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Sujet

*Children in Behind the Mask by
Adetunji Suleiman Ogundimu and The
Housemaid by Amma Darko*

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

- My husband Lédédji Nougboldji Maxime and

- My dear and beloved child Lédédji Mahoulidji Riesz Précieux

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INTRODUCTION

In every religion in world, birth giving is an important event. In Africa, it is a good sign. It is seen as gods' blessing that one should receive good grace and avoid threats that weigh on the good development of the pregnancy. That is why child bearing happens to be a wonderful thing and it is even surrounded with a great number of rituals in order to protect the new born and to assure him a prosperous life. While celebrating a child's birth, people raise unlimited possibilities of a new life; that is the reason why so many traditions about child bearing are worked out either secretly or in brass band. A woman is a mother and a wife, she is the one who gives birth; she also educates and feeds children. The consequence of this conception is that, a woman is given value only through maternity.

Having children is a natural phenomenon that happens not only to human beings but also to animals. Some get pregnant and give birth to their babies as human beings do whereas others lay eggs before having their young.

Since a child is a source of prosperity, its arrival in a family is a great event. Victor Hugo chimes in with this when he says through one of his numerous poems that when the child appears, the family circle cheerfully applauds. That is to say, the family members are happy because of this arrival.

One of the most important characteristics of African tradition is the importance granted to children. Having children is a necessity. In the opinion of most of the African people, spending one's life without having at least one child who will ensure one's succession is a waste of time on earth. That is the reason why a child's birth is a great and wonderful event celebrated cheerfully in the family circle. At an out-dooring ceremony or a naming-ceremony, friends, relatives and neighbours are invited to a great feast and presents are given to the new born baby's parents.

In traditional Africa, the number of one's children determines one's social rank. The more children parents have, the more help they have in their different activities. Besides, African customs allow men to get more than one wife in

order to increase their children's number. In getting a great number of children they intend to be helped in their farming activities or cattle rearing. If only a few numbers of boys are sent to school, girls are not generally sent to school but they are rather submitted to household chores. When they grow up, their parents get rich at their wedding by collecting their bride price. Parents are also generally anxious to be attended by grand children during their old age. Having a good burial is the wish of many African people. In traditional Africa, children are looked upon as a source of wealth, of happiness and of pride.

Moreover, having a great number of children is also justified by the fact that parents are almost certain that a great number of children may die at an early age. But nowadays, medical science has advanced so much that medical services are available almost everywhere; thus, the number of children who die is smaller today than it was twenty or even thirty years ago.

Owing to the importance granted to children in Africa, barren women or childless couples are most of the time subjected to gossips, to social reprobation and to divorce. However, it is not only the childless couples that come across problems; those who have children also get their share of problems with their children and with society. That is to say, having or not having children, are both source of difficulties in Africa.

It is exactly what I am going to discuss about in *The Housemaid* where Tika is urged by her mother to keep her pregnancy, because for her it may be the only one God is willing to give her. And in *Behind The Mask*, Peju comes across so many problems and struggled a lot in order to stay beside her children and ensure their well-being.

Indeed, Amma Darko has presented the traditional vision of the child and the consequences of abortion in *The Housemaid* through Tika, a middle aged woman who has practiced abortion despite the fact that her mother has begged her to keep her pregnancy. Then, she becomes barren because her womb has been infected and has been removed. Finally, her relatives have taken advantage

of her childless condition to play a bad joke on her through her housemaid. The latter is asked by her grand-mother to try by all means to get pregnant so that when Tika will be aware of their poor condition, she will probably help them by taking the child and brings him up. Because, for them Tika is worried for her wealth since she has nobody who will look after it when she becomes old.

In the same way, Ogundimu shows the consequences of divorce on the children when the father gets another wife. He shows this through Peju and Kukoyi a couple with four children that have divorced because of the husband's unfaithfulness. Peju, the mother has suffered a lot for her children, on the one hand, her in-laws especially her husband's mother become a handicap to her. On the other hand, Ruth, her rival is giving her every kind of headache to take her husband. Kukoyi the husband himself is above all Peju's problem. Despite all this, Peju has struggled in order to stay with her children but unfortunately, the divorce is done, then Peju leaves her children to Kukoyi, her husband, and Ruth becomes their new mother. As a matter of fact, a child has only one mother, Peju's children have missed her and have become miserable. Their father experiments the same fate after Ruth has deceived him and leaves him.

Like Amma Darko and A. S. Ogundimu, Samuel Asare Konadu has also developed the traditional vision of the child in *A Woman in her Prime* through Pokuwaa a middle-aged childless woman with her ardent desire to have a child of her own through the observation of the Rites of Tano¹.

Pressures have been exerted on Pokuwaa especially by her mother, leading her to divorce her first two husbands because her union with them has given her no child. Pokuwaa must bear children because since she is her mother's only child, her offspring can ensure her succession and her mother's. Thus, her mother desperately wants her to conceive and expressing her disappointment, she says: “...you see my child, you should have children. You are my only daughter, and unless you have a child, our lives will end

¹A traditional god in Pokuwaa's village

*miserably....*². Finally; Pokuwaa does conceive but she insists that Tano has nothing to do with her pregnancy. Instead she credits her pregnancy to Nyankopon Twedeampong³.

When one sees Pokuwaa with her ardent desire to bear a child of her own blood, and the behaviour of her mother and that of her relatives, one notices the importance given to the child during the pre-colonial period. In fact, *A Woman in her Prime* is a novel dealing with that period. Even today, married couples wish to have children of their own. It is important to remark that, from the beginning up to now, children have always been of a paramount importance in African tradition. But having children is one thing and taking care of them is another one. Beside, children are confronted with serious problems nowadays such as ill-treatment, children trafficking, and many other difficult situations

Through Peju's ardent desire to stay with her children, it is interesting to notice the place that is given to our children in our societies. Couples that are not together to take care of their children cannot feel at ease especially the wife because she is the one who gets pregnant and suffers during childbirth. But things are changing nowadays.

The importance given to children in the African tradition and the numerous problems children are daily confronted with in Africa have motivated me and prompted me to write an academic research paper on the topic: "children's importance in *Behind the Mask* by Adetunji Suleiman Ogundimu and *The Housemaid* by Amma Darko"

Much has been said about children somehow or other. By choosing the topic however, I have undertaken to analyze the African vision of children as seen through the two novels before making my own analysis about children present problems.

²Asare Konadu, *A Woman in her Prime*, (Ibadan: Rasmed Publications Ltd, 2007), p.28.

³The Great God

Like other children of the world, African children are also concerned with children's Rights. In fact, the Rights of the child are universal and it is no use talking about children today without alluding to their Rights that are not fully respected anywhere in the world.

Because of the children in difficult situations in Africa, African leaders, through the African Union, have retained June 16th as the African child's day. But in spite of the efforts undertaken to improve African children's living conditions, one cannot assert with conviction, for the time being that children's Rights are fully respected today. So through my analysis, I will try to suggest the eradication of some bad practices about children such as subjecting children to ill-treatment, children trafficking, and other difficult situations.

The very objective I intend to reach with this research paper is to reestablish the child in his or her right place. Indeed the place of a child in modern society deserves to be deeply examined

Children as vulnerable beings have some essential needs that should be given high priority in the allocation of resources, in bad time as well as in good time, at national and international level as well as at family level. Their natural parents indeed form the fundamental group of society in which they should be, and the natural environment for their growth and well-being. It is important to all members of the society and particularly to children. So, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, the child should grow in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding; in other words, with his or her parents. This paper therefore suggests reflections about every child's good living conditions, as they are future actors of the development of Africa in particular and the world in general.

My work is divided into three parts. In the first part, I will deal with children in the novels. In the second part entitled, Children's bearing and bringing up, I will highlight the social beliefs about child bearing and parents' problem seen in the novels. Finally, the third part puts an emphasis on children's

place in modern society, alluding to their survival, their protection and their development.

PART ONE:
Children in the novels

Chapter one: Amma Darko's vision of children

In African literature, we have a great number of writers who everyday try to show African political, traditional, economical, moral, etc... realities through their respective works. Amma Darko is one of those writers. She emphasizes most of her works on Ghanaian realities; she often talks about women and children; here I am concerned with her second novel: *The Housemaid*.

Amma Darko lives and works in Ghana. She has studied at the University of Science and Technology of Kumasi. After a couple of years spent in Germany she returns to Ghana in 1987 where she now lives with her family. She is the author of a novel which is originally published in Germany as *Der Verkaufte Traum* (Schmetterling Verlag, 1991) and translated into English as *Beyond The Horizon* (Heinemann, 1995). She is a fellow of the Cambridge Seminar. She is married and has three children. Indeed she is known as an important and popular writer in Ghana today. She has written several novels most of which deal with African women or children. Among those novels, there are *Beyond the Horizon*, *Faceless*, and especially *The Housemaid*; the one on which my work is based.

In this novel, she shows that the main important preoccupation of Africans is the fact of getting their own children; so that their name would prosper and also in order to live them a heritage.

Children bring joy and elation to the family in which they appear. Some wise people say that a house without a child is a house with no life and no future. Generally children are given great importance and consideration but in Africa it seems to be more. In fact, in traditional Africa and even today, having one's own children is important; it is even more important than money. In other words, children represent wealth and power in traditional Africa.

African people give more importance to this in most black African countries than any other thing because blood bound is very greatly taken into

account in those African societies. A childless couple is a source of gossip in Africa; Soumaila Mama explains as well in this passage:

La naissance d'un enfant dans une famille Africaine est toujours saluée avec joie et reconnaissance; reconnaissance envers les divinités tutélaires de la famille qui a enregistré cet heureux évènement. Dans l'Afrique profonde, l'on ne se marie pas seulement pour partager les joies et les peines de son partenaire, mais surtout pour avoir des enfants. Et quand l'enfant venait à manqué, la femme, qui dans ces sociétés traditionnelles Africaines, est souvent tenue responsable de la stérilité du couple, subit toutes sortes de vexations et d'humiliation.⁴

In an African family, the birth of a child is always welcomed with joy and acknowledgment; gratitude toward the divinities guardians of the family in which that happy event comes. In the deep Africa, one does not marry just to share his or her partner's joys and pains, but above all, it is to have children. When unfortunately, the couple doesn't get children, the woman is the one blamed in traditional African societies; she is then held responsible of the couple's sterility, so she is subject to all kind of vexation and humiliation.

This negative attitude towards a barren woman shows the importance that the African father grants to his progeny, the fruit of his flesh, his child. One can understand through all this the reason why one gets used to see some couples doing any kind of sacrifices in order to get their own child. As a matter of fact, children are supposed to prosper one's name from one generation to another; the male sex is more preferred and more favoured than the female one. For Africans, giving birth to a girl and bringing her up is as useless as watering a neighbor's plant, that is what some used to say. Therefore, the sex preference is another problem in our African societies. As far as this is concerned, after research on internet, I notice that while some are doing whatever they can to have at least one child of their own, others, because they would rather have a boy than a girl, lightheartedly, choose to practice infanticide or other deceitful practices in which they take children's life away. All these practices happen because, people do not take adoption into account in Africa, the fact is either

⁴ Soumaila Mama: "La Famille, essence et conception Africaine"; in <http://www.Ayaas.net/carnet/vie-etmort/vie.php> diez africa. Consulted May 30th, 2013 (The English translation is mine)

you have children or you do not; it is a nonsense to pretend that another man's child is one's own.

So in African societies, it is necessary to get one's own children.

1.1. Having one's own children in Africa

In *The Housemaid*, Amma Darko shows why getting one's own child is important to African people and the way they are ready to suffer for their child. This is presented through Tika one of the two important characters of the novel who lives in Accra. Tika's mother is young when she starts a love affair with the latter's father who is forty-six when she is twenty-two. The man is already married; *"At the age of twenty-two, she began a clandestine affair with a married man twenty-four years her senior."*⁵ The man puts an eye on her because he cannot get a child with his former wife since she is barren. *"His wife was barren and rumour had it that this was the result of an abortion she had had when they were courting."*⁶ So Sekiywa brings hope to the despairing almost old man by getting pregnant. Owing to that pregnancy, she becomes the man's only one wife since he feels his obligation toward her and his unborn child. Consequently he leaves his first wife.

Thereupon, one can easily notice that through those passages Amma Darko is showing that in African societies, a childless woman is a useless woman and she has no future with her husband.

Indeed Tika's father decides to spend the remaining of his life with his new pregnant wife. *"I will live the rest of my life for you and our child. I will set you up in business. I will make you rich. I will invest every pesewa that crosses my hand for you. So that one day, when I am old and no longer working, you can take care of me and our child"*.⁷ Soon after Tika's birth, he gets Sekiywa a

⁵ Amma Darko, *The Housemaid*, (London, Heinemann, 1998), p. 18.

⁶ Idem

⁷ Idem

big shop and fills it with textile prints. A few years after, she has become one of the wealthiest market women in the town.

However, how can love affair be successful between a young wife and an old husband? It is almost impossible. Since the husband is getting older and therefore sexually weak, the young wife naturally is disappointed and starts looking for good sex and finds it because she is rich. Her husband mistakes her sex satisfaction for her love toward him and his heart starts bursting with affection for her, “*Now that we have achieved what we set out to, we can begin to really enjoy life*”⁸. But unfortunately he is wrong while thinking about love between them. Sekiywa is no longer sharing his point of view as far as sex is concerned, “*Enjoy what life? What life is there with a dead penis?*”⁹

That is how the squabbles start; but what can the man do since Sekiywa and Tika are his only family after he has left his first wife? Tika is so important to her father that he has been mentally and physically ready for any kind of punishment coming from his young wife in order to have his little daughter by his side. No day passes without a fight or an argument, Sekiywa insults and beats Tika’s father the way she wants.

Besides she makes him cry all the time, but he has a hope which is Tika; so he holds on until he dies. Since little Tika has witnessed all the fights between her parents and knows that her father has always been the victim, she starts wondering about the origin of his death and guess it may be her mother who has sent him to heaven because she doesn’t love him anymore. To make it clear in her mind, she asks her mother whether she has done it; “*Did you make him die?*”¹⁰ But her mother seems not to understand the reason why her child is accusing her and reproaches it to her. Then, the little girl, in order to make her

⁸ Amma Darko, *The Housemaid*, op. cit., p. 18

⁹ Idem

¹⁰ Idem

mother know that she is neither deaf nor blind, gives her the appropriate answer; “*Sometimes you make him cry.*”¹¹

From then on, the relationship between Sekiywa and her daughter Tika has worsen because for Tika, her mother has been responsible for her father’s death. She despises her mother once more since the only one who used to play with her when the latter goes to her shop does not exist anymore and will never return. For Tika, Sekiywa has extinguished the light of her life by provoking her lovely father’s death. Consequently, she decides never to forgive her mother.

Through this novel, we notice that Amma Darko explains the way parents’ problems can easily and definitively affect children’s life.

Some children, because of their parents’ poverty and many other things, become prostitutes in town.

1.2. Prostitute teenagers

Amma Darko, in most of her novels, deals with women and children. In *The Housemaid*, she focuses on children in general but she also deals with those who become prostitutes in Accra. While it is no longer news that prostitution is on the increase, teenage prostitution is a new phenomenon that is causing worry in society. This particular situation that is notable in Africa as elsewhere happens to children due to their parents’ irresponsibility. These parents seem not to know children’s rights. They anyhow wrong their role in their children’s education and totally ignore their existence.

Those children are widely traumatized because they are subjected to any kind of danger. Girls end up in prostitution for many reasons. Some run away from their village thinking life is better in the city than in the village, others are promised a housemaid job in rich city dwellers’ home but at their arrival, they find the contrary of what they imagined. At the same time, others are born on the street to homeless single mothers; so they have no choice. Also, some street

¹¹Amma Darko, *The Housemaid*, op. cit., p. 18

children become prostitute when they become teens, since they are thrown out to fend for themselves, and then they end up sleeping on the city streets, the easier business they immediately find is sex work.

In *The Housemaid*, prostitution is noticed through Akua and her friends who have left Kataso their village for the city in order to make money through prostitution. But they struggle a lot to find and maintain their job place; Akua explains through this passage; *“I have my own problems. The owner of my base has returned from abroad and want to resume work on his building, so I had to bribe Atinga yesterday with a couple of quick rounds behind the bleu kiosk to get him to find me a new place”*¹²

It is therefore important to recognize that children are individuals who experience a variety of childhood life in different circumstances.

Teenage prostitution leads to negative effects on the psychology of the child later on in life. Most of them have little access to healthcare and live in extremely unhygienic conditions. It is also common knowledge that prostitution promotes the spread of HIV because most of their clients refuse to have protected sex with the girls, believing that it will bring them fresh blood.

This early exposure to sexual intercourse causes a lot of damage to children including vaginal tearing, pain, infection, or unwanted pregnancy, depression, behavioral problems, insomnia and loss of self-confidence. In most cases, these teenage prostitutes end up with sexually transmitted diseases as Chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes, HIV/AIDS, staphylococcus and syphilis. They also experience pelvic pain and inflammatory disease, trauma, stress, depression, anxiety, and risk of self-mutilation, suicide or homicide. As example one can see that Efia gets an unwanted pregnancy and gives birth in bad conditions so that the baby dies.

Children who think life is better in the city than in the village, should be informed and should understand that they are wrong while thinking in such a

¹²Amma Darko, *The Housemaid*, op. cit., p. 95

way. Parents have to take care of children and help them with advice when they start growing up.

In the following chapter, A. S. Ogundimu also shows his personal vision about children's place in an African family.

Chapter Two: Adetundji Souleiman Ogundimu's vision of children

A. S. Ogundimu is a well-known writer in Nigeria nowadays. He shows African realities with references to Nigerian society. We will deal here with his novel entitled *Behind the Mask*.

A. S. Ogundimu obtains his bachelor of Art degree in 1973 from Université de Bordeaux, France. Then specializing in African Literature, he obtains a Masters Degree from the Sorbonne, Paris, in 1975. He passed his C.A.P.E.S. at Lokossa, Benin Republic, in 1977. In 1990 and 1991, respectively, he obtained from the Alliance Française, Lagos a Certificate in Translation (English-French) and a Diploma in Commercial Translation. A qualified translator, A. S. Ogundimu is fluent in English, French, Spanish, Yoruba and Egun. He starts his teaching career at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Mansfield, England, and later he teaches at Porto-Novo and Lokossa in Benin Republic before joining the then Oyo State College of Education, Ila-Orangun Campus. He is now a Chief Lecturer at former Ogun State Polytechnic, now Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, in Abeokuta. Between 1986 and 1987 he is the Dean, School of Humanities and Communication Sciences. He is Head of Arts and Languages Department till 1990, and Head of Liberal Studies Department till 1996, when he becomes a member of the Governing Council. Currently, he is Director Student Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). A. S. Ogundimu is an important writer in Nigeria today. He has written novels such as: *The Insiders*, *The Bitter Truce*, *A Silly Season*, in addition to the one under study.

In *Behind the Mask*, he focuses the various problems that parents face after having children. Giving birth to children is good but bringing them up correctly by instilling into them moral values is better. When a couple decide to stay together and they do not have children for the time being, except their ardent desire that the woman bears a child of their own, their life seems to be simpler and easier than when a child comes between them. This is to say, as

soon as a child makes his or her appearance between them and starts growing, difficulties start. But where do those problems come from?

Firstly, since the child is getting older, he or she needs to receive good education and as a matter of fact his parents are not from the same family, consequently do not receive the same education, they often find it difficult to think in the same way.

Secondly, by staying together for a long time, parents sometimes seem to get tired of one another and think they cannot put up with each other anymore.

Finally, the most important influence they come across after they get children is the in-laws's interference – often from the husband's side into their conjugal affairs. The wife is always accused to have become the source of every problem in everybody's life including her husband's and her children's. From then on, all kind of disagreements, quarrels and sometimes fighting start; and most of the time, this leads to divorce.

However, one shall not underestimated the fact that children always have their value in the family even though parents are not happy, because parents have the duty to think of their children before any other thing.

2.1. Children's value in the family

Through his novels, he deals with African cultural and moral values especially based on Nigerian culture. The special purpose he points out in *Behind the Mask* is the value given to children by parents and especially mothers.

Peju, the protagonist of the novel has been married to Kukoyi for several years, precisely fifteen years. Since in African tradition, a normal marriage should be blessed by children, she gives birth to four children then she raises the number of the family. The first three are boys and the last one is a girl. Before having her children, she has been peacefully living with her husband and her mother-in-law and “*The three of them were happy and living smoothly together,*

even when the membership of the family was raised to four with the birth of Yinka, to five that of Biola, to six with that of Fola and to seven of that of Doyin”¹³. They lived in Orindowe town in Nigeria.

As Amma Darko does, A. S. Ogundimu is showing the importance which is given to having children in Africa. He continues with the same idea through the same Peju proving that it is primordial to a parent, especially a mother, to overcome any kind of difficulty in her life in order to stay with her children.

Peju, the mother of four children has been peacefully living with her children, her husband and her mother-in-law but her peace does not last, it has been shortened by some events.

Firstly, her husband no longer comes back home early. Secondly, he has become not only cold in bed but he has also grown morose and frosty in the house. And finally and unfortunately, her mother-in-law becomes her worse enemy, since she starts treating her like a rival. She does not live in peace anymore in the household. It has been a kind of war between them because one day, the mother-in-law sits and starts singing a warlike song.

By then Peju comes to discover that Ruth, her husband’s colleague, a married woman is her rival, and she even comes to challenge her at home. One day, she has been beaten by Ruth with a friend of hers on her road from the market. Another day, her husband starts accusing her the way people give a dog a bad name in order to hang him; “*Then sit up and tell me: which of us in this house are you to trying to cast a spell on.....when you brought that juju into this house, what were your intentions?*”¹⁴ He goes to the children’s room and comes back with a black product, Peju takes it, examines it and reminds him; “*This must be what was left of the soap purchased to cure Doyin’s ringworm.*”¹⁵, but her explanations do not convince her husband since he is determinate. “*So you*

¹³ A. S. Ogundimu, *Behind The Mask*, (Lagos: Campus publications, ltd, , 2000), p. 21.

¹⁴ *ibid*, P. 58

¹⁵ *ibid*, P. 59

can remember? Now tell me: which of us was it aimed at; Mama, the children or myself? And what is our offence? ”¹⁶

Despite all this, Peju does not give up since she is married to Kukoyi for better and for worse; therefore, she has to continue living there against the odds for her children’s sake. Thereafter, she invites the other members of the family including Kukoyi’s mother and father to help her solve the problems and save the family because she cares for her children. “*Kukoyi should not destroy our children’s home.....*”¹⁷

A.S. Ogundimu shows the readers through Gbolahan, one of Peju’s in-laws, that since a woman gives birth to children in a man’s family, she henceforth becomes a member of that family. And that in Africa, parents should stay together for the children’s sake;

A wife who has a living issue by her husband has ceased to be a resident parasite. With four children to her credit, Peju has turned a permanent member of the Aralamo family. Her welfare, like that of her children, is already our business. So, make your statement and give your wife a warning, as you may deem necessary. But you must try and accommodate her. Marriage is unlike football where you continue a match with just any substitute that comes on to the pitch. A couple must remain a couple. And a wife is a wife mainly because she is the mother of your children...¹⁸

Therefore, in the African family, since there are children between parents, no matter how important and pertinent the decision they will take, children are always considered and taken into account. So they generally influence their parents’ decision.

2.2. Children’s influence on parents’ decision

Naturally, in a family, children play a crucial role of influence in the decisions their parents take; especially in decisions regarding their well-being in general. In Africa, children are considered as the source of the family’s existence. When children come in a family, since no child asks any parent to

¹⁶ A. S/ Ogundimu, *Behind the Mask*, op. cit., P. 59

¹⁷ Ibid P.64

¹⁸ Ibid P.66

bear him or her, parents are no more free to take any kind of decision at random. Moreover, African children are very important to their parents and especially to their mothers.

For instance decisions concerning divorce issues that hurt so many children should not be taken at random; parent should not be selfish as far as divorce is concerned. They should think of children's mental and emotional condition and especially their future before doing that evitable act.

A sensitive parent has to think about the numerous difficulties children living with parents in divorce situation face. Divorce is a situation that traumatizes children who suffer from it.

Divorce happens when a husband and a wife decide not to live together anymore and that they no longer want to be married to each other. Divorce is really hard to deal with. Sometimes both parents want to divorce while some other times one wants it but the other does not. Usually both parents are disappointed because their marriage has failed.

It hurts children's feeling when one parent wants to leave the house where they all live together. Many children do not want their parents to divorce; whereas others have mixed feelings about it especially if they know their parents are not happy together. Some may even feel relieved when parents divorce; precisely if there have been a lot of fighting between these parents during the marriage.

Children's influence on parents' decision is seen in its naked nature in *Behind the Mask* through Peju. In this novel, she is seen as the prototype of an original African mother who is shaped to overcome all difficulties to see her children happy. She does everything for her children and even after Kukoyi has bitterly deceived her, she forgives him for her children's sake. Since Peju loves her children and is ready to do anything they want her to do for their peace of mind, Kukoyi negotiates with Yinka, their first boy, when she refuses to forgive him, so that Yinka will convince her.

When Kukoyi and Yinka come to see her at home, Peju does not want Yinka to take part in the conversation because, according to her they do not need an intermediary; but Kukoyi insists; *“Yinka is not an intermediary, he is our son, he must be part of our solution to the problem. You see... I’ve reviewed my life in the past three years, and I think a lot of things have gone dangerously amiss; we must talk them over”*¹⁹. Peju contradicts him the way she can, she defends her position explaining she no longer wants to live with him but a mother’s feeling is quite different from any other one’s.

Therefore when she feels the need to stop the conversation and stands to leave Kukoyi alone, Yinka starts begging her and says, *“Don’t walk out on him. As you can see yourself, father has realized his mistakes; he has come to beg you. You have to pardon him. It is not only because of him but because of us. All of us. We can be happy again as a family if you allow him to stay with us.”*²⁰ After Yinka has pleaded with her to forgive their father, Peju finds herself defenseless and bursts into tears.

Through this novel, the author is explaining that African mothers are quite different because each drop of Peju’s tears is full of meaning; that is to say, in African societies, women who have children do not easily divorce as men do without mental reservation. Considering Peju’s case for instance, she already has four children with Kukoyi, her husband; therefore she could not be happy anywhere else but with her children. Moreover, her children need both their mother and their father in order to be happy; consequently, she has no choice; she should necessarily forgive her husband’s sins towards her for her children’s sake. In this novel we easily notice how African children are valued and are really taken into account by their mothers. So children can easily modify their parent’s decision. That is a natural phenomenon which is more remarkable in human societies.

¹⁹A. S. Oguneimu, *Behind The Mask*, op. cit., p. 153

²⁰Ibid P.158

Indeed African couples are seriously confronted to many problems whether one has children or not, he will have his share. I will focus the second part of my work on that issue and more explanations will be given.

PART TWO:
Children's bearing, and bringing up

Chapter three: Social beliefs about child bearing in *The Housemaid*

In African societies, a woman who never bears a child is not considered as such. But the matter is not just giving birth to children, the most important issue is to be morally and psychologically ready to stay with them and bring them up so that they become good citizens. Unfortunately, this is not as easy as it can appear. It needs great efforts and a good deal of will to stay together as husband and wife in order to achieve that goal. This part of my work will deal with the necessity to bear children and parents' problems; seen through the chosen books.

The profound need to have children is universal, it is as old as the world; even in the Bible, Rachel weeps at her husband's feet and pleads with him to give her a child or else she will die²¹.

In African culture, having many children gives a high social status; it is a sign of prestige. A large family is not only desired for reasons of social status but it is also a personal matter. Children at a young age can help out with trading or farming or work around the house and adult children can help support their parents financially.

Newly married couples are expected to have babies right away or suffer harassment when for whatever reasons no babies appear within their first year of marriage. Producing children is an African woman's way of putting into values her womanhood and also proves the manhood of the father. Childless couples are looked upon as a disgrace and as an embarrassment. Therefore, infertility in Africa is especially tragic.

Throughout the years, infertility has been blamed as being spiritual as well as physical ailments. *"A womb too hot would "cook" the baby, making its development impossible and a womb that was too cold was not conducive to the baby's growth."*²² Womb temperature is said to be affected by the mother's

²¹ Genesis 30:1

²² <http://www.Digitalcollections.sit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1041...african...isp>. Consulted, November, 09th2013

temperament, as well as by the food she eats. Although this theory is not considered to be outdated, the real reason often still remains a mystery.

Even now in traditional African societies, women who cannot become pregnant fear the cause may be witchcraft. They go to caregivers, frantic and panicked, not knowing how to rid themselves of the witch's curse. They often go to traditional priests, who assert witchcraft and demons are the cause of their infertility. To counteract these powers, when an infertile woman comes to them for help, they perform rites in which they ask gods involved in fertility how they can be appeased to allow the woman to conceive. Then when the woman becomes pregnant, she must fulfill her promise of providing sheep or money to the god who gives her a child.

That is what Asare Konadu fully explains through the character of Pokuwaa who performs many sacrifices to Tano while looking for a child from him. But as time goes, Pokuwaa gets tired of waiting so long without any response from the god; one day, she loses the hen with which she is going to perform sacrifice to Tano and was very sad, her feeling of despair is expressed in this passage:

She was weeping now, seized with the fear that if she failed to make the sacrifice and lost this chance of bearing a child, her fate as a barren woman would be made certain. Then her old age would be doomed to loneliness; no child to care for her, no grandchild to warm her compound and no issue for her of her blood at all to mourn at her death.²³

Besides, through investigations on internet, I find that Prophet Gabriel, of Peaceful Prayer Church, believes infertility is caused by a different supernatural power. He asserts infertility is a punishment for disobeying God. It is the devil that brings about infertility to women who do not obey God. When they do things that displease God, the devil has the privilege of conquering them. A dream in which the woman is having an affair with a man other than her husband is evidence that the devil has overcome her. The remedy for infertility

²³Asare Konadu, *A Woman In Her Prime*, (Ibadan: Rasmed Publications Ltd, 2007) p.13.

caused by the devil is fervent prayer. During prayer, a vision will reveal itself to the woman and she will see how she should repent. Fasting and drinking water every day, blessed by Prophet Gabriel, until God, in his goodness, brings about a child.²⁴

In this novel under study, Amma Darko emphasizes social rumours about childless women.

3.1- Rumours about Sekyiwa's rival

Rumour can be defined as a piece of information or story that people talk about; but that may not be true. Childless women are often subjected to many gossips in society mainly from their neighbours. They suffer this because they are considered as worthless people. It seems that Africa is a special continent where certain conditions have been made for women. Normally, all the society has to care for women who have child bearing problems. Even though they are unable to bear children, they need to be more loved than healthy women. But they find themselves incapable of making their husbands happy and they are abandoned by the husband or they choose to leave him.

In Amma Darko's *The Housemaid*, the situation of Tika's stepmother is a vivid example of women's divorce because they are childless. This part of the novel depicts the day-to-day life of African childless women confronted with many social difficulties. Here, Amma Darko has chosen a young woman who has taken her elder's husband because the latter is barren and covered by rumours. There she puts:

Madam Sekyiwa, Tika's mother, was 100 per cent illiterate, stinking rich and riddled with guilt. At the age of twenty-two, she began a clandestine affair with a married man twenty-four years her senior. His wife was barren and rumour had it that this was the result of an abortion she had had when they were courting. Then Sekyiwa got pregnant. And the man felt his obligation to his unborn child transcending his loyalty to his wife. He left her...²⁵

²⁴ <http://www.Digitalcollections.sit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi...> consulted November,10th 2013

²⁵ Amma Darko, *The Housemaid*, op. cit., P.18

Through this passage, we notice that no matter how advanced in age a man is, he can make a healthy woman pregnant. We also see that a woman unable to bear child has no right to be considered or taken care of in African societies.

The situation of Tika's stepmother looks like Pokuwaa's in Asare Konadu's *A Woman in her Prime*. In fact, Pokuwaa is a middle aged woman who has child bearing problems. She has been forced by her mother, who needs grand-sons, to divorce her first two husbands because she always fails in getting pregnant. "*You see, my child, you should have children. You are my only daughter, and unless you have a child our lives will be miserably.*"²⁶

Thereupon, one can easily assert that in Africa, a woman who does not bear children and give birth is not considered as a real woman. In *The Housemaid*, Tika has been subjected to a joke from her maid's family because of her barrenness. Through all this, one sees how barrenness affects African women and is socially considered as a discomfort. In the following lines, I shall deal with Tika's case.

3.2- Barrenness as social discomfort: Tika's Case

Barrenness is the state of a woman unable to bear a child; but nothing brings joy to an African woman more than the ability to have children. Culture has solidified the expectation of every woman in that once someone gets married; the next thing is pregnancy and then the birth of a baby. Failure of this natural progression brings so much anguish, shame and despair to the family but much more to the woman affected.

The ability to have children is a gift from God but it seems more like a right of every African woman. It is the ultimate goal of every African marriage. Culture frowns on a woman who fails to conceive within the first two years of

²⁶Asare Konadu, *A Woman in her Prime* op. cit., P. 28

marriage. To the African woman, the scent of motherhood beckons at the altar, when she walks down that isle or go through the traditional marriage ceremony. Any signs of barrenness bring so much pressure to bear.

Women have been subjected to ridicule; they have been branded witches, they have consulted spirit mediums, witch-doctors and faith healers in a bid to have the curse of barrenness removed. A lot of women have died after taking concoctions of unknown ingredients, both bitter and sweet all in an effort to overcome their barrenness. Some have been obliged to wash in crocodile infested rivers and to gulp gallons of holy water all in the hope of cleaning their blocked fallopian tubes.

Some men do not take kindly what seems to be a delay in producing a son, an heir for the family. Such men, under pressure from their families and relatives have either abandoned their wives outright or married second wives, or worse still they have maintained a concubine. These concubines have earned the nickname of small house. These small houses do not hesitate to produce the needed child for these men in the full knowledge that the men are married. Doing this seems to seal the fate of the woman who could not reproduce on time. She has to put up with sharing her husband with another woman and loses her place of respect in her marital house. That is exactly what happens between Tika's parents and her step-mother in Dako's novel.

It is quite interesting to notice that even in Biblical times; women who are barren are subjected to the same agony and shame as it happens to African women nowadays. One example is that of Abraham's wife, Sarah, who most probably under pressure resorts to giving her maid, Hagar to bear a son for Abraham. Hagar ridiculed Sarah. But fortunately Abraham loves her regardless her barrenness²⁷. Rachel, the wife of Jacob also endures years of despair and agony due to barrenness²⁸. She witnesses her sister and co-wife gives birth to six

²⁷Genesis 21:1-2

²⁸Genesis 30:22-24

children and also her husband's concubines have four children amongst them and yet she has none. Her sister mocks her and she feels less of a woman. A third example is that of Hannah the mother of Samuel, who suffers shame and ridicule at the hands of society and her husband's second wife, Penninah. She is so tormented that she cannot eat for days²⁹.

In *the Housemaid* by Amma Darko, Tika, the protagonist, after she has practiced abortion, something her mother has begged her not to do, comes across complications and has had her womb removed; which means she will never get pregnant anymore.

Barrenness situation often makes women feel very sensible as far as children are concerned since they especially have the most important God's blessing missing in their life. Through this novel, especially in chapter four, Amma Darko demonstrates that a barren woman is not equal to stupid woman; she shows this through Tika and her maid, Efia's family, nonetheless Efia has not been fully responsible of what happened; she has been used by her family for personal and insulting goal.

In fact, after Tika has had her problems after abortion, henceforth, she feels the need of having someone by her side and asks an active woman from her village to negotiate a maid for her; but this one should necessarily come from her late father's family. She thinks of this because for her, it is her duty to make amends for her mother's errors toward her father and his family since for the family; her mother is responsible of her father's death. So Tika thinks that, taking a maid from her father's family, she will financially help them since she is rich and alone.

I came to see about a maid. I need one. Someone from my father's family. That is why I am here... I want the person to from my father's extended family... Because I consider it my obligation that if I am fortunate enough to find myself in the position of bettering someone's life, then that person ought

²⁹ 1 Samuel 1:20

to be from my father's bloodline. That way, I would in my own small way, be paying back some of what my mother owes my late father.³⁰

But her offer has been taken otherwise by the maid's family. They start thinking and planning the way they will make profits from the situation basing their argument on her barrenness. The idea comes from Efia's grandmother who proposes herself as the manager.

Turning to Efia, she starts talking of Tika in the most pitiful way. "*Listen! The woman you are going to live with is a rich but wasted woman... A very wasted woman... An unproductive womb is bad enough. But no womb at all? And that is what she is. A walking woman with no womb inside her...*"³¹ As she has been waiting for the occasion, she continues:

So my granddaughters, if you ask me, the present circumstances are no coincidence at all. It has been destined this way ever since that day that evil wife stole our son's... The gods and ancestors of this village of ours designed everything. And you're going to live with her is an essential piece of that design. So hear me! Be subservient, humble and very dependable...³²

Now she lets them know her plan;

Then get yourself pregnant... [...], Efia, you will live with her, win her affection, become indispensable to her. So that when you innocently become pregnant... [...], In the midst of my tears, at the right moment, I will turn the tables. I will suggest that may be all this happened with the blessing of our ancestors. And emphasize how her dear father too is one of our beloved ancestors... Then press home my point that my instincts tell me it is the wish of the ancestors to bring the joy of a crying baby into her life... I will urge her, in my low shaky voice, to adopt the child, make it hers.³³

However, Tika has not been as naive as they think to be so easily trapped. She escapes and they get 'shame'. Even after the manipulation of Efia's parents, Tika forgives Efia since she is not fully responsible of what she has done; saying: "*She was as much a victim of her people's manipulation as I was.*"³⁴

³⁰ Amma Darko, *The Housemaid*, op. cit., pp. 36 - 37

³¹ *ibid*, p. 46

³² *Idem*,

³³ *Ibid*, p.48

³⁴ *Ibid*, p.105

Nevertheless, in this life, God has a plan for everybody; one's duty as human being is to be and remain patient till God's time comes.

Because, in all the three Biblical cases cited above, the women who have been previously condemned as barren have ended up bearing children with God's intervention. It is quite sobering to notice that, God has a plan for each of the women and the children they later have. This supports the assertion made at the beginning that the ability to have children is a gift from God. For instance, Sarah is said to have a child at the age of ninety and this is a miracle as scientifically this cannot happen³⁵. Rachel has her barrenness reversed and she has Joseph at a time when all hope is lost³⁶. Hannah has her situation reversed after she has pleaded with God for a child and she has six other children after that³⁷.

That is exactly what Asare Konadu draws our attention on in his novel: *A Woman in her Prime* through Pokuwaa the main character who, at a given time has given up all sacrifices to the god Tano and has decided to wait for Great God's time. Then she informs her husband; "*Kwadwo, I will not carry out more sacrifices... I will not go on with the sacrifices. I have given them up.*"³⁸ So when the time is over for her, she gets pregnant and shows her gratitude to God. Therefore, when her mother and her husband starts talking about sacrifices to be given Tano, she protests; "*Mother, Tano has had nothing to do with it. I know that it is Nyankopon Twedeampon who has shown me this mercy... I have begun saying to Nyankopon the thanks which I will continue to say for the rest of my life.*"³⁹

It is therefore necessary for women who find themselves at the deceiving end of barrenness and shame, to lean on God and have faith that he can also

³⁵ Genesis 21: 1-2

³⁶ Genesis 30: 22-24

³⁷ 1Samuel 1: 20

³⁸ Asare Konadu, *A Woman in her Prime*, op. cit., p. 113

³⁹ Ibid pp.130 - 134

reverse their situation. Rather than take matters into their own hands, they should wait on God and trust him to reverse their situation. It is also important for husbands and families to support barren women and realize that it is not their will but it is the will of God that they are barren at that time. Culture needs to be prepared to take into account nature's situations beyond one's control.

However, it is necessary to have children but the most important and difficult thing is to happen to bring them up together despite all the problems that will arise. The fourth chapter of my work will deal with the difficulties which parents come across and which they endure for their children with reference to Adetunji Suleimn Ogundimu's *Behind the Mask*.

Chapter four: Problems faced by parents for their children's sake in

Behind the Mask

In Africa, bearing children is the principal reason of setting up a couple. Marriage is organized around fecundity. However, a couple's life is not a quiet long river; sometimes, problems spring up. Thereupon, so many awkward subjects exist in a couple such as jealousy, lack of money, unfaithfulness, family, children's education, tiredness of each other, etc...

Generally, the problems that one often comes across in African couples are unfaithfulness and family's excessive implication in the couple's relationship. This last one complicates things as well. In this chapter, I will focus on unfaithfulness and family's interference which are likely to be the real causes of important unbearable situations in the couple.

4.1- Family's interferences

In Africa, a couple's life is quite different from the ones in other continents. The large family is so important that spouses have the duty to do everything they can to maintain its union no matter how difficult it can be. Thus, they always try to bear all the threats and insults coming from their in-laws especially from their mother-law.

The in -laws' issue is such a difficult one that most married women in Africa will like it not to exist in marriage since this issue seems to be the curse of most families in difficulty. A mother-in-law always has something to reproach her daughter-in-law. Thus, the relationship between them resembles a competition. In many homes all over the world and in African contest in particular, there is habitually a kind of unfinished conflict that rages between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law.

Family interference is seen in its naked nature in A. S. Ogundimu's *Behind the Mask* through Anna, Peju's mother -in -law who always ill -treats

her son's wife and seems not to want her to live peacefully with her son. Peju's feelings are expressed through the following passage:

Living with Anna and Kukoyi has become an uphill task; it was like an eye forcing itself to cohabit with smoke in a windowless room. Yet, she has continued living here against the odds. The term of the contract was clear. She was married to Kukoyi for better, for worse. To her, this meant, among other things, that nobody could frustrate them out of each other's life. Not even their parents or anybody.⁴⁰

Peju's problems start since the second chapter of the novel. One day, Kukoyi, her husband has not come back home early; she has been worried and when he finally comes, she has sympathetically started to talk to him about his lateness by warning him as far as his security is concerned; *"Did you forget that vigilantes have become ruthless with anybody caught after ten in the night?"*⁴¹ But Anna who has been listening to them from the corridor stops her and asks:

Are you praying that he be caught? If that is your prayer, God will not answer it; my son doesn't deserve such prayers, go and pray for your brother to be caught by vigilantes. Go and curse Niyi and don't do it here. My son has done nothing to be caught for. Don't attract evil onto his head. He is an honest man living a decent life. He's not a thief; he eats from his own sweat.⁴²

When Peju starts to defend herself, Anna cuts on: *«No, no, no, don't address me like that. Don't address me at all! I am not your age mate. You should learn to talk to elders.»*⁴³

Then Peju thinks of herself and feels the need to explain: *"I'm only concerned about Kukoyi's safety, that's all"*⁴⁴

But Anna sarcastically rejects her: *"Oh, yes? You are concerned about his safety and I am not, Eh? Beautiful woman! Concerned wife... Look, Kukoyi, talk to her: things cannot continue the way they are going at the moment. Peju spent the whole day insulting me and chasing the children around the house"*⁴⁵

⁴⁰A. S. Ogundimu, *Behind the Mask*, op. cit., P. 9

⁴¹Ibid p. 14

⁴²idem

⁴³idem

⁴⁴idem

⁴⁵Ibid P. 15

She continues when Peju asks her to allow Kukoyi to eat first; “*Must I take orders from you to talk to my son? Should I seek your permission and wait for a time –table? And, tell me, what can Kukoyi eat? Even if there is food, can he eat? If you give a man all the food in the world and remove peace from his home, do you think he can eat?*”⁴⁶

Thus, Peju has been despaired and declares “*You know I am a peace loving wife, and I have never done anything to disturb the peace in this house. On the contrary, I’ve been keeping the peace against many odds. And if I may say so, you haven’t been helping us...All of us. Especially Kukoyi and me. Your interference is not helping our marriage*”⁴⁷

Kukoyi tries to stop her but Anna refuses:

No, no, no, don’t stop her. Why should she wait? Let her insult me. Stand by and watch! Allow her to punch me, if she likes. Hadn’t she been doing so many things and getting away with them? Why shouldn’t she continue? But listen Kukoyi: I am fed up. She has slapped me in the face for too long, and I shall no more pass over the open confrontation in silence.⁴⁸

Moreover, mothers –in –law are somehow proud of their domination on their son’s wife that they may easily associate other members of the family to their schemes. It is the case of Bankole who comes to see Anna and asks for information about Kukoyi and his other wife: “*How far has Kukoyi gone about the other one?*”⁴⁹ And Anna seems to like the situation so much that she does not even think of her grand children’s future anymore: “*Things are moving fast and favorably. I have stepped in, and there’s no going back now.*”⁵⁰

As result, it seems that Africa is a continent where women do not have the right to avoid family interference in their relationship with their husband since Anna has achieved to destroy Peju’s home. Moreover, if she has not wrongly interfered between Peju and Kukoyi’s relationship, they will not end up

⁴⁶ A. S. Ogundimu, *Behind the Mask* op. cit., p. 15

⁴⁷ idem

⁴⁸ Ibid p.16

⁴⁹ Ibid p.23

⁵⁰ idem

divorcing even though Kukoyi has been unfaithful. They will easily set up the problem since Africa is traditionally based on polygamy. But this does not mean unfaithfulness does not hurt married women.

4.2- Unfaithfulness

Defining unfaithfulness, it is the synonym of infidelity which is the fact of betraying one's wife or husband by having love affairs with another person. According to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, "To be unfaithful is having sex with somebody who is not your husband, wife or usual partner."⁵¹ Gender inequality within families, inequitable division of labour within households and cultural attitude about gender roles further subjugate women and limit their representation in family and public life.

In my own opinion, in African traditional societies, women are considered less important than men. Their rights as human being are not the same. Women are expected to submit to patriarchal authority and this is reflected in the way children are treated at home. The girl takes the role of serving while the boy is normally served. Thus, psychologically, the boy builds a patriarchal ego while the girl knows her position as that of service.

Moreover, traditionally, the man is expected to go to farm or to hunt while the woman is expected to cook and to care for children at home. Therefore, she is considered as the family union holder; she is the one who shall bear everything for children's sake whereas the man is free to do whatever he wants. That is surely what Ogundimu emphasizes in *Behind the Mask* through Kukoyi who not only has been unfaithful to his wife Peju but has unfairly started to accuse his wife to be the only responsible of the matter.

In an African couple with children, after any kind of problem, even though it has no importance, the husband can easily ask for divorce without any

⁵¹Sally wehmeier, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of current English*, oxford, University Press, 2000, Sixth edition, p. 1305

resentment. On the contrary, the wife will think about her children first; no real and sensitive mother will easily accept to divorce and leave her children to another woman since African society is a patriarchal one. She will prefer to be insulted, bothered, beaten, ill-treated, deceived, etc... for her children's sake. That is what Kukoyi, Peju's husband and Ruth his other wife have made her endure. Ruth comes to Peju's house to see Kukoyi in order to provoke her. Of course it is a provocation when another's wife says to the other's husband "*Au revoir chéri*"⁵². But she does not stop there. When Peju starts defending her place: "*I have observed our relationship for some time, and I believe it'll do the four of us a lot of good if you stop coming here alone...*"⁵³

After doing a semblance of not knowing what Peju is talking about, she jeered: "*Wonderful...! Are you suggesting I shouldn't visit Kukoyi if I want to?... Do you remember that Kukoyi and I are colleagues?*"⁵⁴

But Peju continues explaining her opinion: "*Yes unfortunately. And I believe that your association as colleagues should end up at work. Wait and discuss your professional matters in the staff room. Practice the teaching of strange languages in your language lab. Kukoyi is not your colleague here. At home, he's my husband.*"⁵⁵

Even after those explanations from Peju, Ruth still seems not to understand; but Peju is bothered and explained once more: "*Why not? You may, if you wish. But you cannot deal with my husband and hope to exclude me. I'm objecting to that possibility. You cannot sit under my roof to conduct a fishy business in shady tongue and expect me to keep mute.*"⁵⁶

After this, Ruth has gone further: "*Does it pain you to hear me practice a language I'm paid to teach? Did I stop you from learning languages? Well if*

⁵²A. S. Ogundimu, *Behind the Mask*, op. cit., p.37

⁵³Ibid p38

⁵⁴idem

⁵⁵idem

⁵⁶idem

*that is your headache, you'll nurse it for long. And take it from me, you have seen nothing yet.*⁵⁷

Despite all the problems she has had with her husband and Ruth, Peju does not give up, she struggles for her children and even though things do not go as she will have liked, and without Kukoyi's support, she finally wins.

At last, it is very important to notice that after Ruth has destroyed Kukoyi, she sends him away from the apartment that he has bought with his own money. Then he has been obliged to go and ask for Peju's forgiveness and she forgives him for her children's sake. Through this novel, the author is giving an advice to all the women. That is to say: a married woman should always think of her children and be able to forgive her husband's unfaithfulness in order to give a real family to those innocent human beings who did not ask to come into life.

In fact, every child has the right to be loved and live with his parents; they need a better future. So People should try their best to give their children or those in their environment best life conditions. But before reaching this goal, it is necessary to put each child in his right place in modern society.

⁵⁷ A. S. Ogundimu, *Behind the Mask* op. cit., p. 39

PART THREE:
Children's place in modern society

Chapter five: Children survival

The two previous parts have revealed child's issue in African societies and how parents are no more free after their children's birth. Women are the most concerned because they are naturally those who bear child. Each of the two main female characters has received her share of involvement concerning children's issue.

Therefore, the novels under study show certain African behaviours toward women as far as children are concerned. Thus, the novels tackle psychological and moral impact on having or not having children.

In the third part, I intend to focus on children characters' incapacity to overcome life difficulties without parents or society's help in term of the reading of the novels. Thus, I will deal with children's place in modern society with approach of solution for leading people to help children to have good living condition and taking into account their education.

The responsibilities parents bring on themselves when they have children are very important. Just keeping children in good health needs a great deal of thought and effort, but developing their characters, helping them to grow into fine young people are even more tasks. That is what some parents fail to do. In *The Housemaid* for instance, Efia's parents do not think of her well-being, they have been so selfish that they rather only think of money they will make from the situation. As result, the poor young girl has had a part of her life badly marked.

The experiences and treatment children receive during their childhood largely determine the kind of people they will grow up to be. A young child deprived of love and attention will always carry the marks of this neglect in his character. So it is very important to think carefully about how to treat young children, and about the kind of up-bringing they should have. Many parents do not do the best for their children only because they do not know the dimensions

of children's place in the family or because they lack the essential needs of their children. Thus, if Efi's parents have means to well bring her so that she will be on welfare, they will probably not send her to Tika as housemaid.

Therefore, children as innocent, vulnerable and dependent creatures need essential needs for a better future. They are curious, active and full of hope; consequently, their time should be one of joy and peace; of playing, learning and growing. Their future should be shaped in harmony and co-operation. Their life should mature, as they broaden their perspectives and gain new experiences.

But for many children, the reality of childhood is altogether different. That is why on 29-30 September 1989 the largest gathering of world leaders in history assembled at the United Nations to attend the World summit for Children. On the occasion, the World Summit adopts a Declaration on the Survival, Protection and development of children.

Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child comes into force on 2 September 1990.

The World summit for children, strongly endorses the Convention which is in a real sense, the first major global action for its implementation.

Together, the Declaration and Plan of action of the World Summit for children and the Convention on Rights of the Child constitute an ambitious but feasible agenda for the well-being of children. In committing themselves to pursue these goals, the leaders of the world have agreed to be guided by the principle of a "first call for children"; a principle in which the essential needs of children should be given high priority in the allocation of resources, in bad times as well in good times, at national and international as well as at family levels.

UNICEF is naturally associated with the World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF is only one among many others; governments, non-governmental organizations, international agencies and individuals; who have duty and a clearly assigned role to follow up on the

implementation of the Summit and the Convention in order to ensure effectively the survival, the protection and the harmonious development of children.

The child is supposed to be the future of his family and the nation. For that, it turns out crucial that particular care should be granted to him from his very birthday until he becomes an adult. Therefore, it is a very important responsibility for all the society to make him become a good citizen for his country; however, no child will survive if his mother is not aware of the way she should play her role by taken care of her maternal health.

5-1. Women's role, maternal health and family planning

Women in their roles play various parts in the well-being of children. The enhancement of women's status and their equal access to education, training, credit and other extension services constitute a valuable contribution to a nation's social and economic development. Efforts for the enhancement of women's status and their role in development must begin with the girl child. For instance in *The Housemaid*, Efia shall be well educated and well treated by her parents, she must not be given as maid. Even Tika herself has not been well brought up since her mother spends all the time beating her father. Every child must live with his or her parents in order to benefit from their affection and their protection. Equal opportunities should be provided for the girl to benefit from the health, nutrition, education and other basic services to enable her to grow to her full potential.

Maternal health, nutrition and education are for the survival and well-being of women and teenage girls in their own right and are key determinants of the health and well-being of the child in early infancy. The causes of the high rates of infant mortality are linked to untimely pregnancies, low birth weight and pre-term births, unsafe delivery, neonatal tetanus, high fertility rates, etc... To redress this tragedy, special attention should be given to health, nutrition and education of women.

All couples should access to information on the importance of responsible planning of family size and the many advantages of child spacing to avoid pregnancies that are too early, too late, too many or too frequent. Prenatal care, clean delivery, access to referral facilities in complicated cases, tetanus vaccination and prevention of anemia and other nutritional deficiencies during pregnancy are other important interventions to ensure safe motherhood and a healthy start in life for the new –born. Promoting maternal and child health programs and family planning together are salutary activities that help to accelerate the reduction of women and children mortality rate. As for Efia, by her parents’ slovenliness, she misses all information concerning pregnancy, birth giving and maternal health so that she has had trouble holding her pregnancy and the baby dies.

In Benin for instance, in October 24th, 2013, the Official celebrations of the United Nations Day hold on. It was attended by various stakeholders of United Nations System in Benin. No child should die from a printable cause anymore. This is the renewed commitment of Benin minister of Health Dorothée Kindé Gazard, under the control of the United Nations System in Benin. And that one year after Washington Call for increased actions on child survival. During the manifestation, the minister of Health in the presence of different actors in the System of the United Nations, took stock and focused the actions to be implemented in Benin for the reduction of infant mortality. To believe this, the implementation of the objectives of appeal of June 2012 in Washington, has enabled Benin to dramatically reduce child mortality. “*But there is still much to do.*”⁵⁸ She admits. And to make adjustments in 2035, the Health minister said she already made arrangements; this by identifying the main causes of child mortality, which are malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea. In a second time, “we have identified also the main bottlenecks, which are summarized in the poor

⁵⁸ <http://www.lanouvelletribune.info/index.php/société/vie> sociable/16539-journée des nations unies, Consulted September, 15th 2013

condition of intervention in public health, poor leadership and inadequate human resources. Faced with these obstacles and achievements to avoid children the causes of death, Dorothée Kindé Gazard announced several strategies. This is among others, to develop partnerships with municipalities and respond best to the needs of women on birth control. Those strategies include the United Nations System in Benin, including staffs in willing to support.

Indeed, according to the acting coordinator of the United Nations System, Elizabeth Balepa, it is necessary to continue tirelessly, investment efforts to improve the conditions of the mother and the child. It reiterates and on the occasion of the day of October 24, dedicated to the United Nations, the commitment of its whole system to support the government of Benin in the pursuit of equity, quick impact in reducing infant mortality.

Moreover, the Association Béninoise pour la Promotion de la Famille (ABPF), acts through its numerous clinics all over the country to reduce national maternal mortality rate. It operates an effective community –based obstetric and antenatal care services in 16 villages, using traditional birth attendants and volunteer health workers. In acknowledgement of ABFP’s expertise and accomplishments, the government of Benin invited the Organization to become a member of the technical committee in the Ministry of Planning that drafts reproductive health policies. ABPF is a large dedicated team of nearly 50 staffs and over 400 volunteers all over the country.

Like millions of parents in every country, many Africans realized that the smaller the family is, the better it is in every way. Where there are fewer children, they can effort to give them best food so that they are stronger and healthier. They will have better educational opportunities because they are cleverer and have more time and energy for their school –work when they don’t have many brothers and sisters to look after and not so many household shores for them to do. The health of the mother is also better, for her body is not worn out with constantly bearing children. It is undoubtedly sure now that, all over the

world, large families live in poverty, while the smaller ones generally have a much better living standard; especially today when life is getting harder and harder.

All children must be given the chance to find their identity and realize their worth in a safe and supportive environment that they too have the obligation to preserve.

5-2. Children and the environment

Children have the greatest stake in the preservation of the environment and its judicious management for sustainable development depends on it. The child survival and development goals proposed in the Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children seek to improve the environment by combating diseases and malnutrition and promoting education. These contribute to lowering death rates, improved social services, better use of natural resources and ultimately, to the alleviation of poverty and the preservation of the environment.

With their relatively low use of capital resources and high reliance on social mobilization, community participation and appropriate technology, the programs designed to reach the child-related goals of the 1990s are highly compatible with and supportive of environmental protection. The goals for the survival, protection and development of children as enunciated in this Plan of Action should therefore be seen as helping to protect and preserve the environment. Still more action is needed, of course, to prevent the degradation of the environment in both the industrialized and the developing countries, through changes in the wasteful consumption patterns of the affluent and by helping to meet the necessities of survival and development of the poor. Programs for children that not only help to meet their basic needs but which inculcate in them respect for the natural environment with the diversity of life that it sustains and its beauty and resourcefulness that enhance the quality of

human life, must figure prominently in the world's environment agenda. In *Behind the Mask*, one notices how children act and reason at parents' place. An example is the way Yinka stops his father from beating their mother when she comes to see them after divorce. He stands between the two combatants and says:

This is not right, father you're acting below your age, I'm sorry to say. What advice would you give a young man of twenty-five if he should beat his wife? I'm disappointed. Are you not an adult? Are you not a parent? Why would you behave like a youngster? When you chase shadows and tire, you must stop. Kill her if you want, but remember, she is still our mother: there's no substitute for her. Just like we can find no substitute for you as father...⁵⁹

Furthermore, Peju's third son Fola forbids Ruth, their step mother, from insulting their mother; "*Mummy Junior, you may say anything you like, but don't talk about my mother...*"⁶⁰

Also in Kofi Anyidoho's introductory essay to Amma Darko's *Faceless*, he writes:

In *Faceless* as in *The Housemaid*, we find the children thinking and speaking and acting above their age. This should not surprise us. Having been abandoned to the streets, each one of them has had to grow too quickly into the ways of the world in order take up for themselves those responsibilities their parents have turned their backs on. For many of these children, thinking, talking and indeed acting "grown up" is a necessary skill for survival in a ruthless world.⁶¹

Moreover, each day, countless children around the world are exposed to diseases and dangers that hamper their growth and development. They suffer immensely as casualties of war and violence; as victims of racial discrimination, apartheid, aggression, foreign occupation and annexation; as refugees and displaced children, forced to abandon their homes and their roots; as disabled, or as victims of neglect, cruelty and exploitation.

But children are innocent, vulnerable and dependent and therefore have right to be protected and to develop

⁵⁹ A. S. Ogundimu, *Behind the Mask*, (Lagos: Campus Publication, Ltd, 2000), p.101.

⁶⁰ Ibid P. 101

⁶¹ Amma Darko, *Faceless*, with an introductory essay by Kofi Anyidoho, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, January 12, 2003, p xv

Chapter six: Children protection and development

Child protection means preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children; including commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking, child labour and any harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation and child marriage. Thereupon, everybody is concerned in making children being healthy, taking care of them in difficult circumstances and protecting them during armed conflicts.

6-1. Children health and especially in difficult circumstances

Many children are confronted to much difficult circumstances like prostitution and street life. Consequently, Kofi Anyidoho says:

The phenomenon of street children has become one of the most widely discussed social tragedies of our time. We are witnesses to a deluge of talk about the plight of these children, from newspaper, articles; to radio talk-shows, television documentaries and elegant academic discussions....It is for this reason that Amma Darko's *Faceless* must be compulsory reading for all those who claim to be interested in the plight of street children. In this relatively short novel, street children cease to be mere statistics or a point of reference for media hysteria, academic discourse or political theoretic. What do we tell the one street child who steps off the pages of this book and declares that she *knows* poverty, that she has in fact *seen* it? And what do we say or do as "normal people" the next time we wake up and.... Before we head towards our bed, may be we should find out from Maami Broni what it is like to have the blood of just one street child on your hands.⁶²

Preventable childhood diseases such as measles, polio, tetanus, tuberculosis, whooping cough and diphtheria, against which there are effective vaccines, and diarrheal diseases, pneumonia and other acute respiratory infections that can be prevented or effectively treated through relatively low – cost remedies; are currently responsible for the great majority of the world's 14 million deaths of children under 5 years and disability of millions more every years. Effective actions can and must be taken to combat these diseases by strengthening primary health care and basic health services in all countries as suggested in the Convention on the Rights of the Child: "*States Parties*

⁶² Amma Darko, *Faceless*, with an introductory essay by Kofi Anyidoho, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, January 12, 2003, p. xix

*recognize the rights of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her access to such health care services*⁶³.

Beside the readily preventable or treatable disease and some others, such as malaria, which have proved to be more difficult to combat, children today are faced with the new specter of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). In the most seriously affected countries HIV/AIDS threatens to offset the gains of child survival programs. It is already a major drain on limited public health resources needed to support other priority health services. The consequences of HIV/AIDS go well beyond the suffering and death of the infected child and include risks and stigmas that affect parents and siblings and the tragedy of “AIDS orphans”. There is an urgent need to ensure that programs for the prevention and treatments of AIDS, including research on possible vaccines and cures that can be applicable in all countries and situations, and massive information and education campaigns, receive a high priority for both national action and international co-operation.

A major factor affecting the health of children as well as that of adults is the availability of clean water and safe sanitation. Progress in child health is unlikely to be sustained if one third of the developing world’s children remain without access to clean drinking water and half of them without adequate sanitary facilities. So it is now necessary, through concerted national actions and international co-operation, to aim at providing all the world’s children with universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation. An important related benefit of universal access to water and sanitation combined with health education will be the control of many water-borne diseases, which currently afflicts some ten million children in parts of Africa and Asia, according to UNICEF valuations.

⁶³Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 24 –paragraph 1.

Attention care and support should be accorded to numerous children in especially difficult circumstances because millions of children around the world live difficultly as orphans and street children, as refugees or displaced persons, as victims of war and natural or man-made disasters and other socially disadvantaged group, as child workers or youth trapped in the bondage of prostitution, sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation, as disabled children and juvenile delinquents and as victims of apartheid or foreign occupation. Such children deserve special attention, protection and assistance from their families and communities and as part of national efforts and international co-operation.

More than 100 million children are engaged in employment, often heavy and hazardous and in contravention of international conventions which provide for their protection from economic exploitation and from performing work that interferes with their education and are harmful to their health full development. With this in mind, all States should work to end such child-labour practices and see how the conditions and circumstances of children in legitimate employment can be protected to provide adequate opportunities for healthy upbringing and development.

Concerning drug abuse, it has emerged as a global menace to very large numbers of young people and increasingly children; including permanent damage incurred in the pre-natal stages of life. Concerned actions are needed by Governments and intergovernmental agencies to combat illicit production, supply, demand, trafficking and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances to counter this tragedy. Equally important are community actions and education, which are vitally needed to curb the supply of and the demand for illicit drugs. Tobacco and alcohol abuse are also problems requiring actions, especially preventive measures and education among young people.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child suggests:

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislative, administrative, social and educational measures, to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances as defined in the

relevant international treaties, and to prevent the use of children in illicit production trafficking of such substances.⁶⁴

In many countries of the world, countless children are exposed to the scourge of war and armed conflicts. Such children deserve to be protected since they need special protection in situations of armed conflict. Recent examples in which countries and opposing factions have agreed to suspend hostilities and adopt special measures such as “corridors of peace” to allow relief supplies to reach women and children and “days of tranquility” to vaccinate and to provide other health services for children and their families in areas of conflict need to be applied in all such situations. Resolution of a conflict need not be a prerequisite for measures explicitly to protect children and their families to ensure their continuing access to food, medical care and basic services, to deal with trauma resulting from violence and to exempt them from other direct consequences of violence and hostilities. To build the foundation for a peaceful world where violence and war will cease to be acceptable means for settling dispute and conflicts, children’s education should inculcate the values of peace, tolerance, understanding and dialogue.

Each day, millions of children suffer from the scourges of poverty, illiteracy and economic crisis. They suffer from the grave effects of the problems of external indebtedness and also from the lack of sustained and sustainable growth in many developing countries, particularly the least developed ones. These are challenges deserving to be taken up in order to diminish enormously the sufferings of those children and to promote the full development of their human potential and to make them aware of their needs, rights and opportunities.

6-2. Family and society’s role

The family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children from infancy to adolescence as it is stated in the

⁶⁴Convention on the Rights of the Child –Article 33

Convention: “*States Parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principles that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interests of the child will be their basic concern*”⁶⁵.

Moreover, in Amma Darko’s *The Housemaid* and *Faceless*, there is a wake-up to everybody as Grandmothers, Grandfathers, as mothers, but especially as fathers. It is not enough to sow the seed of human life in quick, repeated sessions of reckless ecstasy. Beyond the delight of tears, beyond the passionate intensity of countless orgasms, the future of our children, of our own mortality and ancestry awaits our constant vigilance and careful nurturing. No seed grows into harvest joys without the planter’s diligent labour of love. Until we come to this understanding as parents, as family, as community, we will forever stand condemned by the anguish in the eyes and the voices of our children, forever guilty of the nurturing of prospective souls into the devouring jaws of the streets.

Thus, introduction of children to the culture, values and norms of their society begins in the family. For the full and harmonious development of their personality, children should grow in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. Therefore, every mother should act like Peju in *Behind the Mask* who does whatever she can in order to stay with her children. She even forgives her husband’s faults for her children’s sake. Accordingly, all institutions of the society should respect and support the efforts of parents and other care –givers to nurture and care for children in a family environment.

Every effort should be made to prevent the separation of children from their families. Whenever children are separated from their family owing to uncontrollable events, arrangements should be made for appropriate alternative

⁶⁵ Convention on the Rights of the Child - Article 18- paragraph 1.

family care or institutional placement, due regard being paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing in his or her own cultural milieu.

Extended families, relatives and community institutions should be given support to help to meet the special needs of orphans, displaced and abandoned children. Efforts must be made to ensure that no child is treated as an outcast from society. Every child has a different personality and each of them must be treated as an individual with his or her own particular needs, shortcomings and own good points. So it is better to help each child develop fully his or her own personality.

At present, according to UNICEF, over 100 million children are without basic schooling, and two-third of them are girls. The provisions of basic education and literacy for all are among the most important contribution that can be made to the development of the world's children.

As far as basic education and literacy are concerned, the international community, including virtually all the governments the world, have undertaken a commitment at the World Conference on Education for All, to increase significantly educational opportunities for over 100 million children and nearly one billion adults, two-third of them, girls and women, who at presents have no access to basic education and literacy. In fulfillment of that commitment, specific measures must be adopted for:

- a) The expansion of early childhood development activities,
- b) Universal access to basic education, including completion of primary education or equivalent learning achievement by at least 80 per cent of the relevant school age children with emphasis on reducing the current disparities between boys and girls,
- c) The reduction of adult illiteracy by half, with emphasis on female literacy,
- d) Vocational training and preparation for employment and

- e) Increased acquisition of knowledge, skills and values through all educational channels, including modern and traditional communication media, to improve the quality of life of children and families.

Besides, its intrinsic value for human development and improving the quality of live, progress in education and literacy can contribute significantly to improvement in maternal and child health, in protection of the environment and in sustainable development. As such, investment in basic education must be accorded a high priority in national action as well as international co –operation.

Economic continue to influence greatly the fate of children, especially in developing countries. For the sake of the future of all children, it is urgently necessary to ensure the alleviation of poverty and revitalization of economic growth.

Achievement of child related goals in the areas of health, nutrition, education, etc... will contribute much to alleviating the most manifestations of poverty. But much more will need to be done to ensure that a solid economic base is established to meet and sustain the goal for long –term child survival, protection and development.

As affirmed by the international community at the eighteenth special session of the United Nations General Assembly in April 1990, a most important challenge is the need for revitalization of economic growth and social development in the developing countries and to address together the problems of abject poverty and hanger that continue to afflict far too many people in the world. As the most vulnerable segment of human society, children have a particular stake in sustained economic growth and alleviation of poverty, without which their well –being cannot be secured.

The fulfillment of the basic needs of children must receive a high priority. That is what Benin government undertook since many years by making primary public school free of charge and secondary from the first

to the third class is all free for girls. Moreover, the insertion of maternal languages in the learning situations is also taken into account. Every possible opportunity should be explored to ensure that programs benefiting children, women and other vulnerable group are protected in times of structural adjustments and other economic restructuring. For example, as countries reduce military expenditures, part of the resources released should be channeled to programs for social and economic development, including those benefiting children. Debt –relief schemes could be formulated in ways that the budget reallocations and renewed economic growth made possible through such schemes would benefit programs for children. Debt –relief for children, including debt swaps for investment in social development programs, should be considered by debtors and creditors. The international communities, including private – sector creditors, are urged to work with developing countries and relevant agencies to support debt –relief for children. To match increased efforts by developing countries themselves, the donor countries and international institutions should consider targeting more development assistance to primary health care, basic education, low –cost water and sanitation programs to complement their own national efforts to meet the pressing needs of children.

Families, communities, local governments, Non–Governmental Organizations, social, cultural, religious, business and other institutions, including the mass media, are encouraged to play an active role in support of the goals enunciated in the Plan of Action for implementing the World Declaration on the survival, protection and development of children.

CONCLUSION

My research work has helped me to highlight the issue of children's importance in African society. In fact, children in *The Housemaid* and in *Behind the Mask* are an evidence of Amma Darko and Ogundimu's arts and skills to tackle the social heritage in Africa. Then, it can be classified into two main categories which are Amma Darko and Ogundimu's vision of children through their respective novels. They also show their thought about child bearing and the way parents suffer for their children in African societies through their respective novels.

My analysis regarding child bearing reveals that in Africa, no woman can be considered as such if she does not get at least one child. A woman with no child is looked at as a loss of the nature. That is what Amma Darko shows through Tika about what People think of her.

As far as parents' suffering is concerned, I notice that there are some irresponsible fathers who have no more any consideration toward their wife, their children's mother when they find another woman. An example is the one of Kukoyi, Peju's husband who leaves her for Ruth after she gives him children. Men forget women's values just after having children with them. Then, the woman who is wife and mother comes across many problems; but for her children's sake, she can no more give up. So Peju chooses to overcome every kind of difficulty for her children's sake. Pokuwaa's ardent desire to bear children is still remarkable today. It is clear that the child is very important in Africa so that most people are anxious to have at least one for their own. But things have changed. It is no use to having a child nowadays even if it is to ensure your succession unless you are able to provide for his or her essential needs. Moreover you must not have a great number of children if you can't bring them up all. Child traffic for instance is partly caused by the poverty of parents who have children but are not able to look decently after them.

Indeed, parents, elders and leaders at all levels throughout the world have a certain common aspirations for the well-being of their children. The

fulfillment of this purpose cannot be possible if the protection and respect of children's rights without any discrimination is not a reality. So all government must work to promote earliest possible ratification and implementation of convention on the Rights of the Child. Programs to encourage information about children's rights must be launched worldwide, taking into account the distinct cultural and social values in different countries. Children must be given the chance to find their identity and realize their worth in a safe and supportive environment, through families and other care-givers committed to their welfare. They must be prepared for responsible life in a free society. They must from their early years, be encouraged to participate in the cultural life of their societies.

To reach these goals, it is necessary to work for persistent effort for a national and an international action to enhance children's health, to promote pre-natal care and to lower infant and child mortality in all countries and among all people. Parents should get information about children's rights so that they will do their best to provide their children, health and good living conditions in order to avoid phenomenon such as street children, child traffic, etc... and teenage prostitution as Amma Darko mentions in her novel. It is also necessary to promote the provision of clean water in all communities for all their children, as well as universal access to sanitation.

It is urgently necessary to work for optimal growth and development in childhood, through measures to eradicate hunger, malnutrition, ill-treatment and famine; and thus to relieve millions of children of tragic sufferings in the world.

States must work to strengthen the role and status of women. They must work to promote responsible planning of family size, birth spacing, breastfeeding and safe motherhood. They must work for programs that reduce illiteracy and provide educational opportunities for children. That is to say, if Efia's grandmother and mother have had access to education, they will not think

the way they think and will not spoil the innocent young girl's life as they have done.

States must work to alleviate the plight of children victims of apartheid, streets children, displaced children and children victims of natural or man-made disasters. In one word, all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures must be taken in order to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

Moreover, parents should not divorce for the simple reason that they no more bear each other. However, their duty is to think of children's well-being before any other thing. Such protective measures should include effective procedures for the establishment of social programs to provide necessary support for the child and for those who have the care of him or her.

For the future of all children, it is urgently necessary to ensure or reactivate sustained and sustainable economic growth and development in all countries and also to continue to give urgent attention to an early, broad and durable solution to the external debt problems facing developing debtor countries.

These tasks require a continued and concerted effort by all nations, through national actions and international co-operations.

At last, it is necessary to work carefully to protect children from the scourge of war and to take measures to prevent further armed conflicts, in order to give children everywhere a peaceful and secure future. As today's children are the citizens of tomorrow's world, their survival, protection and development are the prerequisite for the future development of humanity. There can be no task nobler than giving every child throughout the world, a better future.

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