

# CHILD TRAFFICKING AND MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT

Olutunmbi T. O. (Mrs.)

## Abstract

The paper examines the -issue of child labour and specifically the issue of child trafficking. Among the major highlights of the paper are the forms labour the children are subjected to; the causative factors of child trafficking. The turn over in terms of manpower development was also discussed. The consequences of child trafficking were examined which include loss of childhood, children who should be at home being-children in all its ramifications are instead put to work 'in. adult environment. Recommendations were made, such as parents sending their children to school, legal framework should be established to control human trafficking, World bodies such as the World Bank should adequately fund the NGOs.

## Introduction

According to Isamah (1997), all through human history, work has been and continues to be a very vital aspect of life in all known societies. The reason for this is quite evident ~ it is an indispensable activity that must take place if life is to continue to exist. It is no surprise then that no known society has been able to do away entirely with it, no matter how repugnant it may have been or is regarded. Karl Marx underscored the crucial importance of work when he pointed out that work is not only the basic condition for all human existence, but is also "that activity which creates man himself. Little wonder then that this close relationship between man, work, and society has attracted and held the attention of generations of scholars the world over.

One important aspect of work which although has existed through the centuries but which has now become the focus of a great deal of attention among scholars, governments, non-governmental organizations, international agencies, etc is the involvement of children in the world of work. It is generally acknowledged that in most societies of the world, developed and developing alike, most children work in one sense or the other.

International Labour Organization. (2002) describes child labour as all forms of work by' children under (he age laid down in ILO (2002) Standards (normally 15 years or the age of completion of compulsory schooling subject to exceptions). Worst forms of child labour include slavery, debt bondage, prostitution, pornography, forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, use .of children in drug trafficking and other illicit activities, and all other work likely to be harmful or hazardous to the health, safety or morals of girls and boys under 18 years of age. It is in line with this view that this paper wants to examine the following:

- The Concept of Child Trafficking
- Factors Influencing Child Trafficking
- The Turnover of this business
- Consequences of Child Trafficking
- Efforts to Combat Child Trafficking
- Recommendations to prevent Child Trafficking

## Concept of Child Trafficking

According to the United Nations General Assembly (1994), cited by Salah (2004) child trafficking is defined as the:

illicit and clandestine movement of persons across national and international borders, largely from developing countries and some countries in transition with the end goal of forcing .women, girls, and children into sexually or economically oppressive and exploitative situations for the profit of recruiters, traffickers crime syndicates as well as other illegal activities related to trafficking, such as forced domestic labour.

Salah- (2004) stated that trafficking of children for economic purposes is closely and inextricably linked to some of the worst forms of child labour in the underworld of human trade; children are exchanged for prostitution, for begging, and soliciting, for work on construction sites, in small shops, in factories and in domestic services. Hidden from sight and beyond the reach of the law, these children are abused, exposed to hazardous working conditions, confined in the workplace, denied education, denied basic healthcare, denied adequate nutrition, leisure time, and the safety and security of their families. Treated like slaves these children often end up working as domestic servants and labourers on plantations, in mines, in the urban informal sector and increasingly in the market of prostitution and pornography where countless numbers lose their innocence, and are exposed to HIV and other health risks.

#### Pattern of Child Trafficking in West and Central Africa

Child trafficking is a complex reality and trafficking networks are often informal and secretive in nature; this makes the identification of networks and traffickers extremely difficult. The scale of the problem is enormous. Studies have revealed clearly established trafficking routes involving Republic of Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Togo, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Niger. While some of these countries are suppliers of trafficked children, others are receivers, and others are transit countries; and others are both suppliers and receivers (Salah, 2004),

According to The News (2003), 16 girls were deported into Nigeria between March 1999 and September 2000; (that Nigeria accounts for about 70 percent of the estimated 70,000 girls trafficked from African countries especially Ghana, Gabon and Cote d'Ivoire. Further available statistics revealed that Italy is usually the destination country for girls coming from Nigeria. WOTCLEF an Abuja-based organization also disclosed that no fewer than 30,000 trafficked Nigerian girls are currently in Italy.

Abubakar founder of WOTCLEF and many other anti-trafficking workers as reported in The News (2003) revealed that 80 percent of trafficked girls never knew they would end up working as prostitutes in their destination countries. The carrot often dangled at them is the lure of good money "abroad" to be made from working as shop assistants, baby sitters, models, artists, farm helps, etc.

#### Factors Influencing Child Trafficking

1. Poverty emerges as a major and ubiquitous causal factor, Salah (2004) opined that all countries of West and Central Africa are experiencing relatively high level of poverty, and large proportions of the population live below the poverty line, the average being 40% but rising to extremely high levels of 72 percent in a few countries, thus in the context of extreme poverty, the motive for the transfer of children is often economic.
2. Lack of vocational and economic opportunities for the youth in the rural areas: Families seeing no economic opportunities at home will often place children with families-or friends in areas where they believe the prospects for gainful employment may be greater. Children in these communities become easy prey for traffickers who promise trade and work opportunities.
3. Insufficient and inaccessible educational opportunities may be another factor for moving children from the protective envelope of the family, is often the search for education rather than the search for work, thus such child may fall prey to child traffickers.
4. Ignorance on the part of families and children of the risk involved in trafficking, such as risks of serious maltreatment, rape, torture, exposure to HIV/AIDS and even to psychological risks linked with separation and emotional isolation.
5. Another factor is opportunities to travel; provided through easy means of communication and transport especially at the border areas or areas situated along major routes are particularly vulnerable to trafficking.
6. The desire of the youth for emancipation through migration encourages child trafficking.
7. Lack of national legislation against child trafficking and absence of a judicial framework allowing for perpetrators and accomplices of trafficking to be held responsible and punished for their acts is another factor.

## **Economic Importance of Child Trafficking**

According to The News (2003), Nigeria happens to be the most "donating" African Country in the global sex industry. While the International Organization for Migration (IOM) puts the worldwide annual turnover of business in the sex industry at between \$6 billion and \$12 billion, the United Nations put it at precisely \$7 billion; thus one could see that the turnover from child trafficking is very high.

### **Consequences of Child Trafficking**

The greatest consequences of child labour is loss of childhood; children who should be at home being children in all its ramifications -- are instead out to work in an environment where the opportunity to be children does not exist. Many of these children learn to take oversized responsibilities very young and to do very hard and sometimes dangerous works, and these of course have significant repercussions on their health and development, (Isamah, 1997). In the work environment children, being children are especially vulnerable to various hazards and dangers in the work place (Bonnet, 1993).

Exploitation is another consequence of child labour, for example girls are sexually exploited. Scores of these girls have contracted the HIV virus while some others have developed full blown AIDS. Outside this, some other girls usually fall into the hands of perverts who subject them to sexual perversions such as masochism and making them sleep with dogs while they watch (The News, 2003).

### **Strategies for Combating Child Trafficking**

#### **(a) Promotion of Education as Preventive Strategy**

Education constitutes an effective long-term lynch pin strategy to combat child trafficking and women exploitation. Educating and keeping children at school reduce their risk of getting involved in trafficking rings. The affected countries should promote basic education as a preventive and protective strategy. Approaches should include school readiness activities focused on the early years; attempts to reduce school dropout rates through quality improvements, selective incentives, and the development of second chance opportunities for working children who have missed out on education.

### **Strengthening Partnerships and Cooperation**

One of the most important ways to accelerate the fight against child trafficking, is the forging of strong partnerships and collaboration among the key players such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), governments, regional and international organizations, etc, at the local and international levels. The role of partnerships and cooperation cannot be over-emphasised. As in other parts of the world affected by the phenomenon of child trafficking, the NGOs in West and Africa were the first to call the attention of the population and development partners to the existence of internal and cross border child trafficking. NGOs also play key roles in the care of victims of child trafficking such as the operation of transit camps, family tracing and re-unification of children with their families, management of drop-in centres, and rehabilitation and counselling of victims of trafficking as indicated by the activities of WOTCLEF in Nigeria (Salah, 2004).

The individual countries must define the strategies and measures needed to curtail cross-border child trafficking. There is also needed for inter-governmental cooperation, such cooperation between countries which is usually diplomatic and police-related, usually focuses on the problem of repatriation of victims of cross-border trafficking.

### **Raising Public Awareness**

Raising public awareness requires all hands to be on deck. Relevant government Ministries, Non-governmental organizations, religious leaders, community leaders, regional and international organisations all need to be involved and encouraged to carry out public awareness activities in urban and rural areas, in market places, in schools, in churches and mosques and particularly in border towns and villages. The media, particularly the electronic media has a key role to play in the sensitization of public opinion. Media coverage on the rights of the child, on child labour and trafficking, and on cases of serious maltreatment of trafficked children as being sponsored by WOTCLEF, an Abuja-based NGO founded by Titi Atiku Abubakar - wife of the Vice President of Republic of Nigeria.

## Establishment of Relevant Legislation or Penal Sanctions

National authorities must see the urgency of establishing legal provision to deter traffickers and serve as a basis for instituting legal proceedings against traffickers and their accomplices. Example of this is the role of Mrs. Titi Atiku Abubakar and WOTCLEF on the presentation of an "Anti-human Trafficking Bill" to the National Legislative of Nigeria.

## Recommendations

In view of the discussions above the following recommendations are made:

1. Parents should be educated about the danger and hazards of child trafficking and the need to educate their children as education programmes serve as effective preventive measure, for a significant proportion of potential victims of both sexes, emphasis should be placed not only on female literacy but also on vocational training for both girls and boys.
2. The different NGOs working in the area of protecting the rights of children need to build their capacity for effective institutional and programme management. They also need to collaborate and network to exchange information and experiences and for mutual support. Highly visible meetings such as the ones organised by WOTCLEF, help in forging consensus and enhance capacity, commitment and capacity in the NGO\*s community.
3. There should be legal framework for human trafficking to be controlled; this will accomplish two things: (a) regulation of the movement of minors, and (b) establishment of penalties for acts that constitute trafficking.
4. Finally, world bodies such as World Bank should adequately fund the NGOs concerned with the prevention of child trafficking.

The paper had examined the issue of child labour and specifically the concept of "child trafficking. Among the major highlights of the paper were the forms of work children were exposed to, causative factors of child trafficking - these include poverty, lack of vocational and economic opportunities, ignorance, youthful exuberance of wanting to travel, desire to be emancipated among others. The turnover in terms of manpower development was also discussed, it was found that whether legal or illicit, child trafficking business affects the economy of those countries especially the receiving countries. The consequences of child trafficking were discussed, and these include loss of childhood, many of these children learn to take oversized responsibilities very young; and they are involved in very hard and dangerous work which have significant repercussions on their health and development. In order to prevent the business of child trafficking, there must be public awareness; qualitative education must be given to keep children in school, and at early years, and special type to those who had missed out on education. Governments of affected countries must legislate against child trafficking.

## References

Bonnet, M. (1993): Child Labour in Africa. *International Labour Review*, 132(2), 381-389. International Labour Organization ILO (2002): *Global Report: A Future Without Child Labour*. Report (B) International Labour Conference.

Isamah, A. (1997): Child Labour. Status of 'Adolescents and Young Adults in Nigeria' *Chcstrad*, 237-251. Salah, R. (2004): An Overview of Child Trafficking in West and Central Africa. U. S. Fund for UNICEF 333 East 38th Street, New York, NY 10016, 1-800-4 UNICEF.

The News (2003). Girls for Sale. The News. <[http://Alafrica.Com/Publishers.html?Passed Name - The % 20 News and Passed location = Lagos](http://Alafrica.Com/Publishers.html?Passed%20Name%20News%20and%20Passed%20location=Lagos)> (Lagos).



