

News/ Nigeria**Caring for the little ones**

Efforts are on in Edo State, Nigeria, to develop nurseries for the children of women fish vendors

By Okechukwu Kanu of *This Day*

Fish markets in most parts of the developing world, including Nigeria, are unhygienic and difficult places for small children accompanying their fish-vending mothers. In almost no market are there any facilities to cater to the needs of the children of market women



It is in this context that the Edo State Women's Association (ESWA) came up with an idea to build a market traders' day nursery. ESWA plans to work with market women's associations to set up and manage in Edo State markets, daycare centres for children up to four years of age.

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

ESWA further observes that, because many of the children are strapped to their mother's backs for long periods, they are slow to meet their developmental milestones such as crawling, walking and running. "On the whole, hygiene conditions in markets are not conducive for the health and growth of young children. Some traders and porters have resorted to leaving their babies at home or in the market in the care of underaged girl-children between the ages of 5 and 14. The implication for these girl-children is that they are unable to attend school, with grave poverty implications for them when they grow up," ESWA says. ESWA has held preliminary talks with leaders of the market women's association and they have agreed to pilot a small-scale nursery/ crèche for up to 40 children. The association is also seeking funding to get the project on track. Already, some French delegates have shown interest in the project and are looking at ways to collaborate with ESWA.

This is summarized from an article by Okechukwu Kanu in This Day, Lagos, 7 October 2003