

RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION AND THE MENACE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY

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Abstract

The contemporary Nigerian society has in recent times being confronted by the challenge of human trafficking. This phenomenon and the menace it poses to the society are rapidly on the increase. It is rather unfortunate that efforts at eradicating this obnoxious phenomenon have yielded little result in view of the clandestine nature of the activities of traffickers. Complex in its nature and forms, human trafficking has raised deep divisions on issues of principles, theories, perceptions, and the strategy to address it. This paper seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of human trafficking, its causes and consequences while trying to draw out suggestions and recommendations which could contribute to better strengthening the national and international legal frameworks aimed at eradicating this phenomenon. Particularly, the researcher intends to calibrate the magnitude of human trafficking, and speculate about potential roles religious organisations in Nigeria have to play in partnership with the government towards its eradication and specifically the church. The researcher adopted qualitative method in the execution of this research. It was discovered that the major cause of human trafficking is poverty and ignorance. Lack of coordination among stakeholders and in the number of intervention strategies, with all the dangers of duplicated efforts both by the international organizations, national governments, institutions and development agencies are problems confronting the eradication of human trafficking. It was also discovered that among the entire religious organisation in Nigeria, the Catholic Church seem to be in the forefront in the fight against human trafficking.

Keywords: trafficking, human trafficking.

Introduction

Human trafficking has become the bane of the modern African societies and particularly Nigeria. Every year, thousands of men, women and children fall into the hands of traffickers. Human trafficking is the trade in people, and does not necessarily involve the movement of the persons from one place to another. It is against this background of growing concerns about this phenomenon and the rapid growth of activities intended to address it that this thesis topic was conceived. Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. It is a crime against the person because of the violation of the victim's rights of movement through coercion as well as their commercial exploitation. The term 'human trafficking', is the umbrella nomenclature of child trafficking, child labour, women and girl child prostitution and child abuse. It is all about twenty-first century slavery that Christians, as part of their social responsibility, should seek to eradicate. Nigeria is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation. Within Nigeria, women and girls are trafficked primarily for domestic servitude and commercial sexual exploitation (U.S. State Dept. 1 "Trafficking").

Most victims of human trafficking are recruited from the developing countries. It is widespread in countries undergoing civil war, or afflicted by political or economic instability (Ngwe and Elechi 103). Human trafficking is condemned as a violation of human rights by international conventions. It is based on the magnitude of this crime that this thesis was originated and the researcher is advocating that the ecclesial community should assist in its eradication.

It is a common practice to persuade a young woman to leave home and to move to a wealthier neighbouring country where she can work in domestic service, child or adult care, or as a waitress in a restaurant or a bar. Upon arrival, her passport, visa, and return tickets are taken from her and, effectively, she is imprisoned, either physically or financially or mentally. She is made to work as a domestic slave or as an agricultural or factory worker, under slave-like conditions, or in a brothel. She sees virtually none of the money that she earns, and eventually she may be sold out (Tomiuc, 20).

The need to improve one-self leads most women to look for jobs or continuing education overseas. The hope of a better life in a developed country and to be able to send money back home to their family becomes enticing to many. Sometimes, children are sent to contribute to the family's finances or to better themselves. Parents are often unaware of the realities that lie ahead. Orphans are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked from Nigeria.

When one Joseph from Benin was 13 years old, a stranger arranged with his parents for him to go to a neighbouring town, Togo to make a better life, but of course it didn't turn out that way. He was made to work from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day as a domestic servant and he was regularly beaten. After saving money for three years, he was able to afford to phone home. This ultimately brought about his rescue by an uncle (BBC News).

Human trafficking especially in children for purposes of hazardous labour is prevalent in Nigeria and Africa today and it is regarded as modern day slavery. Slavery can be a trap that never lets go. Exploited workers, subjected to slave-like labour conditions, may be held by restrictions on their freedom of movement, by confiscation of papers, late payment or non-payment of wages, and by the threat of denunciation to the authorities with the implication that this would be followed by deportation.

Touched by the horrible experiences of young women trafficked into Europe and elsewhere for sex trade, the Leaders of the religious women of Nigeria established the Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW) in 1999 as a counter-trafficking project. COSUDOW works to prevent human trafficking, protect and rehabilitate those who are already victims, and seek out and prosecute traffickers. It is this need to improve oneself educationally overseas or to assist in the financial upkeep of the family that has exposed most women and children to fall victim to human traffickers.

Conceptual Clarifications

Trafficking

The definition of trafficking as provided by the UN Protocol, Article 3A, 2000, states that: "Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation" (cited in Craig 19).

Human Trafficking

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "human trafficking is the act of gathering, moving, receiving, or keeping human beings by threat, force, coercion, or deception, for exploitative purposes. This includes the exploitation of

prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (28). This definition has only been in place since 2000. If any person, whatever the gender, whatever the age, is brought somewhere against his or her will, or without full information about what he or she is getting into, it is already human trafficking. In addition, if a person is coerced by a superior or someone in power over them to become a victim, it is also considered human trafficking. Also, while the sex trade is the most-known form of human trafficking, the current protocol extends even to illegal labour migration.

Although human trafficking can occur at local levels, it has transnational implications, as recognized by the United Nations in the Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially Women and Children (also referred to as the *Trafficking Protocol* or the *Palermo Protocol*), an international agreement under the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (CTOC) which entered into force on 25 December 2003. The protocol is one of the three which supplement the CTOC. The *Trafficking Protocol* is the first global, legally binding instrument on trafficking in over half a century, and the only one with an agreed-upon definition of trafficking in persons. One of its purposes is to facilitate international cooperation in investigating and prosecuting such trafficking. Another is to protect and assist human trafficking victims with full respect for their rights as established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The *Trafficking Protocol*, which now has 169 parties, defines human trafficking as:

- a. the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal, manipulation or implantation of organs;
- b. The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in sub-paragraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;
- c. The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in sub-paragraph (a) of this article;

- d. "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age (un.org)

The National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP), instituted by the Nigerian government in August 2003, offers a comprehensive definition of human trafficking as:

All acts and attempted acts involved in the recruitment, transportation within and across borders, purchases, sale, transfer, receipt or harbouring of a person involving the use of deception, coercion, or debt bondage for the purpose of holding or placing the person whether for or not in voluntary servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive) in forced or bonded labour, or in slavery-like conditions. (NAPTIP 2003)

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ROOT CAUSES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The causes of transnational human trafficking whether in women or children in Nigeria are multiple. But for the purpose of this research, it is pertinent to organize the factors around the economic, political and socio-cultural. Studies have identified risks that make either women or children vulnerable to exploitation that are also causes and contributing factors of human trafficking. These include social and economic marginalisation, dysfunctional family backgrounds, experiences of neglect, abuse or violence within the family or in institutions, exploitative relationships, gender-based violence and discrimination, experiences of living or working on the streets, precarious and irregular migration situations, aspirations to work and to earn money and limited opportunities to enter or remain in school, vocational training or regular employment. As the efforts of national governments to improve social safety nets can lessen many of these risks, human trafficking is considered not only a result of criminal activities but also as indicating weaknesses in the national government's ability to effectively safeguard children's rights to a safe and healthy development (UN 2008).

PATTERNS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

- Patterns of human trafficking are widespread, complex, they operate underground and are often out of the reach of the legal system
- They are constantly changing and often follow migration patterns
- They are difficult to identify - traffickers are adept at avoiding detection and escaping arrest
- They are hidden because those trafficked are illegal migrants; they remain silent and undiscovered for fear of reprisals from traffickers, and deportation
- They have extensive complicity of corrupt State officials
- They are facilitated by technological advances such as telephone, fax, internet, expanding the scope of international transactions and use new communications and information technologies through which they can easily buy, sell and exchange millions of images and videos
- They are organised informal networks between mafias operating in countries of origin, transit and destination.

It is also important to note that the recruitment patterns take different means as follows:

- Local contacts: traffickers enlist the help of local persons and villagers to identify vulnerable families. They make contacts with unsuspecting women and children around bus and train stations.
- Direct sale: women and children are sold to traffickers by parents or other family members.
- Deceit: unscrupulous agents deceive parents, lure women and girls with false promises of well-paid work in cities or marriages to rich partners.
- Debt bondage: economic incentives are given to parents and arrangements which bind their children and young women into sex-slavery or other exploitative forms of labour are concluded, though details of these debt terms are ill defined.

Nigeria, like some other countries of the world, has been badly hit by trafficking in persons. Trafficking in persons has now become an embarrassing social problem to her with its youths drifting and wasting away in the abominable trade in the streets of Europe and elsewhere in the world. It is an affront to human dignity and our collective values as a people. Human trafficking is a global problem and it is prominent in Nigeria. The phenomenon seems to be common in Nigeria especially in Edo State. From available statistics out of every 10 Nigerian trafficking victims deported to Nigeria as high as 90% is likely to be indigenes of Edo State (Nwaonuma, 1). However, the menace of human trafficking is everywhere now. Nigeria is a source, transit and destination country.

Sr Florence Nwaonuma, the General Superior of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, an indigenous congregation in Nigeria reflected on the fact that in Italy 80% of trafficked victims are Nigerian. The pattern of the traffickers in Nigeria has assumed a different dimension. Now the trafficked victim is rarely related to the curse of Juju but thousands of Nigerians are travelling voluntarily for a better life but are easy targets for the traffickers who promise them so much (2).

The type, the size and the organisation of Nigerian groups, organisations or networks exercising human trafficking vary amply. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) noted that the size and degree of organisation of networks may be dependent upon the size of the operation and the number of women being trafficked, the financial strength of the groups and how well connected they are with officials (UNODC 57). Some groups operate a loose network using mostly family members to recruit victims. Others are well structured, ranging from recruiting and travel agents to the law enforcement agencies, professional forgers, financiers and exploiters (Okojie et al. 108).

Prominent players in Nigerian human trafficking possess specific skills, have cultivated important contacts with officials, for instance, or have themselves brought together a network organising human trafficking. They may exercise a great deal of influence in the network but the network rarely is structured. As temporary networks are formed around specific projects and their composition changes constantly, West African criminal organisations do not carry any name of their own (UNODC 42). A loose and flexible structure often makes the network very effective and, at the same time, more difficult for the police to disperse. It may be hard to identify the key players and their elimination from operations does not necessarily have a sufficient impact on the operational capacity of the network as networks reform themselves quickly (43). The key to the effectiveness of the networks is their ability to operate independently while drawing on an extensive network of personal contacts (Europol 12). According to a report by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), published in 2005, the networks are not temporary but well organised and relatively solid and durable (27).

In principle, anyone who is involved in human trafficking and who in any manner participates in or benefits from the exploitation of the victim can be called a trafficker. The following English terms, among others, are applied to persons related to human trafficking: madame (mamma/mama, mama Lola), agent, trafficker, trolley man, middleman, racketeer, sponsor, a term often applied in Benin City (Achebe 178). Besides traffickers, there are many other individuals who help facilitate operations, such as transporters, receivers, brothel keepers, forgers of documentation as well as corrupt border guards and embassy officials (Cherti et al. 40).

A madame is the most important person in Nigerian human trafficking and often also the sponsor financing the journey. Madames are women who organise human trafficking, may recruit girls themselves and monitor the trafficking process closely from recruitment to exploitation. Often there are madames both in Nigeria and in the destination country. The madame in Italy is responsible for the victims after their arrival in Italy, and victims usually live and work under her control. The madames in the countries of origin and destination are closely connected and often related (Carling 27). A man can also operate in the role of a madame; in this case, he is called “boss” instead of madame. In Italy, madames are typically between 25 and 30 years old. At times, madames in Italy recruit the victims and take them personally to Italy in order to manage the subjugation period. Sometimes, these women live in Italy on a permanent basis and regularly travel to Nigeria to recruit new victims who they bring to Italy with the help of escorts. According to United Nations Interregional Crime and

Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), madames are also called *Italos* in Nigeria because they organise everything for their victims for their arrival to Italy (38).

According to Godwin E. Morka (Head, National Agency Prohibiting the Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) Lagos Zonal Office), the madames abroad are in strict control of each step of the trafficking process (Danish Immigration Service 20). They control and organise the groups, comprising usually 10–15 women, and collect their profits (UNODC 57). Some of the madames have themselves been victims and become madames after repaying their debt. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports that most madames have started as prostitutes. According to Jane Osagie, of International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group (IRRRAG), some victims return voluntarily to Nigeria after the debt has been paid and some of them might end up as traffickers themselves. They are usually among the most brutal and vindictive traffickers (Danish Immigration Service 4/2008, 21). According to Europol, the number of women operating as traffickers is increasing. However, madames depend on men for forging travel documents and escorting the girls to their destination. In some cases, madames themselves take their victims to the destination country where they sell the victims to pimps. By doing this, they do not need to wait two or three years for the victims to repay their debt (Baye and Heumann14).

Nigerian organised crime groups are proficient in the production of falsified and counterfeit travel documents for human trafficking, and the victims often use genuine documents issued to “look-alikes”. The visa regime and the asylum system are also abused. Some discard their documents on arrival in the destination country and allege citizenship of an unstable country. Once at a refugee reception centre, they abscond and meet their trafficker or madame. In many cases, Nigerian human trafficking groups use Italian or Spanish residence permits either falsified or obtained through bogus marriages, for instance which allow the victims to travel within the Schengen zone (Europol 10-11). Furthermore, traffickers residing in Europe have been reported to have legally adopted teenage girls with the consent of their biological parents to facilitate the procurement of visas for the girls (Okojie et al. 113).

Often, the families need to borrow money or sell their assets to pay the fee requested by the agent for the journey. If the women make the deal themselves, they have to put themselves into debt (Skilbrei and Tveit 27-28). It is reported that lawyers in Nigeria have drawn up so-called “friendly loan agreements” that secure the victims’ consent to debt bondage with their traffickers. The loan is “friendly” because it is interest-free; in Edo State only licensed moneylenders are entitled to lend money with interest. The victim and her

family may also sign a formal contract with the trafficker, using the family's assets, such as their house, as collateral (Carling 25). The victims must produce a family member to be their guarantor either to sign legal papers or at the shrine so that the traffickers have someone to harass if the victims become uncooperative. Some victims have been initiated into secret cults to which their madames belong. The members of the cult must swear an oath to protect one another like blood brothers. This is done to ensure that the victims or their family do not jeopardise the businesses of the madames by reporting them to officials (Okojie et al 109).

HUMAN TRAFFICKING: A MEANS OF ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION

Human trafficking for purposes of prostitution and hazardous labour is prevalent in Nigeria today and it is regarded as modern day slavery. It is important to mention that child labour and child trafficking are the various tentacles covered by the big umbrella of human trafficking. There is a link between them in the sense that both involves persons who are either trafficked or enslaved to engage in dangerous and hazardous activities in exchange for money, goods and gifts to family members. Another link between the two is the persons are trafficked beyond the frontiers of their own country into a different one where they are either forced into labouring or prostitution as the case maybe.

Through corrupt government officials, unscrupulous labour agents, and poor enforcement of the law, economic migrants may be deceived or coerced into situations that amount to forced labour and slavery-like practices. If the work is exploitative, involving illegal forced labour or debt bondage, or is below national and international labour standards, this too is trafficking. One of the most important objectives of human trafficking is forced labour. This chapter will also help in unravelling the clandestine nature of human trafficking as well as show how little we still know about its reality. Due to the nature of the activities, the understandings of communities and families are obscured in terms of the risks. The possible causes and incidences of human trafficking in Nigeria will also be examined with a view to investigating the various national and international legal regimes aimed at eradicating this obnoxious phenomenon.

MENACE/INCIDENCES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA

The 2014 Global Slavery Index Report revealed that 15.7% of 35.8 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa, representing over 5.5 million people are victims of trafficking. As a

result of limited economic opportunities, food and water shortages, on-going conflicts and endemic corruption, people living in parts of this Region are particularly vulnerable to modern slavery.

The Government of Nigeria, through its Agency, NAPTIP, in line with its commitment to eradicate trafficking has also achieved tremendous successes in its bid to combat trafficking in human beings. These, for us as Nigerians, are collective efforts and successes towards stemming the tide in human trafficking. The Agency has shelters in all the 7 zonal offices and the headquarters in Abuja. It has rescued and counselled over 6,000 victims. About 1000 of this number have been equipped with various vocational skills, while some are in schools and others reunited with their families. The Agency evacuated 104 girls who were trapped in sex slavery in Mali, they were counselled and rehabilitated. 168 traffickers have been convicted and they are serving various jail terms in different parts of the country with many cases still pending in various courts in the country (Nwaonuma 24).

The extracts from the case files currently under investigation reveal that virtually all the offenders arrested and interrogated by the Police worked in close contact with other persons either within the same criminal organization or individual members of other similar organizations engaged in the trafficking of persons. Within these criminal organizations, there are specialized groups dealing, for example, with just travel documents only or just the oath taking and administration of voodoo rituals on potential victims. Some specialise in physical violence (area boys or “*agberos*” in local parlance as well as corrupt Police officers). This last class belongs to the group of thugs, traffickers employ to either threaten or physically abuse victims or members of their families in Nigeria when the victims are not cooperating enough. Professional lawyers are patronized by traffickers or their agents to draw up “friendly loan agreements” which secure the victims’ consent to debt bondage. The loan is said to be “friendly” because in Edo State only licensed moneylenders are legally entitled to lend money with interest. Therefore, ordinary citizens can only lend out money on an interest free basis. The traffickers take advantage of this and commit the victims and their guarantors in writing to having borrowed money on a gentleman’s agreement from the traffickers.

The size and composition of the different criminal organizations depend on the financial strength of the group and how well connected they are with officials. Some of them operate a loose network using mostly family members to make contacts and to recruit victims. Some others are well structured; right from recruiting and travel agents to the Law Enforcement agencies to professionals to financiers and the exploiters. The extracts from the

10 case files with the Police reveal that 90% of the suspects are Nigerians and 96% of those figures are Binis from Edo State (25).

Arrests and prosecutions by Human Trafficking Unit (Edo State)

Cases	Number
Cases reported	21
Persons arrested	35
Cases charged to court	12
Cases struck out	2
Cases pending in court	7
Persons convicted	3
Cases under investigation	9

Source: Edo state government document

The above statistics show that it is difficult prosecuting human trafficking offenders. Considering the enormity of human trafficking issues, only 21 cases was reported from a state noted for human trafficking offenses and just 35 persons were arrested on human trafficking related cases. This record also shows that out of 35 arrests only 12 cases were charged to court which is a typical representation of the corrupt nature of the Nigerian police. Suffice to observe that one is adjudged guilty only to the extent, the case has been decided against him/her by a competent court of law, but the fact remains that corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian legal system. No wonder out 12 cases charged to court just 3 persons were convicted.

OVERVIEW OF THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH AGAINST HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA

“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). These words leave us in no doubt that the trafficking of people is an evil that the Church must find the energy and commitment to stop. Every person carries the imprint of the creator. Every person carries unique value within creation. People should not be bought and sold.

In 2014, for the first time in history, major leaders of many religions– Buddhist, Anglican, Catholic, and Orthodox Christian, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim – met to sign a shared commitment against modern-day slavery; the declaration they signed calls for the

elimination of slavery and human trafficking by the year 2020 (Pope Francis *Huffington Post*). Various groups in Nigerian have made efforts to combat this menace. We shall look at the efforts made by the church so far. The Church is first because she is at the forefront of combating human trafficking in Nigeria. This was through the activities of the Women Religious (Catholic Rev. Sisters) of Nigeria. In 1998, the Nigeria Conference of Women Religious Leaders was alarmed and appalled at the many Nigerian women who were involved in the sex slavery in Europe. In Italy alone, there were 15,000 of them, caught up mostly, totally against their wills in forced prostitution! It is not easy to provide exact statistics regarding this issue because of its clandestine nature but records show that thousands of women and girls are being trafficked from developing countries and brought into conditions in which their basic human rights are violated.

In January 2007, from 20 – 24, about twenty seven women and one man from seven African and two European countries, representing different religious congregations and Church based Christian and Muslim organizations gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, at an International Conference on Trafficking in women and children, to deliberate on ways of combating this evil menace of human trafficking. This Conference was sponsored by Mensen met een Missie (MM) then known as CMC in collaboration with Dutch Foundation of Religious against Trafficking in Women (SRTV) all of Netherlands. Dutch Foundation of Religious against Trafficking is set up to help in the struggle against the growing trade in women and the corresponding forced prostitution. It is the group's intention to contribute in compliance with religious and cultural aspects to the creation of a respectable future for the victims of this trade (SRTV).

They all agreed at this Conference to undertake actions against this rapidly growing problem in Africa. Having placed much emphasis on networking this group decided to form a network: African Network Against Human Trafficking (ANAHT).

The main Focus of ANAHT activities include:

- Working on awareness raising concerning issues of human trafficking
- Encouraging and strengthening the organizations that are undertaking activities to battle the problem of human trafficking
- Facilitating networking activities among the different member organizations
- Working in prevention, assistance and advocacy against human trafficking. To achieve this goal they work together with other religious, faith based organisations and other key players in this fight in our various countries, in Africa and the world at large.

The office of African Network Against Human Trafficking (ANAHT) is in Lagos, Nigeria, for now. This same office coordinates some of the Anti-trafficking activities of the Religious in Nigeria, as it shares the same office with COSUDOW (Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women), Lagos Branch. With the appointment of a full time Coordinator for ANAHT, a lot has been done in the name of ANAHT. ANAHT has participated in many international programs and belong to such networks as TALITHAKUM (International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons), INRATIP (International Network of Religious Against Trafficking in Persons) and collaborates with many other organizations and networks that share the same goals and aspirations with them (ANAHT 2014).

CONCLUSION

Human trafficking is no respecter of any person. It is insensitive to their vulnerable conditions and is a contemporary form of slavery. Even with all the awareness created, arrests made and prosecution of traffickers, this evil continues to flourish. Ironically, the strength of the Nigerian trafficking networks lies in the element of reciprocity between traffickers and victims. The religious and legal sanctioning of the pact between the two parties, as well as prospects for a better economic situation when the indentured prostitution ends, give the majority of victims a strong motivation to comply. Suffice to observe that the church is called to be the epiphany of God's love and not just prophetic and silent witnesses, but also eloquent denouncers of all inhuman activities.

Unfortunately, the pact between victims and traffickers makes it particularly difficult to combat this evil. In several European countries, authorities have "rescued" women from their traffickers, but they return to prostitution to fulfil their obligations towards their sponsors. For the police, the religious element has provided a convenient explanation. For the media, the combination of vice and "voodoo" has fuelled sensational coverage. Therefore, it is vital to understand the social and cultural context of human trafficking while recognizing that the most intriguing aspects of this context, as in the Nigerian case, are not necessarily the ones that can best explain it. While the global scale of human trafficking is difficult to quantify precisely, as many as 800,000 people may be trafficked across international borders annually, with many more trafficked within the borders of their own countries. Organized criminal groups are earning billions of dollars in profits from trafficking and exploiting people, many of whom are victims of severe human rights violations. Trafficked persons are often victims to abuse such as rape, torture, debt bondage, unlawful confinement, and threats

against their family or other persons close to them, as well as other forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence.

The demand for cheap labour, sexual services and certain criminal activities are among the root causes of trafficking while a lack of opportunity, resources and social standing are other contributing factors.

Human Trafficking has become a worldwide problem in recent years and has without doubt, come to be the world's fastest growing global crime by which people are enslaved and one of the largest sources of income for organised crime. Every year, the sanctity and growth of the human race is threatened by traffickers who buy and sell millions of women, men and children to enslave and exploit in numerous ways. Also referred to as Modern Slavery, it is estimated that approximately 35.8 million people in the world today are made to engage non-consensually in activities such as commercial sex, forced labour, street crime, domestic servitude and even the sale of organs and human sacrifice. Condemned as a human rights violation, human trafficking in its many forms affects people of all sexual orientations irrespective of age, race, ethnicity and religion; even though, there are a number of situations that can make a person more vulnerable to trafficking.

In the course of this study, it was discovered that the church is playing a leading role in the combat against human trafficking globally and particularly the Nigerian Catholic community with her numerous bodies and agencies have been very active in this regard. The Catholic Church has played and is still playing a prominent role in Nigeria to combat this obnoxious 21st Century modern slavery. The Catholic Church bears witness to the teachings of Christ and has done so very well through the centuries. The church teaches that human life is a sacred gift from God and must be respected and safeguarded at all stages – from conception through natural death (Pope Paul VI, *Humane Vitae*). Therefore, Catholic organizations in different continents have developed shelters as well as medical, social and pastoral services for victims of human trafficking.

The Anglican community have also been involved in this fight against human trafficking but they have not done much especially the Anglican Community in Nigeria. The Redeemed Christian Church (RCCG) to some extent is involved in the fight; other Pentecostal bodies seem to be engaged in other forms of social welfare activities such as prison ministry and visitation of motherless babies' homes. In summary therefore, the activities of the Catholic Church in fighting against this obnoxious phenomenon is quite commendable and must be encouraged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate victims, there must be strong collaboration and networking between care-givers in both victims' origin and destination countries. The care-givers are to play their different roles in the different countries for proper rehabilitation and reintegration to take place in the lives of the victims (women) they serve and to make judicious use of available resources. As a result of the complexities of human trafficking, particularly its clandestine nature, there is always the need for networking between stakeholders and law enforcement agencies. In the same vein, this can be extended between Catholic churches.

Essentially, the over-riding recommendation is that the Federal Government should take steps to implement the Protocol to which it is a signatory. In making recommendations, it is recognized that there is a need to take into account the various aspects of the problem. The Protocol has taken note of the multidimensional nature of human trafficking, it is a criminal problem, a human rights problem, a labour problem and a public order problem. Specific recommendations are now made, based on the findings of this study. These recommendations apply to both the Federal Government as well as State Governments that are source states for victims.

Despite efforts made to reduce human trafficking, the menace seems to continue unabated. This shows there is need for massive awareness campaign against the evils of human trafficking. Nigeria continues to intensify efforts to ensure a trafficking free society. Human trafficking will be completely eradicated when all those involved as countries of origin transit and destination sincerely join hands to fight against it.

Governments should invest in education and provide alternative economic opportunities for children and the youth. This will greatly reduce the number of those that will be available for trafficking.

Countries should be encouraged to take action against this crime at the national level first, supported by international bodies.

There should be severe penalty for traffickers at home and at the destination countries. *Name and Shame* principle should be used that entails public condemnation of identified traffickers and media exposure, with the names of convicted traffickers circulated to all Embassies.

Basic rights of the victims of trafficking must be respected bearing in mind their special needs and predicament. A collaborative approach that brings together anti-corruption

and anti-human trafficking measures should be devised. Corruption should be integrated in anti-trafficking plans.

Further research should be encouraged on society, corruption and human trafficking. Attention should also be focused on migration issues, raising awareness about migration related risks and monitoring migration trends within and between countries. There is the need for staff of Nigerian Immigration service to be represented at Nigerian Missions abroad, especially in those countries identified as either destination or transit points for human traffickers. This will help the service quickly determine the causative factors and strategies for addressing this.

There should be a renewed campaign on the importance of the family, good family name and a de-emphasis on materialism. Religious institutions should be encouraged to highlight these and condemn the inhumane crime of human trafficking.



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