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FEMALE TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF AKWA IBOM STATE.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the social problem of female trafficking in Nigeria and its implications on the affected families. The search light beams on Akwa Ibom State. Data is collected through primary and secondary sources. Major findings include the prevalence of poverty in Akwa Ibom State as a result of her being predominantly a civil service State with very few industries that can give employment to citizens. Poverty is identified as the main cause of women trafficking in the State as these women and girls are lured by cruel contractors who deceive them that there are job opportunities abroad also some families in the coastal areas that are polygamous see trafficking of their children as a way of making money to feed the remaining members of the family. Major recommendations include government establishing and making industries functional to employ the many unemployed girl school leavers who are being deceived by the greedy group of individuals and taken abroad for sex trade. It is also very important that the State and other human rights organizations raise awareness about trafficking in human beings through engagement of the mass media and information campaigns. Another important recommendation is that the State promotes training in foreign languages those in key positions, in particular, the law enforcement agents for combating trafficking in human beings especially, the French language which is spoken by the neighbouring countries along the coastal areas of Akwa Ibom State.

INTRODUCTION

The trafficking of women is one of the gravest violations of human rights in the world today. Women are ensnared by the empty promises of the trafficking networks – promises of a better life, of an escape route from poverty and each year, hundreds of thousands of women and children are smuggled across borders and sold as mere commodities. The loss of these women and children are felt by families till death since some of those families are deprived of the only family bread winners. The Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW), the International Human Rights Law Group and the Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (STV) in conjunction with similar NGOs around the world defined trafficking as:

Any act or attempt involving the recruitment, transport within or across national boundaries, exchange, sale, transfer, lodging or reception, constraint (including the use of force or the abuse of authority) or by means of debt bondage with a view to placing or maintaining the person in question, with or without financial consideration, in a position of servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive) in forced labour in conditions analogous on slavery, in a community other than that in which the person lived until the moment the deception, constraint or debt bondage was brought to bear.

Any act or attempt involving the recruitment, transport within or across national boundaries, exchange, sale, transfer, lodging or reception, constraint (including the use of force or the abuse of authority) or by means of debt bondage with a view to placing or maintaining the person in question, with or without financial consideration, in a position of servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive) in forced labour in conditions analogous on slavery, in a community other than that in which the person lived until the moment the deception, constraint or debt bondage was brought to bear.

labour problem.

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) in the US estimates that every year two million people are trafficked against their will to work in some form of servitude. The international organization for migration estimates that trafficking in human being is a \$5 to \$7 billion dollar industry worldwide. Trafficked prostituted women are rarely granted refugee status, although there is growing consensus that they should be allowed access to refugee determination proceedings.

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According to CRS Report For Congress, trafficking affects virtually every country in the world. The largest number of victims, according to the Report, comes from Asia, with over 225,000 victims each year from Southeast Asia and over 150,000 from South Asia. The former Soviet Union is now believed to be the largest new source of trafficking for prostitution and the sex industry, with over 100,000 trafficked each year from that region. An additional 75,000 or more are trafficked from Central and Eastern Europe. Over 100,000 come from Latin America and the Caribbean, and over 50,000 victims are from Africa. Most of the victims are sent to Asia, the Middle East, Western Europe and North America.(CRC Report For Congress Received through the CRS Web).

Approximately 120,000 women and children are trafficked into the European Union every year (Osborn,2001). Sex Traffic is Europe's Shame(The Guardian, March 9). Worldwide, estimates range from 700,000 to outstanding 4,000,000 women and children trafficked annually (Osborn, (2001). Sex Traffic is Europe's Shame. The Guardian, March 9). To put this number into perspective, in the last decade of what is being called 'Modern Slavery', Southeast Asia alone has produced three times as many victims of trafficking than the entire history of slavery from Africa (Osborn, Andy. (2001). Sex Traffic is Europe's Shame. The Guardian, March 9).

Between October 25 and November 12, 1999, eighty-four Nigerian girls were deported from Italy to Nigeria. The highest number which was seventy-one (71) came from Edo State, followed by Delta State who had nine, two came from Ondo State while Enugu and Imo States had one each. Between December 3 and 8, eighty-seven (87) females were deported from Italy to Nigeria. Of the 180 Nigerian females deported from Italy to Nigeria, 80 percent of them came from Edo State (Chidi, 2002:1).

As reported by Dutch Anti-trafficking Agency (DAA) on February 2006, the plight of many Nigerian teenagers involved in prostitution in the Netherlands is deplorable. Another Report came from the Women Right Watch International, a United States Based NGO, in December, 2005 indicating that over 15,000 women are being trafficked to the United States annually and a significant proportion of these women come from Africa. The highest numbers of these trafficked females come from Nigeria. The immigration service in 2005 reported that about 15,000 Nigerian women are involved in sex trade around Asia and Europe and the trafficked area is Nigeria.

The United States (U.S.) Ambassador once said that most migrants have genuine intension raising their lives and have little intension of committing crime (*The Guardian*, Thursday, January 31, 2008:39).

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) in the United States estimates that every year, 700,000 to two million people are trafficked against their will to work in some form of servitude, approximately 50,000 women and children are trafficked to United States each year (Gbadamosi, 2006:12). The Agency notes that the majority of them are women and children who are trafficked across International Borders.

Trafficking is also outlawed in the universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the convention for the suppression of the traffic in persons and of the Exploitation of the prostitution of others (1949), the Declaration of the Rights of the child (1959) , the International covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1979), the convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women (1979), with its supplementary Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2002), convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) relating to prohibition of the worst forms of child labour (1999) and the charter of the International Criminal Court (Rome, 1998).

Human trafficking cannot be isolated from poverty especially in the developing world. As explained by the United States Agency for International Development, 1999:

Trafficking is a complex development issue. It is an economic problem as the vast majority of women seeking to escape poverty are lured into trafficking by the false promise of economic gains. Trafficking is a health problem as women and children are at the risk of HIV infection. It is a gender problem, as unequal power relation reinforces women's secondary status in the society. Lastly it is a legal problem, as its victims are stripped of their human rights and lack any access to redress the crimes committed against their (United States Agency for International Development, 1999).

Lyday (2001) highlight women trafficking, from the United Nations global dimension as a social problem. The United Nations views women trafficking as a form of slavery and a crime against humanity. According to Lyday, about four million women are trafficked throughout the world each year. Women between the ages

of 15 and 35 are often taken to countries such as United States, Israel, Spain, Italy, Germany, Thailand, Netherlands, and some of them are lured into prostitution and other exploitative activities. India is rich in girls that are trafficked and forced into prostitution. A CNN programme featured in the year 2008 revealed that sex trade in India is an outcome of human trafficking. A recognized contractor was featured who lived in a story building constructed in such a manner that the ceiling accommodated more than 30 female sex workers. Whenever the building was on a seize by the police, the girls were asked to stay inside the ceiling. One eventful day, the contractor asked them to come down and be seen by a CNN correspondent. More than 50 females who were in the apartment, and they came out one by one and told the story of how they were trafficked. The most shocking situation was that the contractors were operating without fear of molestation. A particular street in New Delhi was filled with females who lined up waiting for males to take them home. Ebrim (2002) posits that about 50,000 Nigerian woman were being trafficked within Nigeria, to the neighboring country and to the United States, Europe and East Asia. The author is also of the opinion that the trafficking of women in Nigeria has been institutionalized with organized agents involved in the illicit trade and that a growing number of women are being lured into the trafficking business. According to Ebrim, Nigerian women are the most trafficked not only in the West African Sub Region but in Africa. Human trade, according to UNICEF, is caused by poverty, unemployment, limited capacity of customs and immigration agencies, making the borders very porous, weak policy implementation, high level of illiteracy, increasing taste for materialistic values among youths.

Benjamin (2000) revealed in his study that many illegal groups use employment, travel agencies, educational agencies, and marriage firms as fronts for their trafficking activities. Others use househelp fronts to trick the poor mothers in the rural areas to get their female children for househelp purposes.

According to Osaro, (2004) traffickers are wealthy individual who search for huge returns on quick investment sometimes they cajole desperate parents to pawn or give up valued family property such as a home or a parcel of land as collected to finance their daughter's trip aboard. Worse still the traffickers are so organized that the organization have recruiters, trolleys, passport racketeers, embassy staff, law enforcement agents and fetish priest who administer fearsome oaths on trafficked victims.

Ayua (2001) observes that traffickers and their agents are located in towns and villages, recruit their victims by using false inducement and promise of good jobs in foreign countries. According to the author, these agents often lie or bribe and use other forms of deception on families and guardians to lure girls away from their homes.

The title of this paper really focuses on the definition given to human trafficking by the United States Agency for International Development, 1999. Female trafficking and their effects on the affected families. Although Nigeria is a country that booms with oil, the average citizen is living below a dollar a day. This paper argues that the root of female trafficking in Nigeria is poverty. Very few States in Nigeria are industrialized enough to employ the increasing number of female graduates.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This work adopts the theory of Anomie as propounded by Merton (1957). It is the author's view that the society shares certain value system that exerts enormous social expectations on the individuals in the society. Since the goals and means to achieve these social values are not stressed, the condition in Anomie resorts to any means. This amounts to any individual resorting to either crime or other vices in order to achieve their goals. It is, therefore, seen here that the end rather than the means, is emphasized.

MEASURES SET UP TO COMBAT WOMEN TRAFFICKING INTERNATIONALLY AND NATIONALLY

- The international and domestic communities are striving at very insignificant pace to address the issues of trafficking through legal instruments with various organizations. One of such conferences was the Africa-Europe second Ministerial Conference at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso held on November 28, 2002. Most recently the commitment at the UN Millennium Summit to Fight Transnational Crime including Trafficking in Human Beings, in Palermo Italy is one of such instruments and Meetings. However, it is a reality to state that governments too often can do very little to combat women trafficking in poor countries where poverty is predominant. Although some countries us strategies that target the legal and immigration-based issues of trafficking, but don't address the human rights of trafficked people. Other instruments include:
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948);

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- The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979);
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (1995);
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989);
- The UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2000);
- The Declaration of the World Summit for Children (1990);
- A World Fit for Children - UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (2002);
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (1995);
- The Constitutive Act of the African Union (2000);
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981) and its Protocol relating to the Rights of Women (2002);
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) and
- The African Common Position on Children (Declaration and Plan of Action (2001).

As poverty disproportionately affects women and their children, it is not surprising that, following trends in migration, women would be pushed to migrate in the hopes of acquiring economic security for themselves and their families (*Lantigua, 2000*).

THE ACTIVITIES OF NATIONAL AGENCY FOR THE PROHIBITION OF TRAFFIC IN PERSONS (NAPTIP)

The National Agency for the prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) is a Federal Government of Nigeria Agency established pursuant to the trafficking in persons (prohibition) law enforcement and administration Act, 2003.

Declaration

NAPTIP is fully committed to the prevention of all forms of sexual, exploitation and forced labour of a child or of adult occasioned by way of deceit, abuse of position of authority, fraud, threat, force, abduction, coercion, debt bondage, etc.

An individual so exploited is regarded as a victim. A victim so identified is not a criminal but an individual that needs the help, counseling, and support of the Agency to fully realized his or her right, self esteem and potentials with a view to be economically, socially and psychologically reintegrated into the society.

A victim is required to cooperate with the Agency to enable him/her take the benefit of the opportunities available towards his/her economic, social and psychological rehabilitation.

NAPTIP is dedicated to helping victims rediscover themselves by recognizing and identifying their problems with a view to advising counseling and rehabilitating them.

The identify of a victim and all information divulged to the counselors, investigators or any other officer of NAPTIP is confidential.

Rights of Victims

- The personal history and information on a trafficked or exploited victim shall remain confidential and entitled to give evidence in court against his/her trafficker in camera.
- A victim's picture name or other particulars of identification shall not be published in any manner whatsoever without the prior consent of the victim.
- A victim is entitled to institute civil action against his/her trafficker or any other person who have exploited or abused him/her.
- A trafficked person has a right to compensation against his/her trafficker for economic, physical and psychological damages.
- The person and identity of a victim shall be protected against any likely attack from his/her trafficker or his associates.
- A victim is entitled to a shelter if he/she so desires for a period not exceeding 2 weeks for his/her psychological and vocational counseling.

- A victim is also entitled to rehabilitation and reintegration programme of the NAPTIP to enable him/her acquire prerequisite skill in any vocation of his/her choice and also of necessary formal education.
- A victim on request is entitled to micro credit facilities provided by our partners to enable him/her complete the process of reintegration into the society.

BASIC STATISTICS

Total population of Nigeria (1999)	123.9m
Estimated children population (1999)	64m
Mean age of marriage	16.9 years
Primary school enrolment rate	Girls 77%
	Boys 84%
	84%
Average completion rate	69%

DATA ON ABUSES

Average age of trafficked children	15 years
Nigeria Girls in European Sex trade	60-80% Girls or over 200
Common Trafficking Route:	base in Italy, West Cost to Mali Morocco and by boat to Spain or West Coast to Libya or Saudi Arabia.
Means of Transportation:	90% travel by road Across the Sahara Desert, others through airports Seaport and Bush paths'
Categories of Children Labour:	Girls domestic servant prostitution Boys: Used as scavengers, car washers, bus conductors, drug peddlers, farmers about 8 million Nigeria children are engaged in exploitative child labour.

NAPTIP (UYO ZONE): AKWA IBOM STATE OFFICE

The zone started in the year 2003. It comprises Akwa Ibom State, Bayelsa State, Cross River State. The activities of NAPTIP are co-ordinated at the Federal level but the zonal staff carry out activities according to the schedule assigned to the zone.

Information from respondents in Akwa Ibom State Office revealed that the high endemic area is the coastal areas where immigrants come in for persons for their forced labour.

One of such cases happened in a village in one of the Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State. She came from a poor family and when she was approached for an offer as a house help aboard, she quickly accepted. Information gathered revealed that when she was taken abroad she was taken to where she was involved in sex trade. The ugly side of it was that two years after her departure, she was declared dead and her corpse could not be brought home. Taking cognizance of the examples given in this paper, without adequate machinery to tackle trafficking in poor countries, it becomes difficult for any domestic and international instruments to tackle adequately, female trafficking.

The Akwa Ibom State government has contributed immensely to the fight in traffic of persons in the area of sheltering the victims and rehabilitation. The former Governor Obong Victor Attah provided the first accommodation at No.13 Udoumana. During this tenure of the present governor Chief Godswill Obot Akpabio, accommodation has been provided for NAPTIP at plot 40 Shelter Afric. This accommodation comprises office, Shelter and clinic for the victims. Many training programmes have been mounted and equipments donated to the victims. Mrs. Elizabeth, Head of NAPTIP Zonal Office was honoured by different Administrations with many Awards for her excellent work. Many cases of traffickers jailed have also been reported (NAPTIP, News 2010).

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Distribution table of the convictions according to year and Jurisdiction

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
Abuja	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	4
Lagos	-	2	1	1	3	5		12
Kano	-	2	-	-	7	2	10	21
Uyo	-	-	1	-	1	2	2	6
Benin	1	-	1	4	1	3	2	12
Sokoto	-	-	-	-	11	10	3	24
Enugu	-	-	1	2	2	-	1	6
Maiduguri	-	-	-	-	-	-		-
Total	1	4	4	7	28	25	19	85

Source: *NAPTIP NEWS* Vol.2 No. 2 August – October 2010

CONSEQUENCES OF WOMEN TRAFFICKING IN AKWA IBOM STATE: IMPLICATIONS ON FAMILIES

- HIV/AIDS has been a disease that ruins women most. Women are most vulnerable to contract of HIV/AIDS and some of these trafficked women and girls come back infected with the virus. There is an increase in sexually transmitted diseases in Nigeria. Although the first case of HIV infection in Akwa Ibom State was first reported in 1989, the results of the Federal Ministry of Health HIV/Syphilis sentinel zero-prevalence study conducted in 1999, 2001, 2003 indicate that Akwa Ibom State is among the first three States of the Federation affected by HIV/AIDS. Figures ranging between 200,000 and 250,000 citizens of Akwa Ibom State, according to the HIV/ Syphilis report, are living with HIV/AIDS. The report also shows that the worst affected are people between the ages 20 – 29 years (Bangboye, 2007).
- Small girls are encouraged to get pregnant and sell their babies. This profession which is a dirty aspect of trafficking is critically criticized.
- Trafficking does not give respect to the countries who engage in this traffic business. For example, Nigeria has been noted as a great business tycoon in human trafficking in the whole of Africa. A police report in Nigeria showed that about 50,000 Nigerian girls who engage in sex trade were stranded in the streets in Europe and Asia, most of them come from Southern States in Nigeria.
- Trafficked women are isolated by foreign cultures and sometimes language while their illegal status, according to Pauline (2004) makes it hard for them to seek help.

Challenges for Uyo zonal office

Information gathered from the Uyo Zonal office revealed that the challenges that face the office include inadequate funding, insufficient equipments for investigation such as recorders cameras and other security gadgets. Information gathered from respondents also revealed that the Akwa Ibom State Office requires counterpart funding which is very necessary for the effective operation of the office. Language barrier in communication as some of the staff in Uyo Office are non-indigenes is also challenging.

CONCLUSION

This work concludes that the increased rate of trafficking in Akwa Ibom State is as a result of poverty and ignorance of some families of the ills of human trafficking. Human trafficking is encouraged by some families who desperately need financial benefits to cope with their increased family problems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Akwa Ibom State Government should revive all her ailing industries to provide employment opportunities to young school leavers.
- Programmes should be developed that offer livelihood options, including basic education, skills training and literacy, especially for women.
- Discouraging the long-standing belief of male-preference in Akwa Ibom State should be the mission of every Akwaibomite.
- Potential migrants should, especially women, be properly intimated of the consequences of migration without a clear knowledge of what they are migrating for.
- The general public should be properly informed by intensive campaign by promoting awareness of the dangers associated with trafficking.

- The promotion of labour migration by the Akwa Ibom State Government should be a function of the existence of regulatory and supervisory mechanisms to protect the rights of migrant workers.
- Guideline No. 7 which is preventing trafficking which states that States and intergovernmental organizations should take into account the factors that increase vulnerability to trafficking, including inequality, poverty and all forms of discrimination and prejudice Should be upheld by States in the federation.
- Law enforcement authorities should be provided with adequate investigative powers and technologies. Most laws in this country are never enforced although they are very good policies.
- Guideline No. 6. on protection and support for trafficked persons which states that government should partner with non-governmental organizations and give access to primary health care and counseling should be implemented.
- Guideline No. 3 which is involved with research, analysis, evaluation and dissemination of information should be rigorously carried out. It will be agreed that without research adequate information cannot be acquired. Current information on the status of trafficked persons in each state is necessary.
- Promote the empowerment and women in their national policies.
- Raise awareness about trafficking in human beings through engagement of the mass media and information campaigns.

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