanaach, Acting Civil Secretary, Eastern Region, "Decorations: Miss M. L. Belcher," January 15, 1952, Miss M. L. Belcher Personal Papers, CADIST 13/1/998, NNAC.

⁴³ Margaret L. Belcher, Social Welfare Officer to Dot Sansom, May 15, 1949, Papers, 1954-1958, MSS. Afr. S.1343, Rhodes House, Oxford.

⁴⁴ Margaret L. Belcher, Personal Papers, 1954-1958, 34, MSS. Afr. S.1343, Rhodes House, Oxford.

⁴⁵ Belcher, Personal Papers, 28. If she worked in the office, she worked from 8:00 am until 2:00 pm on Mondays through Fridays. See Belcher, Personal Papers, 25.

⁴⁶ Belcher, Personal Papers, 36.

accompanied older Efik women.⁴⁷ Belcher did not believe that the children in their care were blood-related, but had limited options in returning the girls to their natal homes.⁴⁸ What Belcher may not have realized was that having an unrelated (by blood) child in one's care had become so normalized in Calabar that few questioned it. Belcher felt that the ongoing transfer of children needed forceful intervention and noted as much in her memoir:

It soon became clear that urgent action was needed to try to stem the traffic in children & their exploitation by masters & mistresses. To get some idea of the size of the problem a night round-up of the children in need of care & protection was necessary, & for this the co-operation of the Police was essential.⁴⁹

Police officers frequently visited the Remand Home and acted as intermediaries between it and the Juvenile Court.⁵⁰ The Police Department assigned two officers to work with the BSWO on a permanent basis, adding additional officers on a temporary basis as needed.

Rounding Up Children in Creeks and Beaches

With the full support of the Superintendent of Police, Belcher performed nightly round-up efforts in the local waterways. For example, Belcher searched for unaccompanied children along the Oron Canoe beach in Calabar. She chose to investigate the beach because it served as a popular trading area where traders used children as assistants and canoe guards. The covert operation involved colonial officers and the Calabar police. With access to the government boat, Belcher and her crew entered into the waters while a ground squad began its search quietly on land.⁵¹ They used

⁴⁷ The girls could have been prostitutes, domestic servants, market trader assistants, etc.

⁴⁸ Margaret L. Belcher, Social Welfare Officer to Dot Sansom, 5 August, 1955, Papers, 1954-1958, 110, MSS. Afr. S.1343, Rhodes House, Oxford.

⁴⁹ Belcher, Personal Papers, 34.

⁵⁰ Belcher, Personal Papers, 34.

⁵¹ Margaret L. Belcher, Personal Papers, 1954-1958, p. 110, MSS. Afr. S.1343, Rhodes House, Oxford.

flashlight signals to communicate and inspect the open waters in the dark. With care to avoid immediate notice, the team succeeded. By the end of the night, they collected 35 children from the ages of 6 -11 years old.⁵² The traders caused a great commotion when they realized that Belcher and the officers captured their child attendants. They aggressively proclaimed that they took very good care of their young dependents – surely to combat the claim that they had no right to the children or that they (the children) suffered abuse. Belcher hoped that the massive search would discourage traders from using children as canoe guards in this location. As part of the British Social Development program, Belcher collected the children and returned to the Remand Home where they remained for varying lengths of time.⁵³

Authorities also caught child smugglers in Calabar and just beyond its borders. Custom and Excise agents discovered that smugglers docked their canoes along a small creek in Calabar, and asked Belcher to be their guide for the purpose of reclaiming the unaccompanied children. In another instance, she and 30 police personnel and customs agents set off to find the hidden canoes at 9:00 pm. After a five-mile hike to the beach, they broke up into groups to search the swamp in sections. While they found evidence that traders used this section of the creek to harbour smuggled items, they discovered one small boy hiding along the water's edge. The child told the officers that he was "sent to the beach to wait for an uncle in a canoe," and he joined Belcher on her return to the Remand Home.⁵⁴ In another example, the Numan native administration, north of Calabar, a region that bordered the Cameroons, prosecuted non-legal guardians who had a child in their care while travelling by canoes, steamships and other vehicles.⁵⁵

Belcher continued her work in another nearby beach on a more regular basis. Between 1:00 a.m. and 2:00 a.m., Belcher and the police broke up into three groups, two beginning at opposite ends of the beach and one at the centre in search of children, whom they consistently found as young as 3 to 4 years of age, asleep in the bow of the canoes. When questioned, the young canoe guards claimed that their parents or guardians

⁵² Belcher, Personal Papers, 38-40, MSS.Afr.S.1343, Rhodes House, Oxford.

⁵³ Belcher, Personal Papers, 39-40.

⁵⁴ Belcher, Personal Papers, 54-6. The term uncle could denote any male older than the child.

⁵⁵ "Numan makes new law for juveniles," *The Daily Times*, August 2, 1956, 2, NNAI.

instructed them “to follow” “complete strangers.”⁵⁶ Parents most likely received some form of payment from the “strangers,” and children generally obeyed their new guardians and remained in the canoes until their masters returned.

In 1956 and 1957 immigration officers realized that the number of trips made by traders to and from Fernando Pó had increased significantly, as noted on the traders’ passports. Traders initially travelled with their own children to the island, left them there and returned to Nigeria. They then acquired additional children and took them to Fernando Pó to perform domestic chores and agricultural work on palm oil farms. They claimed that the newly acquired children were their own. The prevalence of older women trafficking young children became so severe that laborers in Fernando Pó began to write to the Calabar Divisional Officer. One complaint highlighted this issue and claimed that,

[t]here is a group of this type of woman who practice the habit of kidnapping under false pretence [sic] illiterate children especially female, declared as servants at your end in order to obtain a ... permit, and given out for a reasonable sum locally amidst the semi-cultured class of Spanish Europeans... this traffic and the result is always detrimental of the health of the young and healthy children. There are some children craving freedom...good children are battered combined with her prostitute living, urge me to request that such measures be brought into force that she be not permitted any more travel in my name and be prevented to travel over with female children to save her deception to both the Government and public.⁵⁷

Belcher and her team responded by surprising traders, who waited on the wharf to board ships, headed for Fernandos Pó. If Belcher or any other authority doubted the legitimacy of a child’s status, they detained the child, and confiscated the trader’s passport. The Remand Home became the

⁵⁶ Belcher, Personal Papers, 36-7.

⁵⁷ Letter from Samuel W. Johnson to Divisional Officer, Calabar from Samuel W. Johnson, Santa Isabel, Fernando Po, April 26, 1932, Slave Dealing, CADIST 13/1/76, NNAC. Samuel Johnson was the husband of Lucy Ekanem Edet. Lucy’s alias was Ekanem Ndiyo. Older women forced young girls into prostitution.

child's new home and the trader remained in Nigeria until a judge heard the case.⁵⁸

Children in the Market

Aside from searches along beaches, Belcher and police officers began their pursuit of unaccompanied children who roamed local market streets and hawked goods past 11:00 pm. Children often avoided returning home at the end of the day for fear of abuse by mistresses and masters when they failed to sell a certain quota of goods. As a result, the market became a place where children could easily steal from others, which allowed them to return home and give their guardians the stolen money. On one particular night, Belcher's search for children yielded twenty-one juveniles.⁵⁹

Among other reasons, unsafe working conditions urged the ongoing commitment to locate at risk children. Belcher and the Juvenile Court focused on child deaths by drowning along Calabar's beaches, deaths by fire, and other causes while working for traders.⁶⁰ For example, one incident involved a small boy who worked with his master in a market. Like others, the child slept in the market stall at night and would sound an alarm if thieves attempted to take his master's goods. However, one night while he was locked in the market stall, fabric fell on top of him and he suffocated.⁶¹ Belcher claimed that these types of tragedies fuelled her desire to identify and stop what she and the Court believed to be the trafficking and exploitation of children. However, her task proved difficult, especially when trafficking involved girls.

Marriage by Proxy

Belcher claimed that agents chose very young girls and transported them far from their villages in hopes that the girls would no longer remember where they came from. At times, four to five different parties exchanged

⁵⁸ Margaret L. Belcher, Social Welfare Officer to Dot Sansom, January 15, 1957, Papers 1954-1958, MSS. Afr. S.1343, Rhodes House, Oxford.

⁵⁹ Belcher, Personal Papers, 34-5.

⁶⁰ Belcher, Personal Papers, 36, 39.

⁶¹ Belcher, Personal Papers, 40.

the girls. Child traffickers sold girls for a large profit. They either married older men or worked as domestic servants for those who bought them. The girls who ended up at the Remand Home often had no recollection of their natal villages.⁶² However, Belcher's concern did not solely remain with the girls who ended up at the Remand Home and she took it upon herself to do more research.

The knowledge that a large number of railway men married young girls and then took them to the northern region made Belcher question if the girls remained in Nigeria or if the men transported them outside of the country. Once she had an opportunity to visit Jos, Zaria and Kaduna, she surmised that some of the girls that she met had come from the south. She also concluded that others had ended up in the Middle East.⁶³ The native laws allowing girls to marry by proxy increased pervasiveness of the trafficking and the colonial administration found the issue of child marriage and pawning increasingly problematic. Belcher decided that in order to stop traders from using child labour and selling young girls through marriage by proxy, she needed to visit the local villages and speak with the parents of young children directly.

As villagers became more attuned to Belcher's efforts to prevent the exchange of young girls, the women would occasionally approach Belcher's rest house under the cloak of darkness. For fear of agents finding out and of retribution, women would kneel outside of the Remand Home wall and share what they knew about "abuses against children."⁶⁴ It is likely that women feared exposure to Aro agents or those working on behalf of the Aro, known for their violence and control of the human trafficking schemes.

The history of Aro trade networks provides an overview of the infrastructure used by traffickers in order to maintain trade ties through the expansion of settler colonies in Southeastern Nigeria. From the height of

⁶² Belcher, Personal Papers, 52, 41. Many of the trading networks, which incorporated the trade in children during the transatlantic slave trade and beyond, were part of the Aro trading networks from the 17th century onwards. See G. U. Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra: An African Society in the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and A. E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs: Indirect Rule in Southeastern Nigeria, 1891-1929* (Humanity Press/Prometheus Bk, 1972).

⁶³ Belcher, Personal Papers, 30-31.

⁶⁴ Belcher, Personal Papers, 50.

the transatlantic slave trade until the 1930s, it is clear that the Aro acted as the main agents of slaving, and continued to dominate the trade in children during the colonial era.⁶⁵ During one such incident a local woman told Belcher that two “marrying” agents had travelled throughout the district marrying young girls by proxy. The woman told Belcher that the men kept the girls housed in a hut deep in the bush. Waiting until the next morning to be joined by the constable, Belcher searched the hut, but the men and the girls recently fled leaving warm ashes in their stead.⁶⁶

As early as 1905, a considerable amount of trafficking in young girls, four to thirteen years old, ensued in the Upper Cross River region (located further to the north). Charles Partridge, District Commissioner of the Obubura Hill District, noted that it was not unusual for young girls to be betrothed at a very young age during the first decade of the 20th century. He acknowledged that girls in this region changed hands four to six times, and garnered bride prices of about £40.⁶⁷ Generally, the girls came from outside of the region. Upper Cross River men desired girls from outside of the area because of the implications on inheritance customs. If a man married a girl or woman from their area, upon his death, the wife’s mother’s family inherited his possessions. If he married someone from outside the area, a “stranger,” the wife became the property of her deceased husband’s relatives. Most importantly, the control of reproductive labor became paramount because any children resulting from that marriage belonged to the husband’s family. Having enough young people to support the oldest members of the family was essential. Children provided agricultural labour, daily care for the elderly and younger children, and eventually as the girls matured, they produced additional dependents. Thus the need for this type of labour spurred the influx of girls into the region, and in October 1957, the Welfare Office removed thirteen girls from suspected traffickers in the area, with another twenty-four cases waiting to

⁶⁵ The Aro of Arochukwu were a prominent slaving group and had far-reaching trade operations that penetrated much of Igboland and their social and political power went unmatched in the interior. For a full analysis see G. Ugo Nwokeji, *The Slave Trade and Culture in the Bight of Biafra: An African Society in the Atlantic World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁶⁶ Belcher, Personal Papers, 52.

⁶⁷ Charles Partridge, *Cross River Natives; Being Some Notes on the Primitive Pagans of Obubura Hill District Southern Nigeria*, 1905 (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1905), 254-5.

be heard for suspicion of child trafficking.⁶⁸ Efforts to eradicate child trafficking did not end with the BSWO officers' endeavours. Newspapers targeted children as a way to educate them about the threat of child traffickers.

Educating Children About Stranger Danger

There are a number of ways the colonial administration and others concerned with the welfare of children attempted to stop what they deemed illegitimate use of child labour and child dealing. In addition to social welfare officers teaching parents about the harms of giving children to "strangers," newspapers throughout the country began to address the issue by writing articles especially for children. One article warned children by stating:

You must have been startled by the recent cases of kidnapping. Perhaps that reminds you of the days of the slave trade when life was unsafe.... But as if this dirty business had not been finally uprooted, we find in our midst today living memories of those evil days. They roam about in the garb of decent folks seeing for whom to enslave....⁶⁹

Speaking to the number of child kidnapping cases pending court attention, the author encourages children to take the message seriously and to be wary of strangers. By the end of the 1950s, some children began self-reporting to Remand Home seeking assistance. In turn, the BSWO workload regarding custody issues and child support increased.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Belcher reported that the vast majority of juveniles whom she and her accompanying officers remanded, had been enslaved and exploited and needed 'saving'.⁷¹

The issue with the 'saving' approach is that Belcher did not consider the long history and importance of using child labour within the family and

⁶⁸ Margaret L. Belcher, Social Welfare Officer to Dot Sansom, October 13, 1957, Papers, 1954-1958, MSS. Afr. S.1343, Rhodes House, Oxford.

⁶⁹ "Beware of Human Wolves," *The Daily Times*, August 11, 1956, 4, NNAI

⁷⁰ Belcher, Personal Papers, 65.

⁷¹ Belcher, Personal Papers, 36.

extended social contexts. Many children participated in petty trade activities, parents lent children as apprentices to learn a trade, or pawned them to secure a temporary loan to provide funds for an immediate expense. All of these methods provided the family additional income by which they survived. Moreover, while child stealing and forced girl marriage needed intervention, local customs generally allowed the betrothal of a girl at a very young age, especially when a parent could not repay a loan. Nevertheless, once a child entered into the custody of the BSWO, a team worked to locate the guardians and established what should be done with the juvenile. A probation officer initially searched for the child's natal village for the purpose of having the parents (or kin of some sort) attend the Juvenile Court hearing to determine legal guardianship so that the child could be repatriated.

Children's Work in the Calabar Remand Home and the Colonial Economy

Few of the boys and girls who ended up in Remand Home successfully returned home to their families. If the BSWO located a relative, a vetting process began. The family, the village at large, and its headman had to confirm that no further trafficking of the child would occur. However, if the representative found the home "unsuitable" the child would remain in the care of the Remand Home. The Juvenile Court, which was comprised of a head magistrate, two assessors, and police, all of whom were Nigerian, heard cases once a week and made the majority of the decisions dealing with whether or not a juvenile could or should return home. Belcher was the only non-African who participated in the court hearings.⁷² The effective search for legitimate guardians proved difficult and occasionally the Court placed children whom they considered "genuinely homeless or ill-treated" into foster homes when the Remand Home lacked the space to accommodate them and paid the willing caregivers a "maintenance grant."⁷³ However, a majority of the children remained in the Remand Home.

⁷² Belcher, Personal Papers, 35.

⁷³ Belcher, Personal Papers, 35. It is not clear who or what the SWO considered a foster home.

Former army barracks in Calabar housed the Remand Home for children.⁷⁴ It provided a living area for Belcher, which included a bedroom, parlour, sitting room, and a wardrobe. The compound also included boys' and girls' quarters, and separate housing for servants.⁷⁵ The Remand Home offered a space for recreation, and operated as a training ground where children worked in various capacities. The Home accommodated between 30-40 boys and a handful of girls in 1953. According to Belcher's records, the percentage of children considered "delinquents" and "in need of care and protection" was divided equally. Children deemed "illegitimate", whose mothers never married their fathers, presumably also made up some of the population.⁷⁶ The Remand Home aimed to provide this group of children the reform and rehabilitation needed in order to transition into productive citizens. Richard Waller contends that,

Co-opting the young and turning them into productive and responsible citizens alone offered colonialism a future. This required appropriately modern or modernized institutions of socialization – schools, youth organizations, welfare and, if necessary, penal agencies...⁷⁷

Taking advantage of the available workforce sought to 'save' the colonial economy when authorities deployed child labour on the demonstration farm as a result of the decrease in trade and cash crop profits as a result of World War II. In 1945, an intellectual debate existed in the British Parliament about whether or not to support welfare policies that invested in "social welfare needs of the colonial people" or develop "primary industries in the colonies that would support war efforts." The British chose

⁷⁴ The BSWO, Juvenile Court, and the Education and Labor Departments made up the colonial offices located in the same area. The entire staff consisted of three probation officers, two clerks, an office messenger, a warden, an ex-army sergeant, several male assistant supervisors, two female supervisors, a night watchman and a 'house man' to guard the entrance. Belcher, Personal Papers, 23.

⁷⁵ Belcher, Personal Papers, 23.

⁷⁶ "Problem of Illegitimacy [sic] Children," *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroon Star*, April 4, 1957, 6, NNAI. Authorities believed that these types of children were the most likely law offenders.

⁷⁷ Richard Waller, "Rebellious Youth in Colonial Africa," *Journal of African History* 47 (2006), 79.

to emphasize the latter. Bekeh Ukalina argues that Nigeria's ten-year development plan prioritized agriculture "as the key to the economic success of the colony" that would provide Britain with much needed revenue. He describes this form of development planning as "the second colonial occupation." I broaden Ukalina's assessment and argue that the rhetoric used by the BSWO, which described its work as 'saving' children, was a response to the British metropole's call to action for the empire to 'save' Britain's economy.

The Remand Home operated as an appendage to the larger colonial project that aimed to institute new farming technologies at a time when domestic food production was low and reform institutions, like the Remand Home, housed able-bodied labourers. The colonial state aimed to improve Nigeria's overall economy by redirecting children's productive activities and shifted the use of child labour from independent capital seeking ventures to a farming enterprise whereby the colonial state benefited from training. In addition to agricultural work, boys and girls participated in doing chores at the Remand Home. Girls' tasks included cooking, cleaning, fetching water, among others. As noted in the caption of the photo of girls below, "The girls too are not left out where there is work to do in the Remand Home, and in this picture, they are cleaning buckets and household gadgets." They assisted with the daily operation of the Remand Home and its upkeep.



The girls too are not left out where there is work to do in the Remand Home, and in this picture they are cleaning buckets and other household gadgets.

Belcher charged boys with the responsibility of running the demonstration farm. In 1951, the “boys cleared the bush, and with the help and close cooperation of the Agricultural Department;” they applied new agricultural techniques. As a way to learn “modern methods of farming vegetables,” the boys planted yams, cassava, sweet potato, corn, melon, and egusi, and learned how to care for and cultivate trees. As seen in the photo of the boys, they also planted cannas, a type of flower used for medicinal purposes. The Remand Home became a sight of speculative interest for others interested in learning the new farming technologies.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ “Calabar Remand Home,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, June 11, 1953, 4, NNAI. Egusi are various types of melon seeds.



Gardening has formed an important part of the work in the Home and these boys are planting canna in the flower garden which surrounds the Home's buildings.

Photos of boys farming and girls collecting water at the Calabar Remand Home.⁷⁹

The colonial national agenda encouraged the development of these new farming methods. In 1947, the Nigerian newspaper, *Ijebu Review*, established a section of the newspaper that primarily dealt with post-World War II agricultural issues. This section of the publication was a response to the Colonial Office advising Nigerians to seek out agrarian solutions on their own. The *Review* reported that, "With the exception of cocoa, our production costs were higher than any of our competitors. The natural consequence of this was, in the main, the selling price of our products on the world market was higher and high prices are not an attraction to prospective customers." The *Review* also acknowledged that poor soil quality decreased crop production and suggested that chemical fertilizers

⁷⁹ "Calabar Remand Home," *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroon Star*, June 11, 1953, 4, NNAI.

and “green manuring” might solve these issues.⁸⁰ More intense efforts to improve farming conditions began in the 1950s. M. O. Ijere claims that, “Agricultural research was regionalized along with agriculture in 1951, and as a result each region undertook research projects specific to its area.” Those regions included Ibadan, Onitsha, Agege and Calabar. For example, Ibadan’s Moor Plantation (currently the Federal College of Agriculture) presented demonstrations on crop rotation, insect identification and control methods and how to breed pigs and cattle.⁸¹ The Colonial Office also implemented reforms that included the increased use of large machinery, at significant cost, in the Northern regions.⁸² By 1955, the Agricultural Technical Committee, a group of scientists and professionals, focused on increased food production for domestic consumption.⁸³ The farming techniques practiced at the Remand Home was a direct result of the broader agricultural reforms, which began in Nigeria during 1947.

The British colonial office encouraged farmers to buy new types of fertilizers in order to increase agricultural output. In 1951, the Eastern Regional Production Board had approved the funding of £200,000 to import and distribute new types of fertilizers.⁸⁴ A 1953 Eastern Regional Production Development Board Fertilizer advertisement emphasized the importance of implementing new fertilization methods as seen in the picture below.

⁸⁰ “Farmer’s Week in Ibadan,” *Ijebu Review* 5, No.1, July 1947, 2, Newspaper Publications, CADIST 1/4/137, NNAC. Green manure are uprooted crops that are left on the field to serve as mulch.

⁸¹ “Farmer’s Week in Ibadan,” *Ijebu Review*, Vol. 5, No.1, July 1947, 2, Newspaper Publications, CADIST 1/4/137, NNAC.

⁸² Kenneth D. S. Baldwin, *The Niger Agricultural Project: An Experiment in African Development* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1957), 1.

⁸³ M. O. Ijere, “Colonial Policy in Nigerian Agriculture and its Implementation,” *Agricultural History* 48, No. 2 (Apr., 1974), 301. M. O. Ijere, was the former Senior Lecturer and Acting Head of the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

⁸⁴ “New Fertilizer Plan for East,” *The Nigerian Citizen*, September 20, 1951, 9, NNAI.



Eastern Regional Production Development Board Fertilizer Advertisement⁸⁵

It is clear that colonial officials wanted to increase the output of food goods for the purpose of selling those goods at local markets and perhaps to other countries. As one of the recipients of the grant, the assistant farm supervisor taught the boys how to use this new form of fertilizer on the Remand farm. He also taught them how to plant and harvest crops in a way that preserved the viability of the land. The boys learned the science of composting, planting, cultivation and reaping, generally growing crops one would find in the local villages—or in cash cropping plots. Schoolboys from other areas also visited the Remand farm to learn the new techniques.⁸⁶ Belcher claimed that if the Remand boys returned to their home villages, they would employ the new techniques. Otherwise, they remained on the farm and participated in the demonstration training.⁸⁷

By April 1954 an editorial in *The Eastern Outlook* claimed that, “We need more food; we must find the means to produce it either directly by greater output or indirectly by producing other commodities which we can

⁸⁵ “Calabar Remand Home,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, June 11, 1953, 4, NNAI.

⁸⁶ Belcher, Personal Papers, 33. Although Calabar was a smaller town than Port Harcourt, it had a healthy trade industry. Palm oil and rubber formed a majority of trade activity and children actively participated in that form of agricultural labour as well.

⁸⁷ “Calabar Remand Home,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, June 11, 1953, 4, NNAI.

exchange for it.” It added “Land and manpower represent our principal resources and it is to these that we must look with a crusading spirit.”⁸⁸ This advertisement called all Nigerians to utilize their land and labour for the utmost profit.

The Remand Home had the land and human capital to fulfil this call. Juvenile labour provided the sustenance for all of those who lived in the Home. It is unlikely that the BSWO received any profits produced from child labour on the demonstration farm. However, it is evident that their children’s labour coupled with the application of new agricultural technologies functioned as free training for outsiders. Ultimately served to benefit the colonial state when the farmers used the new technology in cash crop plantations. An increase in “production could only be achieved through three principal means: stimulating the African farmer to put forth more efforts; using Europeans to develop more government estates; and allowing farmers to develop estates.”⁸⁹ One way to get Nigerian farmers to expand agricultural production was to use young people to transfer the new knowledge about farming fertilization and techniques. In an era when the Colonial Office focused heightened attention on reforming “delinquent” children and ending certain forms of child labor, agricultural training became the alternative. The Remand Home served as another apparatus whereby the productive activities of children were not only monitored, but from which the British metropole aimed to benefit.

Conclusion

This national and international undertaking by humanitarians, psychologists, legal personnel, reformists, and welfare officers sought to improve the wellbeing of children throughout the colonies by ending certain forms of child labour, and promoted their efforts by claiming to ‘save’ children.⁹⁰ The development of urban areas and the lack of employment opportunities in the post-war era led to an increase in attention on children who did not attend school or engage in legitimate work. During the 1940s and 1950s, fears that Nigerian children would grow up to be idle

⁸⁸ “Challenge of the East-I,” *The Eastern Outlook and Cameroons Star*, April 1, 1954, 1, NNAI.

⁸⁹ Ukalina, 99.

⁹⁰ W.R. Bett et al., “Abstracts and References,” *The British Journal of Delinquency*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (January, 1955): 244-252.

or, even worse, delinquents prompted colonial officers to begin to develop welfare programs, such as the BSWO. These efforts prompted the establishment of reform institutions, such as the Remand Home in Calabar and the installation of British Social Welfare Officers, like Margaret L. Belcher.

This article has explored the manner by which the BSWO dislocated many children from their trading activities, where at times, no criminal activity existed, and ultimately denied them and their guardians certain forms of economic agency. Attempts to end child labour by collecting children from individuals whom the BSWO believed to be illegitimate guardians, and save children in need of protection, provided a new labour resource to the colonial state. The Colonial Office did not initially establish the Remand Home for the purpose of fulfilling the post-War need for increased agricultural production. However, the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade, the institution of pawnship, and indigenous marriage practices, which incorporated the transfer of children, produced a supply of juveniles who worked on the BSWO demonstration farm. The development of the demonstration farm highlights BSWO's response to Britain's call when it duplicated the indigenous labour norms that deployed child labour.

It is evident that Belcher regarded her work with children throughout Africa and the Middle East as important and it seems that she hoped to improve children's lives. However, the use of child labour on the demonstration farms illustrates a paternalistic perspective toward indigenous people as the BSWO monopolized access to child labour. Whether or not either form of labour, utilized by Nigerians or by the BSWO, is evidence of abuse, is not at issue here. However, decrying local customs, which incorporated child labour and the movement of children between guardians, as a way to remain economically solvent, Belcher ensured that the BSWO gained and maintained authority over able-bodied laborers reproducing indigenous methods of controlling the productive labour of minors in order to save Britain's post-war economy.