

ISSUES AND INSIGHTS INTO PROSTITUTION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Trafficking in women has taken a new phenomenal dimension. Its complexity and sensitivity today is linked to poverty, violence, integration, sexual exploitation and [he quest (or monetary reward. This paper attempts an explanation of the causes of human trafficking and prostitution, the impacts of the trade, the roles played by government and NGOs in curbing the trade and recommendations towards eliminating the illicit phenomenon.

Introduction

The trade in human being is one of the recent developments globally. This trade involves the transportation of persons mostly women either by deception or personal volition. Despite attempts by, various government and international organizations to curb the act of human trafficking with its enormous negative consequences on social life, the incidence, of trafficking has refused to be submerged on the global scale.

The consequence of human trafficking is the escalation in the sex trade popularly referred to as prostitution. This implies an instance where a woman engages in sexual intercourse for monetary benefits. As a result of trafficking there has been rising case of migration within and outside the world over. According to Fatima (2002), between seven hundred thousand (700,000) and two million (2,000,000) women and children are involved in transnational trafficking.

Human trafficking and prostitution are almost complementary as either of them can give way to the other. The dividing line between the two as Fatima (2002), rightly points out is the fact that trafficking on the one hand, is the "transportation of human beings within and across national borders for work or services by means of violence or threat of violence, abuse or authority, or dominant position, debt, bondage deception or other forms of coercion". On the other hand prostitution is one of the many consequences of trafficking which is enhanced by international syndicates who tend to profit more than the victims of the trade, namely women. The importing countries are Italy, Austria, Japan, Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, US, and exporting countries such as Nigeria, Mali, Korea, Ghana etc. (Nwakunor, 2001: JO). The negative effect of the trade on victims ranges from loss of freedom and personal dignity, severe physical torture and abuse. These conditions have motivated national governments, international organizations, feminist activists and human rights organizations to take' action towards the campaign against this unfortunate social problem.

This paper intends to address the causes of prostitution and human trafficking, the impact of human trafficking, the role of Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations in curbing Human Trafficking and Recommendation.

One of the paramount causes of prostitution and human trafficking can be explained and understood on the basis of the condition that women and girls find themselves. The condition in which-no job exists, poverty ranges-high in their countries of origin for instance Kenya, Mali, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Brazil, Nigeria to mention a few. Emanating from the indices (deprivation, hunger, diseases, ignorance, and illiteracy) of poverty that usually follows underdevelopment; the citizens of these countries prefer to improve their standard of living by seeking succour in the more advanced countries. This point is again strengthened by the assertion that, most women from 3rd world countries migrate to develop nations in search of better social conditions.

This migration contributes a lot to trafficking and prostitution especially where the migrants of these third world countries find themselves in obscure conditions of insecurity molestation and harassment, thus, compelling them to INK! jobs in order to sustain themselves and by so doing they end up as prostitutes just to be used as a commodity in the sex trade.

The unemployment rates in developing countries are another causative factor responsible for prostitution and human trafficking. Most unemployed parents encourage their daughters to travel overseas with the hope that their staying there will in turn improve their (parents) economic status.

Ignorance, also, enhances trafficking in some families. Siblings get entangled in the trade as a result of huge sums of money offered to their families by the agents to be repaid by these girls from the proceeds of their jobs either as nannies, maids, dancers, factory workers or models. On the arrival," these girls end up not as employees working under the umbrella of these promised jobs but as prostitutes.

One other factor is globalization. As a result of the opening up of international boundaries, to ensure global economic integration this can then lead to increased trade and development. Other negative tendencies, have also followed in the wake of this recent economic development such as expanded tourism and reduction in restriction on international travel regulation have created room for easy migration particularly in the area of human labour especially from the economically backward countries to the more advanced nations.

Impacts of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking has assumed a global dimension. Almost all the parts of the world are involved in the trafficking either as exporters or recipients of the commodities of trade, namely human particularly women. Some of the victims are compelled to have sex with dogs, monkeys etc. the health of women who are caught up in the scourge is always in danger. This is because, not only that they are exposed to high risk of contracting transmitted diseases, but also stand a big chance of contracting the dreaded HIV/AIDS. These women are agents for transmitting STDs including HIV since all men that have sexual relation with them are bound to contract and hence transmit same to their innocent spouses. In Nigeria, out of eight women who were deported from Italy in the year 2000, seven tested HIV positive {ICC. AF, 2000:6). This is the kind of risk that the victims of trafficking and prostitution are amenable to, as quoted by Ahmed in Fatima (2002), "the country is ridiculed and the health of its people endangered as AIDS and other STDs would be imported" In Nigeria alone,-45,000 persons are trafficked abroad yearly. As for deportation, 100 Nigerian girls were deported in 1999. In 2001, 116 were deported from the Republic of Benin alone, while 346 Nigerian prostitutes were deported in the year 2001. These figures go a long way to show the rate at which women have become articles of this modern trade which has assumed an international dimension in recent times.

The Role of Governments and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Curbing Human Trafficking

The toll that the operation of trafficking and prostitution has had on humanity has pushed government and NGOs, into devising strategies to reduce it, if not, totally eradicate the illicit trade. International organizations, such as the United Nations, World Health Organizations, etc. and individual countries government, have made tremendous efforts in curtailing the phenomenon. The efforts range from international declarations treaties and conventions to national programmes and crusades that attempt to stamp out the trade in humans.

At the national level with the coming of Obasanjo's regime, the campaign against human trafficking has witnessed a greater upsurge with the wife of the vice president Her Excellency Chief Mrs. Amina Titi Atiku, the Chief pioneer with some other state governors' wives operating at their own levels. The main operational tool of Mrs. Atiku is her programme women trafficking and child labour eradication foundation. Through this programme, Mrs. Atiku, has been able to seek freedom for Nigerian girls in foreign prisons, their evacuation and rehabilitation at home which has enabled the deportees to acquire various training so that they can be absorbed into society.

At the state level also the wife of the Edo state governor, Mrs. Eki Igbinedion has, distinguished herself in the campaign against women trafficking and prostitution. On her part, she has succeeded in launching her programme "idea Renaissance", the aim of which is also to rehabilitate deported Nigerian prostitutes, of Edo state origin such, that they can acquire skills as artisans, which

will make them economically self- dependent. She has also established the Edo state, underprivileged children scholarship Trust Fund which has been of immense benefit to youngsters, including girls.

On the part of the NGOs, many anti-trafficking and prostitution organizations have arisen to play a significant role in research, prevention and advocacy and awareness creation. Such preventive activities as information campaigns gender education in schools, vocational training for women, training teachers and school advisers to recognize those at risk and facilitate women at risk to access employment and career development opportunities, etc have impacted positively on the crusade against women trafficking and prostitution.

In Nigeria, The Women Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) has made an impressive impact at combating trafficking in women. Its activities range from sex education campaigns in schools, mobilization of grassroots women against the trade, to lobbying members of the National Assembly to consider legislation that will prohibit trafficking and prostitution. The Africa Women's Empowerment, group (AWEG), sited in Benin City in Edo state, Nigeria has supplemented WOCON's activities. AWEG's pre- occupation is mainly education campaigns in schools against trafficking.

The church is not left out of the crusade against trafficking and prostitution. The Catholic Church in Nigeria with Reverend Sister Adenike, Regina Oke has embarked on the protection and rehabilitation of girls who have returned from Europe. Their activities are based and felt mainly in Lagos and Benin city. They work with a group of lawyers in collaboration with the families of the girls to ensure that the returnee prostitutes get integrated into the society.

Recommendations

The trafficking in women and prostitution has become a global menace and a threat to social cohesion within and among nations. The international attention through the efforts of government, international organizations and NGOs, has thus been directed towards alleviating if not completely eradicating the illicit social phenomenon. It is on the basis of this that, this paper pose the bellow recommendations;

- I. An exchange programme between police forces in different countries that deal "with trafficking should be encouraged. This will make for better co-operation and sharing of information in the detection and prosecution of traffickers or syndicates. 11. All governments, as a matter of priority, must embark on long- term educational planning aimed at the economic and political empowerment of women, which in the long run will curtail prostitution. III. Government and NGOs should cooperate across national borders to ensure that various efforts against trafficking are effective and that assistance to trafficked persons reaches them. This cooperation can include-seminars, workshops etc. for exchange of information and data joint research and agreement on joint services among NGOs and government.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of trafficking in human especially women and prostitution has become a menacing reality that stares in the face of the world. No government should shy away from the social danger posed on this trade. This paper has attempted to look at the causes and impacts of the unwholesome international illicit trade and attempts made by governments, international bodies and NGOs in curbing human trafficking and prostitution. A number of recommendations were made in line with the hope that if implemented will finally stamp out women trafficking and prostitution.

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