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Global Sex Trade and Women Trafficking in Nigeria¹

Rasheed O. Olaniyi

Academic discourses and policy debates on the phenomenon of women trafficking have focused on the threat of illegal migration, migration management, and the stereotypical linkages between criminality and migration. Such themes neglected the perspectives of trafficking victims and the social context, most especially closed borders and poverty. Obviously, women trafficking constitute one of the anxieties and disruptive effects of globalization. For many women, migration across the polarized economy under the regime of globalization is associated with exploitation, criminalization, and insecurity. This paper argues that trafficking in women reflects inequality on a global scale: transfer of resources from depressed economy to prosperous economy, from the periphery to the core, and from rural to urban areas. There is a thriving market for trafficking in women to Europe for sexual purposes, as economic motivations, organized global syndicates, poverty, and patriarchal pressures have ensured steady supply of women in the global sex industry. Despite the political will, the weakening influence of the Nigerian government in the global economy and international diplomacy, as well as porous borders, undermines its efforts in rolling back women trafficking.

Introduction

Like slavery in the usual sense, prostitution has an economic aspect. While being a cultural phenomenon rooted in the masculine and feminine images given currency by society, it is a market and indeed a very lucrative one. The merchandise involved men's pleasure, or their image of pleasure. The merchandise is unfortunately supplied by physical intimacy with women or children (Balos, 2004, p. 151).

They are selling a product for which there's a (global) market. It's not a stigma anymore, as long as money comes with it. If they come back with money, they are respected. If they come back poor, they are sex workers (Osakue, 2004, p. 16).

¹The author acknowledges the anonymous reviewers' comments on this paper.

The foregoing excerpts eloquently affirm that the global sex trade flourish due to customer's demand rooted in the patriarchal doctrine that women exist to serve men's pleasure. This paper analyzes the processes in which women are commodified in the global market, and the causes and catalytic factors that encourage trafficking in young Nigerian women. Since the mid-1980s, socioeconomic predicaments and global immigration impediments have been inhibiting women mobility. The interacting complex and contradicting web of power dynamics embedded in these phenomena converged to commodify women as articles of sex trade. Free market forces were responsible for the disarticulation of rural economies, which led to the impoverishment of women. In Nigeria, the neoliberal conception of development has been antagonistic to the actual needs of women and children and those affected by sex trade. The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and other similar programs had virtually no enduring impact on the lives of poor women. Women's relations to the state have also been marked marginalized from the mainstream economy, politics, and governance.

Equally, patriarchal values, including paying of bride price, polygamy, marital problems, desertion, and contracting economic resources make women to be viewed as marketable commodities. There are also growth of commercialization, commodification of sex, family disintegration, rural-urban migration, decline in access to education and income generation, and massive clandestine movement of people in the era of economic globalization. Poverty and unemployment in Nigeria pushed women migrants out when they were unable to find lucrative employments. Some other women were pulled into Europe and America usually by rapid economic growth, which requires adequate labor supply, particularly, skilled and professional workers. Indeed, few European governments allow any immigration of people who merely seek to work, unless they have specific skills; even more permissive countries, such as the United States, Australia, and Canada, rarely allow unskilled workers (*The Economist*, 2003, March, p. 35). Because of the disadvantaged economic position, women can be particularly affected by the application of racially-inclined immigration laws.

Feminist political economy research into the relationship between gender relations and the globalization of capital emphasized the conflictual interactions among multinational corporations, households, the nation-state, and women (Bergeron, 2001, p. 990). Feminist theories on globalization demonstrated that states have collaborated with transnational capital's efforts to exploit women

through austerity measures such as currency devaluation, economic deregulation, cutbacks in healthcare, childcare and other social services. Globalization weakened the capacity of the state in providing social services and protecting workers from the negative effects of transnational capital (Bergeron, 2001, p. 992). In addition, the expansion of global capital and international division of labor gave rise to deindustrialization and austerity measures through which women are drawn into the informal economy. In the informal sector, women are subjected to several forms of exploitation, including trafficking. The chaotic nature of neoliberal reforms gave a picture of insecurity as people struggle to manage new forms of disorder and indeterminacy (Chalfin, 2000, p. 988). The structural adjustment program heightened the economic inequalities experienced by poor women. Chant (1989, p. 167) points out that Female Marginalization Thesis has often been used as a framework for the study of women's employment in developing countries. The marginalization thesis has four dimensions. The first is "exclusion from production" (especially employment in the manufacturing sector); the second is "concentration of women on the margins of the labor market;" the third is "segregation and feminization" and the fourth is "economic inequality" (especially wages and working conditions). The marginalization of women in the key sectors of the economy provided impetus for trafficking and sex trade. The theories of social change also emphasize the connections between changes in class and sex relations. Since the rise of global capital, significant changes have occurred in the respective roles of men and women in the mode of production. In this context, women function as underpaid, irregular laborers whose wages had to be supplemented by sexual attachment to a man, inside or outside family arrangements (Kelly, 1999, p. 14).

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Part II Article 7c) defines trafficking women and girls broadly to include sexual slavery, generally and by the military, the deception of migrant women, and "mail order" and false marriages. In this paper, trafficking is defined as the relocation of women from their communities of origin through circuitous routes by orchestrated syndicates for perpetual enslavement in bonded sex work (Olaniyi, 2003, pp. 44-52). Trafficking severs women and girls from their systems of social support and renders them invalid, insecure, unprotected, and exploited.

Women are trafficked for sexual exploitation both internally and across national borders. There is no distinction between forced and voluntary recruitment and trafficking into sex work. Both are geared towards the

exploitation of women's productive labor and sexual potentials. Indeed, social constructions of gender relations and sexuality facilitate trafficking for sexual exploitation. While males are trafficked also, with trade in young boys dominating in some parts of the world including Nigeria, the majority of trafficked persons are women and girls. Therefore, human trafficking is a highly gendered transaction (Williams & Masika, 2002, p. 7).

Expansion of Global Sex Trade

While humanity grapples with the memory of the obnoxious trans-Atlantic slave trade, the world is equally confronted with human trafficking and sex slavery. The unprecedented expansion in women trafficking was accentuated by the accelerated growth of sex industry, the Western racist perception of sexuality and economic recession in developing countries. The global political economy of sex industry exists in terms of growing demand in sex tourism and prostitution. Western gender ideology is infused with racist social categorizations that assign different types of "nature" to different types of men and women. In the area of sexuality, white women are considered as pedantic and almost asexual, while black women (and men) are seen as wild and even oversexed (Peterson & Runyan, 1999, p. 138). In the "racialised economy of sex" and sex trafficking discourses, "the sexual lasciviousness of 'alien,' foreign nationals distinguishes them from proper members of the political community and citizens of the nation-state" (Berman, 2004, p. 42). In many African countries, particularly Kenya and The Gambia, the phenomenon of Big Mamas involving sex tourism of European women sexually exploiting young African males, is prevalent. The apparatus of global communication and technology, including email and Internet facilities, have become important channels for sale and trafficking of women and children by traffickers and pedophiles (Agbu, 2004, p. 10). The beneficial impact of globalization has been slow in reaching women, especially in the global south.

The supply of women in the global sex industry was kindled by the impact of economic transition, rural impoverishment and urban unemployment, and the low status of women (Peterson & Runya, 1999, p. 138). But the era of economic recession has witnessed the acceleration of cultural decadence or the subversion of values such as morality and sexual discipline, giving rise to the accelerated commodification of sex and culture of consumerism. In many Nigerian cities, there exist video clubs that specialize in pornographic film shows while youths equally patronize cyber cafes for pornographic sites. In Edo State, politicians and

businesspersons patronized hotels and nightclubs where live shows of pornographic dances were displayed by young women and men (Okemi, 2004, December, p. 18).

Despite the political will to stamp out women trafficking, the social life of the power elite exacerbates the scourge. In December 2004, a state governor, while bagging a traditional title, was entertained with the barbaric virgin nude dance of twenty maidens (Erhariefe, 2004, December, p. 19). In such arenas and public functions young girls are recruited or lured into sex work and, ultimately, trafficking into Europe.

Trafficking is equally economically driven. Under the social condition of uncertainties, young women and men seem captivated by crass greed and opportunism, accruing wealth from nothing or spending without earning, in which case the will to consume outstrips the opportunity to earn (Nyamnjoh, 2004, p. 3). The combined factors of self-corruption and economic decline pushed many young women into the global sex industry. Added to this, the youth, most importantly young women, often frustrated by the receding capacity of the state in providing social services, parents and older generations, are easy prey to the generalized promiscuity engendered by poverty and beleaguered desire (Nyamnjoh, 2004, p. 3).

Women trafficking have been endemic in the oil-rich Niger Delta region: Edo, Delta, Cross River, and Akwa Ibom States (Ijaku, 2004, p. 6). Oil production is principally serving the global economy at the expense of the local population. Local people are deprived of the means of livelihood due to environmental degradation, episodic conflicts, and insecurity. The unequal patterns of global economy create an unprecedented supply of poor and vulnerable women from Nigeria as well as a corresponding increase in European men's income and their ability to demand women's sexual pleasure.

While poverty may explain the supply factor of trafficking in women, it does not explain the demand factor. The latter is linked to the market, the customers, and the criminal networks (Muntarbhorn, 2001). In most European countries, there was an upsurge in the demand for young girls and children for sexual purpose. Most European male clients (like their counterparts in Southern and Eastern Africa) had the myth that sex with teens and children would cure their HIV/AIDS or that the teens are too young to have the dreadful virus. Some others think having sex with teens and children makes them feel young. This myth is now widespread in several African countries where rape of children and incest

are the order of the day. In this way, women are sold across borders for a variety of needs: sex slavery, begging, bonded labor, sex tourism, adoption, entertainment, baby farms, and trade in human organs. Trafficking of women and girls flourishes because sex tourism is a huge business. The female body has become an exotic article of trade in the global sex industry.

Under the globalization regime, an unprecedented explosive growth has been recorded in trafficking of women. In 2001, International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimated that between 700,000 and two million women are trafficked across international borders per year. According to the former Nigerian Minister of State for Justice, Musa Elayo, in 2002 official statistics indicates that an estimate of 45 000 women were trafficked per year to Europe, the Middle East, and the United States (Orolua, 2002, p.4). However, the subterranean nature of the trade makes it exceedingly difficult to ascertain accurate statistics of trafficked women and girls. First, many of the trafficked women and girls were never registered with either the Nigerian Embassy or Consulate in their country of operation. Second, sex trade is so mobile in nature that they change location periodically due to police raids or discovery of new lucrative sites. Third, traffickers are highly secretive, hiding information regarding their trade to have control over the sex workers.

Since the early 1990s, women trafficking have increased dramatically due to its low risk, lucrative nature, and increasing demand for African sex workers in Europe. The booming cross-border trade in trafficking, forced sex work, and sweatshop labor earn traffickers worldwide \$7 billion a year, according to the United Nations (Wennerholm, 2002, p. 11). The Vienna International Centre for Migration Policy Development estimates that smuggling immigrants into Europe earned crime syndicates between \$100 million and \$1 billion in 1993. Much of the profit comes from Western Europe that has a huge market and growing demand for teenage sex workers of 15 to 25 years presumed to be free of AIDS. Traffickers are encouraged by large tax-free profits and continuing income from the same victims at very low risk. With strong footholds in coastal Italy, the Nigerian underworld dominates Europe-bound sex trafficking from Africa. According to the Italian police, Italy's indigenous Mafias which shun the trade, lease "territory" or "sphere of influence" to Nigerian Mafia which constitute 40% of their income (Boudreaux, 2001). Italian Mafia magistrates in Bolzano investigating illegal immigration networks estimate that \$7 billion was netted from smuggling 20,000 people. For every Nigerian girl successfully sold, tricked,

or coerced to migrate to Europe, a trafficker expects a return of \$50,000. If that trafficker successfully ferries 10 to 12 of such girls to Europe, his/her profit is multiplied tenfold (*The Guardian*, 2001, September). Organized crime syndicates exploit globalization apparatus, thereby making their evasion and freedom from punishment possible. In 2004, Nigeria was rated as one of the top 20 countries trafficking in persons especially to the United States (*Daily Trust*, 2004, June, p. 4). Although the United States contributes huge financial resources to the control of human trafficking, yet it is one of the biggest destinations for victims.

Most women migrants are unskilled workers; thus they are denied legal migration, residency, and work permit. It is very difficult for women from countries outside the European Union (EU) to enter Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy legally in order to find work and to live in the countries permanently. In some of these countries, there are opportunities for temporary work and short-term stays, especially for dancers and entertainers. In Netherlands, women migrants of non-EU origin, before entering the country for other purposes other than tourism has to apply for a special visa specifying the reasons for their journey. For these stringent immigration laws, many women from Nigeria experience forced deportations, expulsions, rape, police brutality, homophobia, xenophobia, and even death. As xenophobia rises in many receiving countries, the international response to refugees has become increasingly stingy. Even the bedrock principle of international response to refugee law, the prohibition against forcibly repatriating refugees to face a well-founded fear of persecution, is routinely violated.

European Union governments violated migration regulations by summarily repatriating Nigerian women asylum-seekers. For example, Sefiya Adamu was forcefully deported under a dehumanized condition leading to her death. EU and U.S. border patrol agents equally continued to commit acts of violence against undocumented women migrants with impunity (*Human Rights Watch*, 1996, p. 14). While Germany has taken commendable steps to prosecute those behind right-wing and xenophobic violence, police abuse of foreigners is still on the rise.

Well-established criminal organizations trafficking in women and girls capitalize on rising unemployment, disintegrated social networks in Nigerian communities, and stringent immigration laws of the European Union and the United States. Women victims of trafficking are lured with better job/education prospects or kidnapped against their wish. In Nigeria, some communities in

southern and northern regions sold their daughters for immediate payment or expectation cash remittance and deceived them into illegal cross-border migration. Unlike the trafficked women, traffickers and their intermediaries have network linkages with various authorities in Nigeria and Europe, including police, customs, border forces, overseas recruiters, travel agents, transport agents, traditional religious institutions, refugee camps, asylum centers, and baby farms. Traffickers of women operate boldly across international borders, using modern means of communication and trade. They lure victims who often lack adequate information on Europe with advertisements and false promises of jobs as nannies, servers, sales clerks, and models. This modern slavery frequently involves force, deception, and coercion (US Senior Coordinator for International Women Issues, 1998).

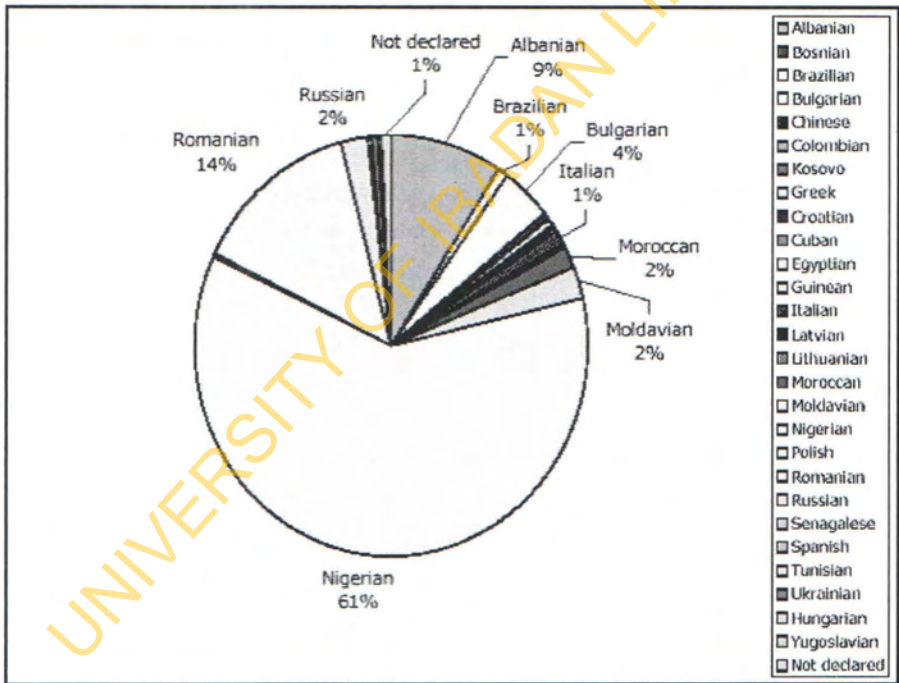
Trafficking in Women and Young Girls

The Fourth Annual Trafficking in Persons Report of the U.S. Department of State (2004) classified Nigeria as a source, transit, and destination country for trafficked women and children (*Thisday*, 2004, p.1). According to the evaluation of the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, Nigeria does not comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking despite its significant efforts. Nigeria was placed on the Tier 2 Watch List because of the continued complicity of Nigerian security personnel in trafficking. The report further stated that Nigeria does not face the same severe resource constraints of other countries in West Africa, yet it utilizes insufficient funding and personnel for the fight against trafficking in women and children. However, the United States is also guilty of similar complicity considering the high rate of trafficking in young women and children from Nigeria to the United States.

From the middle of the 1980s, Nigerian women were trafficked to Italy to work as sex workers and shared the market with women from Eastern Europe. Nigerian women were transported across West African countries, such as Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, and South Africa, from where they were transported by sea to Italy. Some North African countries, particularly Algeria, Morocco, and Libya were used as transit points for onward movement to Spain and France. They crossed the Mediterranean Sea, from Africa through the Middle East to the Balkans. Some entered Spain through Morocco by the Strait of Gibraltar. The Strait of Gibraltar remains the most popular route for thousands of illegal immigrations into Spain, which is just 8.6 miles wide at Tarifa – Europe's southernmost point.

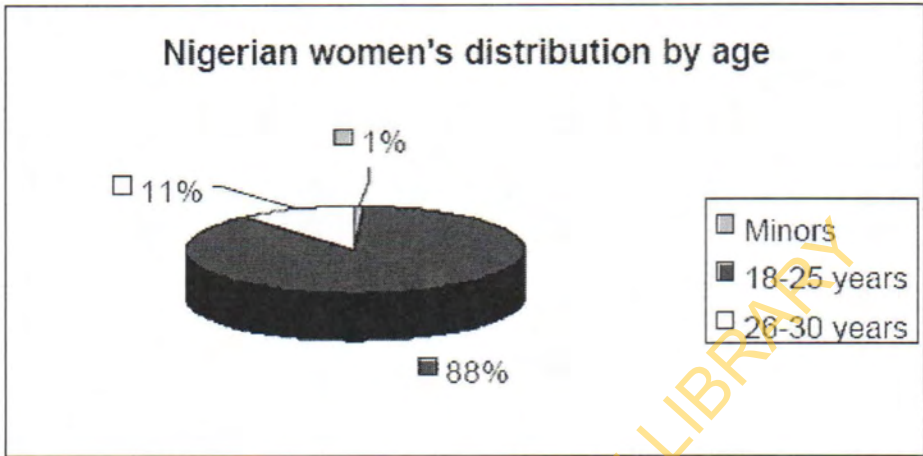
About 75% of the women were smuggled in through the major European airports (Amsterdam, Rome, Paris, and Brussels). About 19% of them were smuggled in through stopover and connection flights to big cities, such as Turin in Italy. About six percent were smuggled in through border crossing and ferries via the island of Malta and Albania. In Europe, Britain and Netherlands served as transit countries. According to Dutch Authorities, young women trafficked from Nigeria arrive first in the Netherlands with instructions to apply for asylum as homeless minors. The following charts provide graphic details of Nigerian trafficked women in Italy.

Figure 1: Representation of Prostitutes Trafficked into Italy



Source: Ume-Ezeoke, J. (2003). Desk Review for the Programme of Action against Trafficking in Minors and Young Women from Nigeria into Italy for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation. Rome: United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute.

Figure 2: Ages of Women Trafficked for Prostitution in Italy



*Source: Gruppo Abele, Progetto Numero Verde, Postazione di Torino. Processed by UNICRI.

Source: di Cortemiglia, L. (2003, January). V. Programme of Action against Trafficking in Minors and Young Women from Nigeria into Italy for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation. Rome: Desk Review, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute.

Undeniably, there is preponderance of young Nigerian women in Italy's sex industry. The increasing dominance of the Nigerian women in the sex sector followed the retreat of many Italian women due to the widespread HIV/AIDS scourge. Torino, an industrial town in northern Italy, constitutes the famous Italian destination for trafficking victims from Nigeria. According to Grace Osakue, "every girl who travels (to Italy) and who doesn't get deported is a potential sponsor for more" (Faris, 2002, August). Their ages ranged from 14 to 25 years; most were teenage high school dropouts or young unemployed adults who had just completed school (Raufu, 2000, October). Statistics available in media reports shows that 87% of the girls are single, about five percent are married and about eight percent are separated or divorced before trafficking. Due to the high demand, traffickers target poor and young girls. Through deception and coercion, they are transported abroad, and then forced to work as prostitutes. Women and girls constitute high-risk group for gender-based sexual and productive labor exploitation.

Nigeria equally served as a destination country for trafficked women from Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Ukraine, Romania, Russia, and Malaysia. A notorious

Lebanese merchant in Nigeria, Abass Moujir, also known as Ali Baba, specialized in the importation of girls from North Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe to Nigeria (Thomas, 2004, March, pp. 12-17). Ali Baba is the proprietor of M.J. Pyramid Hotels, Limited, located in Ikeja, Lagos. The hotel served as a citadel of prostitution and human trafficking. Ali Baba had a special arrangement whereby imported prostitutes were delivered to prospective customers with ease and guaranteed convenience.

In the late 1980s, Ali Baba operated the hotel like an “embassy” for foreign prostitutes who were duly registered and issued identity cards as “staff.” As a commission agent, Ali Baba was very close to prominent and wealthy Nigerians, supplying them foreign women for different occasions. The trafficked girls often made huge financial gain from sex work, as they demanded their payment in “hard” foreign currency. They charged between \$400 to \$500 per night, depending on the occasion and the bargaining power of the client. In 1997, Ali Baba’s exploits reached its pinnacle when he was arrested along with his numerous trafficked girls and later deported by the government of late General Sanni Abacha. However, he resurfaced in Nigeria through the intrigues of his powerful clients.

The trafficking trade of Ali Baba attracted the attention of the international community. Between 2003 and 2004, four countries, namely, Ukraine, Romania, Russia, and Malaysia, petitioned the Nigerian government, declaring Ali Baba as a most wanted man (Thomas, 2004, March, pp. 12-17). In 2004, the Nigerian police arrested Ali Baba along with 10 white women. However, the administrative bottleneck between the police and the Immigration Service over prosecution of the case led to his escape. Many traffickers have been arrested by the Nigerian police and Immigration Service but they often escaped being prosecuted due to corruption and negligence. Globally, women trafficking thrive on corruption. It is being protected by corrupt politicians, police, and civil servants who receive bribes, demand sexual favors and are themselves customers of sex establishments (Balos, 2004, p. 159).

Nigerian trafficking syndicates devised sinister means through which their trade was carried out under the guise of religious pilgrimages to Mecca, Israel, and the Vatican City of Rome (Akpe, 2004, May, 2004). Media reports indicated that during the 2004 Hajj and Umrah there was an unprecedented increase in trafficking in young girls.

These networks demanded a high price for their services, and those who patronized them typically were forced to work off exorbitant “debts” under abusive and coercive conditions. Many women victims were unable to distinguish in advance between legal and illegal work opportunities and thus could not note that they were dealing with syndicates or mafias until after they had been cheated, had incurred heavy debts, and had entered Europe illegally. Many women knew they would be sex workers, but believed they could earn their freedom by paying \$50,000 in weekly installments.

Syndicates painted rosy pictures of economic situations in overseas countries. They promised lucrative overseas jobs, asking for placement fees of as much as \$5,000 to obtain work permit and consultancy fees of \$100. The victims were either repatriated or miserably stranded and took to sex work, having abandoned their jobs back in Nigeria. The syndicates’ modus operandi was to collect their victims’ passports and marry them to fictitious South African or Europeans citizens to obtain for them fake accompanying spouse visa, with the active connivance of some officials in the immigration and internal affairs departments. They were usually camped in a hostel. They put women and girls in stiff transit camps (terminus) particularly in Cotonou, Benin Republic, Cote d’Ivoire, and Morocco (*The Guardian*, 2002, September, pp. 1-2).

At another level, some women who could not afford to pay traffickers (migration entrepreneurs) or could not raise enough money for tickets, passports, and visas migrated through cross-border routes across the Sahara Desert. Illegal Nigerian immigrants suffer many harrowing experiences in Morocco, including succumbing to fatigue, starvation, cold, and untreated diseases. They also receive cruel treatment from ethnic secret cults such as “Yoruba Aso Rock,” “Ibo Stone Cold,” “Edo-Delta Aso Rock,” and “Eagle Square,” that are constituted by fellow Nigerian illegal immigrants (Shuni, 2003, March, p. 1).

The port of Rabat, Morocco, served as a porous route for Africans en route Europe. Some women migrated illegally using Rabat as a transit point (Akpaekong, 2003, March, p. 50). They paid huge sums of money to smugglers, otherwise known as “connection men,” who tried to ferry them from the Moroccan coastal towns of Tangier and Rabat to Spain in an engine-powered dingy called a Zodiac. On January 17, 2003, 26 Nigerians drowned in the Atlantic Ocean while being smuggled from Morocco to Europe.

Sex workers would earn 90 million Lire (\$50,000) from forced prostitution to earn their freedom. The going rate of 30,000 Lire per sex encounter amounts to

having sex with 3,000 clients (Guest, 2000, June). Nigerian women and girls competed on roadsides, standing and sitting on chairs, waiting for hours for clients, and even waiting by the road in the rain (Douglas, 2000, June).

Social Displacement and Isolation

Trafficked women and teenage girls work in Western Europe as prostitutes and surrender their income to traffickers holding them in bondage. An embedded fear of the police and deportation, and the shame of facing their families back home keep the victims of sex trafficking in fearful hush. The sex industry itself is steeped with stereotypes and reproduced sexist and racist relations. In Europe, Nigerian women are used on a large scale by white men; they are hardly ever recognized as equal partners. The women also face brutal racism among their white male clients. In Turin, Italy, Nigerian women organized a demonstration after six prostitutes had been murdered and two disappeared within two months.

Instead of exposing the women traffickers as criminals, victims of trafficking are often criminalized as foreigners who crossed state boundaries and sex workers who crossed the borders of mainstream morality. In the bid to recuperate border sovereignty and increase security, states often forcibly deport trafficked victims like illegal immigrants. Most countries of the European Union and the United States have taken a “crime control” approach to trafficking. They have done very little to raise awareness on trafficking abuses or to develop laws and establish programs that simultaneously combat trafficking, punish traffickers, and provide effective protection for trafficking victims, mostly women migrants. In Greece for example, law enforcement officials are concerned with migrant women status as an undocumented migrant and not with any abuse they suffer at the hands of traffickers. In Greece, undocumented persons who are apprehended by the police are often treated like criminals, and are detained and deported despite being trafficking victims. According to Regina Desfinitou, a police major with the Division of Public Security, “if a woman has no travel documents, she must be expelled according to the 1975/1991 Alien Acts” (*Human Rights Watch*, 2000, November). The absence of government-supported services for trafficked women in Greece often results in an ad hoc and uncoordinated approach to their care. As a result, trafficked women who manage

to escape cannot rely on the authorities for effective protection or for assistance with safe repatriation to their home countries.

By allowing perpetrators to exploit trafficked migrant women with impunity – and by failing to effectively stem corruption among government authorities and law enforcement officials who facilitate trafficking of women for forced sex work, the “crime control” approach exacerbates women’s vulnerability to abuse, thus treating victims as criminals. When police raid brothels, women are often detained and punished, subjected to human rights abuses in jail, and swiftly deported. Few victims dare testify against the traffickers or those who hold them, fearing retribution for themselves and their families, since most governments do not offer stays or adequate protection for witnesses (Miko, 2000).

In 1999, 500 trafficked girls were deported from Italy; in January and July 2000, 3,000 Nigerian girls were deported from Italy; in March 2003, 88 girls were deported from Italy (Abdulrauf, 2003, March). By February 2004, 88 young girls between the ages of 19 and 27 years were deported to Nigeria by the Italian government. Between January and March 2004, over 1,000 Nigerians were deported from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for trafficking offences. Among the deportees were 370 minors between the ages of eight and 14 years. In April 2004, 386 Nigerians were deported from Saudi Arabia including nine traffickers who were charged to court. On a monthly basis, it was reported that over 1,000 victims of human trafficking, mostly women and children, got stranded in the Sahara deserted (Adamu, 2004, December, p. 5).

The criminalization process has inadvertently contributed to the recycling process of trafficking. With economic distress at home, integration process is often difficult for deported victims who strived to return or recruit others into trafficking. In several ways, the criminalization process has contributed to the growth of trafficking. First, it increases pressure on women in migration. Second, it places anti-trafficking policy crime units of the police with restrictions on migrants’ passports, visas, and permits. Third, it offers the state the right to claim control over border control in order to protect citizens from the threats of illegal immigration. In this way, migrants are forced to seek assistance from traffickers in order to beat the “closed borders” and stricter surveillance.

In Belgium and the Netherlands, trafficked women are granted a temporary visa (45 days and 90 days, respectively) to allow them testify against the traffickers. Since those who testify are rewarded with temporary residence and those who do not are forcibly deported, trafficked victims continued to be

vulnerable to the threats of traffickers. In Italy, Law 40 provides trafficked women with residency and work permits “on the condition that they agree to leave prostitution” (Berman, 2004, p. 54). The law ignores the ways through which women could make decisions to take control over their capital, sexuality, and mobility.

Combating Women Trafficking in Nigeria

Women trafficking have been addressed by a variety of agencies, including governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In 2003, the act establishing the National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) was enacted by the National Assembly. The enactment of NAPTIP Act in August 2003 was in fulfillment of Nigeria’s international obligation under the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, supplementing the United Nations’ Transnational Organised Crime Convention (TOC). Article 5 of the TOC and Trafficking Protocol enjoins state parties to criminalize practices and conducts that subject human beings to all forms of exploitation, which include, in the minimum, sexual and labor exploitation. The bill for the implementation and domestication of the TOC and Trafficking Protocol in Nigeria was sponsored by Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), a non-governmental organization founded by Titi Atiku Abubakar. NAPTIP is legally empowered to carry out the following functions:

- To coordinate all laws on trafficking in persons and related offences;
- To adopt measures to increase the effectiveness of eradication of trafficking in persons;
- To adopt witness protection measures;
- To enhance effectiveness of law enforcement agents to suppress traffic in persons;
- To establish proper communication channels, conduct research and work on improving international cooperation in the suppression of traffic persons; by land, sea, and air;
- To reinforce and supplement measures in bilateral and multilateral treaties and conventions on traffic in persons;
- To work in collaboration with other agencies or bodies that may ensure elimination and prevention of the root causes of the problem of traffic in any person;
- To strengthen and enhance effective legal means for international cooperation in criminal matters for suppressing the international activities of traffic in persons;
- To strengthen cooperation between the Attorney General of the Federation, Nigeria Police, Nigeria Immigration Services, Nigeria Custom Services, Nigeria Prison Services, Welfare Officials, and all other agencies in the eradication of traffic in persons;

- To take charge, supervise, control, and coordinate the rehabilitation of trafficked persons; and
- To investigate and prosecute traffickers.

NAPTIPP collaborates with state, non-state, and multilateral agencies, such as: the International Organisation for Migration, United States of America Consulate, Ministry of Women Affairs, UNICEF, Ministry of Justice, American Bar Association, National Women Rights Commission, USAID, Embassies of ECOWAS member states, National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) and the media. The global campaign against women trafficking has equally spurred the emergence of non-governmental organizations fighting against the menace. They include: Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), Galilee Foundation, Ibadan; Emmanuel World Children Foundation, Ondo; WOTCLEF; Real Women Foundation; Media Concern for Women and Children (MEDIACON); Societies for Enlightenment of Youth for Dangers Abroad; Societies for Women and Aids in Africa; Child-Child Network; Change Consult; Project Alert; Child Lifeline; and Terre Des Hommes. These non-governmental organizations in collaboration with state agencies and donors carry out advocacy programs against women trafficking.

Both police and NAPTIP have made frantic efforts to arrest and subsequently prosecute traffickers. In February 2004, the police in Kano State arrested 20 trafficking victims who were in the process of being taken to Libya from Kano by one Emeka. Sarah Okoya, a 51-year-old mother of six, was sentenced to 36 months in prison for trafficking offences. She was arrested at Bembo Hotel, Cotonou, Benin Republic with six girls from Edo State, aged between 19 and 24 years on their way to Spain (Olisah, 2004, November, pp. 1 & 4). She was charged by the NAPTIP with the following offences:

- procurement of persons for prostitution contrary to Section 15 (a) of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003);
- organizing foreign travel which promotes prostitution contrary to Section 16 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003); and
- deceitful inducement of persons to go from any place contrary to Section 19 (1) (b) of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003).

In South Africa, police arrested 59 Nigerians who were allegedly running a child prostitution ring. Thirteen of the children were kidnapped by the gang. The

children aged between 10 and 16 years were kept in houses and forced to have sex with men (*Sunday Vanguard*, 2004, November, p. 3).

By 2004, NAPTIP had investigated over 60 cases of human trafficking and other related matters. Six out of the 60 cases of human trafficking were taken to court for prosecution; four of the cases were in Benin courts while the other two were in Kano (Adamu, 2004, December 1, p. 5). NAPTIP rehabilitated over 200 victims by giving them temporary shelter in Abuja before referring them to other agencies. The NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Office, which covers southwestern states, provided shelter, counseling, reintegration, and rehabilitation for about 1,031 (820 females and 211 males) victims of trafficking between December 2004 and August 2009. The Lagos Zone, in 2009 investigated 317 cases and arrested 416 suspects. About 36 cases were filed in the courts with 14 convictions with the highest jail term for seven years (Igbokwe, 2009, August, p. 34). The victims had a global spread found in European countries, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. Most of them were returned to their countries through their Consulates in Nigeria while others waited rehabilitation. Some of them often arrived through special deportee flights. They were handed over to NAPTIPP by the immigration officers at the airports and border posts. Most of the convicts' accounts and properties are used for Victim Trust Fund to sponsor the victims that are interested in receiving education. A monthly meeting with cultural attachés for Benin Republic and Cote d' Ivoire embassies and Technical Committee of the Nigerian Benin Joint Commission on Trans- border Trafficking has been instituted. In 2009, the Human Trafficking Unit of the Nigeria Police arrested 132 human traffickers. More than 70 young girls were rescued and reintegrated with their families while others were rehabilitated.

Despite the proportionate increase in human trafficking and arrests by the police, the anti-human trafficking agencies are not provided with adequate settlement homes. It has become challenging the units to accommodate the victims that could provide evidence in courts. Granting the victims accommodation and security would ensure adequate prosecution of the traffickers. The police require training in intelligence gathering, surveillance, petitions, and public complaints on human trafficking.

The menace of trafficking has been compounded by the weakening influence of Nigerian government in both global economy and international diplomacy, particularly with Europe. The mounting external debt and under-funding of Nigeria foreign missions has crippled government efforts in negotiation against

either the barbaric deportation of Nigerian girls or the treatment of Nigerian immigrants abroad. In 1995, 85 diplomatic missions got a total allocation of \$150.91 million. By 2004, the budgetary allocation plummeted to \$77 million for 89 diplomatic missions (*Sunday Sun*, 2004, October, p. 2). The deplorable condition of the Nigerian missions suggests that Nigeria has weak capacity for international relations that could safeguard the trafficked victims or negotiate for the enforcement of bilateral agreement on anti-trafficking. There is an appalling condition of Nigerian missions in many parts of the world, with an avalanche of litigations over default in the payment of rent, school fees, and telephone bills. In many African countries where Nigeria plays the role of big brother, but trafficking flourishes, Nigeria missions have been riddled with debt and inability to pay staff allowances. In Equatorial Guinea, a Nigerian diplomat experienced property owner's invasion, assault, and ejection (*Sunday Sun*, 2004, December, p. 6). This is simultaneously coupled with the Nigeria external debt.

Conclusion

Women trafficking have depleted Nigeria's human resources and enhanced underdevelopment through the spread of the dreadful HIV/AIDS virus, and increasing crime rates and unemployment. The measures taken to redress the scourge, including prevention, protection, and prosecution could be termed short-term plans. Nigeria, as an exporter of women, should re-diversify the economy from petrol-business into agriculture and government-assisted small-scale enterprises. The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) could be further widened to cater to youths and women. The Nigerian government should strive to improve women's educational and employment opportunities in the country to help prepare them for the competitive global skill jobs. The Nigeria diplomatic missions must actively defend the human and labor rights of all Nigerians, irrespective of their immigration status, without discrimination based on sex or occupation. Community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations should be empowered in their efforts and campaigns against women trafficking at the community level. In legislative terms, Nigeria is ahead of some European countries, particularly Britain, in the attempt to end trafficking of women. The anti-trafficking law makes it a crime and NAPTIP, an agency dedicated to ending the practice, has been created. Nonetheless, understanding women trafficking as a transnational problem is the only way to fight it.

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