

COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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A Holistic Support for Victims of Human Trafficking

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I would like to begin my presentation by thanking the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales for organizing this Conference. Also I wish to thank Bishop Patrick Lynch for his kind invitation to me as a resource person. It gives me joy to know that the Holy Mother the Church is constantly concerned about our brothers and sisters who are suffering different forms of slavery.

Introduction

Trafficking in human persons is a new form of slavery in the 21st century. It is well discussed in literatures on human trafficking. The international body of Catholic Women Religious says: "every year, trafficking in persons claims more victims, mostly women and children forced to work as prostitutes or in conditions of slave labor" (USMI, 2007, p. 5). The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) a Nigerian Law Enforcement Agency on trafficking, notes that "trafficking in persons, mostly children and women, has become a global business that affects all countries and reaps enormous profits for traffickers and their criminal intermediaries" (2009, p.10). The problems associated with trafficking in persons are now a central theme in public seminars, workshops and symposia. In his address to the staff and students of 'La Sapienza' University in Rome, Italy in May, 2009, on human trafficking, Professor S. Orobator, a Social Scientist Expert of the University of Benin, Benin City Nigeria says: "The sum total of these is the fact that a large number of Nigerian men and women, boys and girls have found themselves in the diaspora in the last two decades. While the women and girls patronize prostitution that offers the most readily available soft-landing, the men and boys migrate from place to place in search of the Golden Fleece more or less endlessly. The repercussions for Nigeria, has been the loss of prime manpower, through transit countries to destination countries, notably in Europe and North America, a scenario reminiscent of the slave trade era when the able bodied men and women were shipped from Nigeria across the Atlantic to the Americas. The difference here is that while the victims of slave trade were forcibly driven and pulled-out of the Nigerian homeland, the victims of the trafficking industry are albeit partners of the nefarious deal even though in the final analysis it does end in their disadvantage".

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 its prominence in Nigeria is traceable to the nation's economic down turn. 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 (Oseghale, 2001). However, I wish to state here that the menace of human trafficking is everywhere now in the country. Nigeria is a source, transit and destination country.

This paper will briefly define trafficking in human beings. It will also throw light on what the Nigerian Government has done to tackle this ugly trend in the country, the efforts made by my Congregation as well those made by the women religious in Nigeria to address the menace and the Church's pastoral response to it. The paper will also look at steps to a holistic approach towards supporting victims of human trafficking.

Definition of Human Trafficking

Trafficking in persons has been defined in Nigeria as:

...all acts and attempted acts involved in the recruitment, transportation within or across Nigerian borders, purchases, sale, transfer, receipt or harboring of a person involving the use of deception, coercion or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding the person whether for or not in involuntary servitude, domestic, sexual or reproductive – in forced or bonded labor or in slavery-like conditions (UNICEF, 2005, p. 1).

However, the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially in Women and Children” put together by the United Nations Convention and signed by 80 countries and the European Union in December 2000 in Palermo, Italy will be used for the purpose of this study. The Protocol definition as found in Article 3 of the Supplementary Protocol of the Palermo Convention is:

“Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring 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 payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. (Raymond, 2001:13).

Paragraph (b) of the Protocol notes that “the consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) has been used” (Raymond, 2001, P.13). The Protocol takes it for granted that adults and children can be trafficked. The definition also postulates that freedom of victims would have been manipulated, constrained, subdued in a way to allow for exploitation (Fayomi, 2009).

Generally, trafficking in persons is divided into three phases, namely recruitment, transfer and exploitation in the destination country. Women and girls constitute both the perpetrators and the victims. Women and girls therefore play major roles in the three phases.

The causes of human trafficking (push and pull factors) and the solutions are very well discussed in many literatures on the topic of human trafficking. I will leave that for us to read them up on our own.

The 2013 Global Slavery Index estimated that 740,000 Nigerians are in bondage as a result of modern slavery (p.7). It is also estimated that 60% of the foreign prostitutes in Italy are of African descent with majority being Nigerians (NAPTIP p.7). Nduka Nwanwene states that Nigeria is said to constitute over 80% of African prostitutes in Italy (NAPTIP, p. 34).

Trafficking in human beings in Nigeria today has assumed a different dimension. There is a new pattern of trafficking different from the usual tricks of traffickers taking their would-be victims to a native doctor for oath-taking (juju) so that the girl or woman will not run away until she pays all that her madam wants her to pay. In some cases, after the payment, her madam could sell her off to another trafficker and the circle could go on for a very long time. Trafficking is very rampant as many of the youths ignore advice and insist on going abroad for greener pastures. There is the impression that life is better in Europe and in America. Therefore, many people, especially the youths, want to travel abroad with a view that they will someday end up in their dream country. Villages in Nigeria witness youths and able bodied men and women traveling abroad and sometimes without letting their families and relatives know about their journeys. These people travel just for better life and the need to meet up with other life’s commitment fast. What is worrisome here is that these youths do not understand the realities of what it means to travel abroad without proper travel documentation. They do not understand the harsh realities of the weather conditions and the social systems of their destination countries so that in the final analysis they end up in the trafficking rings in a bid to escape from the authorities of those countries. The victims start out their journey voluntarily but end up as trafficked victims either while in transit or in the destination countries. When some of these groups of victims are rescued, they manifest those same signs as those who were tricked into trafficking in their country of origin. Some of these signs are psychological trauma with low self-esteem, personality mal-adjustment and thought of suicide. They have difficulties in making meaningful contributions to life and society.

The Nigerian Government Response

In Nigeria, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP) was established in 2003 in response to Nigeria’s International Obligation under the Palermo Protocol

to combat the scourge of human trafficking which has brought the image of Nigeria to disrepute. In pursuance of this, the National Assembly passed the Law in July 2003 to address the menace of human trafficking and its associated problems of labor exploitation, bonded and forced labor, sexual exploitation, drug trafficking, sports trafficking, money laundering, organ removal/harvesting etc.

The Nigerian Law with over 20 penal provisions has extensive mandates which includes but not limited to the following:

- The coordination of all laws on trafficking in persons and related offences
- The adoption of measures to increase the effectiveness of eradication of trafficking in persons
- The enhancement of law enforcement agents' effectiveness to suppress trafficking in persons
- Working in collaboration with other agencies or bodies that may ensure elimination and prevention of the root cause of the problem of traffic in persons
- Taking charge, supervising, controlling and coordinating the rehabilitation of trafficked persons
- Investigation and prosecution of traffickers.

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 over 6,000 victims have been rescued and counseled. 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 trapped in sex slavery in Mali were counseled 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.

NAPTIP has taken steps to educate the public and stakeholders on the menace of human trafficking in Nigeria. Workshops, seminars and open - air rallies have been held in various states of the federation. The programs are usually targeted at various groups belonging to the different sectors of our national life. The Agency has collaborated with countries such as Italy, France, Netherlands, United States of America etc and organizations like UNODC, IOM and UNICEF.

In 2008, the Federal Executive Council of Nigeria approved National Policy for the Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons in Nigeria. The document encapsulates strategic issues in care-giving for victims of human trafficking from reception, identification, sheltering, return/repatriation, reintegration, empowerment, follow up/after care and disengagement. While some victims of trafficking want to continue with formal education, having dropped out of school earlier, most of them want to key into informal vocational training such as:

- Hair dressing and cosmetology
- Catering and hotel management
- Fashion and design
- Computer and secretarial studies
- Soap making
- Bead making
- Photography and video-making etc.

After skills acquisition for about six months to one year, victims expect to be empowered with equipment on their areas of training, to run and operate their own businesses that enable them to support themselves and their families. Most trafficking takes place because victims are not engaged in any productive venture. As a result, they become very vulnerable to be recruited and be trafficked

The traumatic nature of their experience requires great care. Pastoral and psychosocial counseling will go a long way to assuage their feelings and get them properly reintegrated to the society. Continuous collaboration with the churches for awareness - raising and their intervention or religious moral reorientation will a long way in the reintegration process.

Rehabilitation and reintegration require a lot capital but when it is attained, there is the unlikelihood that such survivors of human trafficking can be vulnerable to be re-trafficked. Greater support is required by government, religious and civil society organizations to reduce the incidence of human trafficking.

PREVENTION

One of the most effective ways we try to prevent human trafficking in Nigeria is through awareness-raising. Campaigns, seminars and workshops are aimed at educating the public on the dangers of human trafficking and are used by the government and non-governmental organizations to stimulate interest and awareness about the problem. In raising awareness all strata of the society are targeted. These include:

- The churches/faith-based organizations
- Students/pupils
- Market women/traders
- Youths
- Traditional leaders/institutions
- Private/public servants
- Civil society/organizations
- Corporate bodies
- Opinion leaders
- Trade unions, for instance, National Union of Road Transport Workers
- Law enforcement agencies
- Intelligence community
- Media
- Orphanages
- Vigilante groups
- Community Development Associations, etc.

Techniques for raising awareness and sensitization on human trafficking include:

- Rallies and campaigns
- Seminars and workshops
- Use of information, education and communication (IEC) materials, e.g. posters, stickers, flyers carrying appropriate messages against trafficking in persons
- Media (electronic and print)
- Use of social media like face book, twitter, U tube, emails

- Bill boards and outdoor campaigns
- Use of role models that can serve as inspiration to the youths
- Use of dialogue and town hall meetings
- Use of interpreters in local languages
- Drama and Soap Opera

In creating awareness and sensitization on human trafficking, the content and mode of communication are very important.

THE CHURCH'S PASTORAL RESPONSE

The Church (Catholic) has played a prominent role in Nigeria in creating awareness on the dangers of human trafficking. Collaboration with the government and NGOs in preventing human trafficking is necessary because it has been realized that no one organization can do it alone.

Edo State – one of the 36 states in Nigeria is the most endemic state in human trafficking. The Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Benin City, Most Rev. Patrick Ebosele Ekpu in 1999 gave Women Religious in Nigeria the institutional support to establish their counter-trafficking project as well as the permission to use the parishes in the Archdiocese to raise awareness against the ravaging trend. Also, in 2013 the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Benin City Most Rev Augustine Obiora Akubeze granted permission for collaboration between NAPTIP and the Church for awareness-raising in some of the biggest parishes in Benin City. Over 20,000 members of Christ's faithful were sensitized. It is worthy of note that the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) wrote a pastoral letter and communiqués condemning trafficking in human beings in its entirety. Many other non-governmental and faith-based organizations such as the Committee for the Support of Dignity of Women (COSUDOW) and Fullness of Life Counseling and Development Initiative (FULIFE) are equally creating awareness on human trafficking and illegal migration within and outside the country.

The multi-dimensional nature of human trafficking requires the development of International network and collaboration (relationship) with all stakeholders and Law Enforcement Agencies. First, it is recognized that no one organization can combat human trafficking alone. Secondly, domestic legislation fashioned in line with the Palermo Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children recognizes the fact that victims of exploitation should be treated as victims. For instance, section 50 of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act 2003 (as amended) provides that

- A trafficked person is not subject to discriminatory treatment in practice on account of race, color, gender, sex, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, cultural beliefs or practices, national, ethnic or social origin, property, birth or other status, including his status as a victim of trafficking or having worked in the sex industry.
- A trafficked person has access to adequate health and other social services during the period of temporary residence.
- A trafficked person has access to the Embassy or Consulate of the country of which he is a citizen or where there is no Embassy or Consulate ensure access to the diplomatic representative of the state that takes charge of the country's interest or any national to protect him.
- A trafficked person is able to return home safely, if he so wishes and when he is able to do so.
- A trafficked person should not be denied temporary residence visas during the pendency of any criminal, civil or other legal actions.
- Investigation, dictation, gathering and interpretation of evidence are conducted in such a manner as to minimize intrusion into the personal history of a trafficked person.

- The identity of a trafficked person is protected.
- The use of the person's history of being a trafficked person, his family or his friends in any way whatsoever, his family or, particularly or particularly with regards to freedom of movement, marriage or search for gainful employment is not encouraged.
- It takes step to maintain or rehabilitate facilities provided for trafficked persons; and
- A trafficked person and his family are protected from intimidation, treats and reprisals from intimidation, treats and reprisals from traffickers and their associates including reprisals from a person in position or authority.

Various countries of the world are expected to adopt the above model and legislation in order to ensure adequate protection for victims of human trafficking.

It is important to now look at some concrete steps that have been taken in Nigeria and in Italy to help victims of women traffic. This segment focuses on what my Congregation, Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the women religious in Nigeria are doing in combating trafficking in women and girls.

SISTERS OF THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

In our effort to respond to the signs of time and as part of our apostolate, we, Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus committed ourselves to uplifting the dignity of all human persons especially women and girls through prevention and rehabilitation. Some of these include:

A. Cottage Industry:

The Sacred Heart Cottage Industry is an attempt to give marketable skills to young women who are school dropouts, and who otherwise would end up either being trafficked, given to early marriage, or in prostitution.

As an integrated development project aimed at addressing the issues of poverty with its resultant effects, the cottage industry offers an enabling environment for growth, marketable skills and employment opportunities that will prepare the target population for meaningful life in the society. The industry comprises five departments - Weaving, Dyeing and batik, Sewing, Knitting and Catering/Baking. Some of the trainees are re-employed after their training and some are assisted to establish on their own. In addition to the skills both the trainees and workers are given instructions on home management, simple hygiene and leadership. The training is designed to last for two years and within these two years the trainees are expected to have acquired skills in at least two departments.

B. Castel Volturno - Italy

In line with this spirit, we have a community in Castel Volturno in the Archdiocese of Capua, Italy that has its primary apostolate to work with victims of human trafficking especially women and girls. The ministry of the sisters consists of:

i. Road Ministry

Jesus went about in the cities and villages announcing the Good News of the reign of God and curing all kinds of sicknesses and diseases (Mtt. 9:35). The commonest place victims carry out their services/activities as sex workers is by the roadside. The sisters visit the girls during the day and at night. During the road visitation, the sisters discuss with them important issues that affect their lives; their fears, their problems, their families, their experiences with madams (pimps) and clients. After they have shared all these experiences they are counseled; the sisters share the word of God and pray with them. The women and girls are informed of the possibility they have to live better lives. They are given hotlines to call anytime they need the attention of the sisters and can also go to the Centre (Centro Fernandes) to visit with the sisters. The sisters usually walk on foot to visit with the girls. In 2000-2005 the sisters could count 20 - 25 girls each day on road visitation. While in recent years the sisters have noticed a reduction in the number (10) of girls and women they visit along the Domitiana Road, particularly at night.

ii. Rehabilitation

The next stage is the rehabilitation of those women who choose to come out of the road and quit prostitution. The sisters run a house of welcoming called CASA SANTA MARIA (ST MARY'DELL'ACCOGLIENZA (ST MARY'S HOUSE OF WELCOMING). The sisters admit in this project those who called the toll free police line, accept to renounce prostitution, and have an undertaking with the police not to return to the roads. The law requires that they denounce their madams. With this any girl who denounces her exploiters, takes an undertaking with the police, will be admitted for rehabilitation and will be eligible to work in Italy after she has completed the program and obtained legal documents.

When a girl applies to join the project, she is interviewed to make sure that she is not a spy for the syndicates and that she truly wants to leave the road. If she is admitted in our project, she will go through a program that will last for one year before she is given a permit to stay and to work. Admission of girls brought by an outsider is done with great care in order to make sure she does not just want to get the papers and go back to the road.

The first three months involve:

- a. an intensive orientation on the rules and regulations of the house,
- b. medical and psychological analysis,
- c. training in house management,
- d. training in Italian language,
- e. training on preparation of Italian food,
- f. a course in English, computer studies,
- g. Batik making and sewing.
- h. Regular counselling
- i. Spiritual direction

After the three months, a six month permit to stay is issued to the girl; with this also she will be free to work while she continues in the program. At the expiration of the six months permit to stay, she will receive one year permit to stay and work. With this, she will complete her program and will be free to look for her own house. Her permit to stay will be renewed for her again only if she has a stable job contract to show to the police.

During the period they will leave in the house, they receive spiritual and psychological counselling. Spiritual exercises include prayer sessions, study of the Scripture and Catholic catechism. Some of the girls, especially those from Nigeria are usually non-Christians. They are not Moslems either. They just did not go to any church while in Nigeria, though some of them claim to go to some of the Pentecostal Churches. General instructions on the articles of faith are introduced to help them mature in their faith to help them deal with the issues of fear of the effect of the oath they took and other diabolical acts performed on them during their negotiation with the madams. This oath is the major reason why some of them prefer to remain in the bondage until they have been able to pay off their madams.

For most of the girls, contact with their families is very important for them. The safety of their family members is one of the major sources of worries for them. The consequence of their decision to disown their madams and leave the road is the harassment of their parents by the agents of their madams in their country of origin. In many cases, their parents are arrested by the madams and sometimes in connivance with the police, kept in prison until they will produce their daughters. The offices in Benin City, Nigeria (COSUDOW and FULIFE) have been of great help in dealing with this matter. This has proven very successful and has minimised the ugly experiences. With the successes achieved so far, many of the girls are no longer afraid to take decisions to leave the roads.

The girls while in the project enjoy free medical care. A group of volunteer doctors are available to attend to

them twice a week for any kind of medical needs. Casa Santa Maria dell'Accoglienza is equipped with various facilities to meet the needs of the project. They also have free psychological counselling and evaluation.

Our experiences have taught us to treat these young women with gentle loving care and much patience. Most of them have been traumatised and many of them feel so much guilt. Worst still many of them were recruited from remote villages at an early age of 15 to 16 years, many of them just out of primary school. In many ways, they lack manners. They have been treated like animals, used by their clients and abused by many who see them as rags.

Rehabilitation work with these young women involves serious supervision and constant reminder. They can be crabby and can sometimes be ugly with each other. This is understandable considering their backgrounds and the ugly experiences they might have gone through in the hands of their exploiters. The Nigerian girls appear aggressive. For those who do not understand the Nigerian culture and where these young women are coming from, it is always difficult to work with them. Dealing with them requires some systematic reflection and planning. One has to be firm but gentle. You need so much patience and understanding. Counselling sessions are very important.

Below is the breakdown of the number of girls and women who have passed through Casa Santa Maria since it started in 2000.

Year	Number
2000	3
2001	9
2002	10
2003	12
2004	10
2005	8
2006 to 2007	no admission due to some administrative problems
2008	8
2009	5
2010	6
2011	7
2012	7
2013	8
2014	5 (As of March 2014)

Among these were 5 Ukrainian girls; the rest are Nigerians. Out of this number 97% are from Edo State. 80% of these girls obtained their permesso di soggiorno from this program and they now have regular jobs; among these, 10 of the women are legally married, and are with children, 7 of them wedded in the Church. Three are married to Italians, some others went to Nigeria to marry and brought their husbands to Italy, while others met and married their husbands in Italy.

The Centre has a mini hair salon. This provides job opportunity for our girls and women especially those in our community of casa Santa Maria dell'accoglienza and those of them who have completed our program but are yet to find job.

iii: Pastoral Care

The work of the sisters in Castel Volturno includes pastoral ministry to immigrants. One important ministry of the Sisters in this place is that of reconciliation. Since the Lord makes his sun shine on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust (Matt 5:45), the sisters extend their outreach to both the exploiters and the exploited. The ministry of reconciliation here therefore includes reconciling these immigrant brothers and sisters of ours, who see themselves as great sinners and therefore have no need to approach the Lord. It is also a reconciliation that brings about unity among them. Our work with them also involves being advocates of justice for them. We intervene when we see that their rights are being tampered with. This includes going out for peaceful demonstrations against racism and injustice.

At Centro Fernandes (Centre for Immigrants), we work as counselors to those who are becoming depressed because of the daily hardship they face. We also encourage those involved in drug trafficking to desist from it and look for something better to do, especially for those who have the permit of stay that makes them eligible for legal jobs and still find themselves in drug trafficking. We assist in the soup kitchen for the many immigrants that come to eat at Centro Fernandes.

C. FULNESS OF LIFE COUNSELING AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (FULIFE)

In Nigeria, our Congregation has an NGO – Fullness of Life Counseling and Development Initiative (FULIFE) which has done so much work in awareness creation, work with families, youths and children with a view to reducing trafficking in persons in Nigeria. FULIFE cooperates with Associations that have shelters to rehabilitate victims of human trafficking. It provides Micro Credit facility to mothers to enable them make a living.

COSUDOW

Committee for the Support of Dignity of Women (COSUDOW), though a project of the Nigeria Conference of Women Religious, was started and run for the Conference for its first ten years of existence by Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. COSUDOW works to combat trafficking in human beings, using Prevention Protection Rehabilitation/Reintegration and net-working approaches.

CHURCH'S PASTORAL CARE: HOLISTIC SUPPORT AND NET-WORKING FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Trafficking is no respecter of any victim. It is insensitive to their conditions. It is a contemporary form of slavery. Even with all the awareness created, arrests made and prosecution of traffickers and the deportations, this evil continues to flourish. I was in Italy in May 2013 and I was shocked at the number of Nigeria women who still stand on the streets of Italy waiting for clients. It seemed to me that we are not seeing the end yet.

The urgency for us here is to read the signs of the times and to remind ourselves as Christians (Catholics) that we have been called to be at the service of people who are in need, especially vulnerable women and young girls searching for help, guidance and support and to obey Christ's injunction in Matthew 25: 34 – 36 "I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me drink" (v. 35). We are called "to be the epiphany of God's love" and to be "prophetic and silent witnesses, but also eloquent denouncers of an inhuman world" (USMI, 2007, p.8). Christians should see this call from the divine Master to be the field of education, health, social assistance to orphans, the aged, the handicapped and the marginalized of every time and place. WE need to witness to voluntary charity in order to make up for the short-comings of our government structures. It is a greater thing to give than to receive. Many faith-based organizations are known for their charities; and we must continue to give until it hurts.

The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25 – 37) is an excellent example on the teaching of Jesus on who my neighbor is. The victims of human trafficking are the persons in vulnerable positions who every

follower of Christ should see and take as neighbors. They should not be persons labeled and excluded from our own circles. All of us, Christ's followers, have been called by Christ to 'set the downtrodden free' (Luke 4:19).

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 (Humane Vitae). Therefore, Catholic organizations in different continents have developed shelters as well as medical, social and pastoral services for victims of human trafficking. Spiritual care and healing for victims are indispensable especially helping them to forgive those who exploited and hurt them so much and to bring about reconciliation.

Globally, women religious in every country have different services targeted at safety, rescue and restoration of life. In Italy, apart from the work of government at combating trafficking in human beings, the Church has unprecedented record of different projects for the benefit of the victims. The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) has its Counter trafficking body 'Talitakum' through which it joins other stakeholders to help in combating trafficking in human beings. In Nigeria, the Nigeria Conference of Women Religious (NCWR) has its Counter trafficking arm 'Committee for the Support of Dignity of Women' (COSUDOW) which it established since 1999 to help rescue our women held in bondage by human trafficking. The Episcopal Conference of Italian Catholic Bishops built a shelter for the Women Religious in Nigeria for the rehabilitation of victims of human trafficking.

Women Religious promote wide ranging awareness campaigns to prevent the 'exodus' of young women from their families, schools and parishes towards the 'promise land'. They trace and protect the families of the victims against extortion and reprisals by their exploiters. They welcome and assist in social reintegration, through ad hoc projects for young women who choose to return home on voluntary basis. They give assistance to the undocumented victims who are deported by destination and transit countries. They also offer information/counseling about how to carry out denunciation, social recourses, etc. They help with job assistance, housing for women without documents, and help female victims of violence who have denounced their traffickers and women with children.

Women Religious also offer prevention/training, pastoral care/therapy, get in touch with the women in the streets, in the places where they are, develop working relationships with the Police and with international networks that fight against human trafficking.

Steps to Holistic Approach

Having looked at the practical ways of helping victims of human trafficking which is part of the Church's pastoral and holistic response, I will now look at the steps to be taken in the protection and assistance to victims. The processes include the following:

Prayers

In working with the victims of human trafficking, we need to pray for the victims for protection, conversion for traffickers and for strength and a sense of direction for the care-givers. I am very grateful to the Holy Father, Pope Francis for declaring February 8 as a day of prayer for complete eradication of trafficking in human beings. We all know that St. Josephine Bakhita, an Africa saint was sold into slavery before she became a nun late in life. Saint Josephine Bakhita experienced the pains of slavery, we pray, through her intercession, that human trafficking, a worse form of slavery, would be eradicated. We pray that the most Sacred Heart of Jesus will have mercy on us and that our Mother Mary will continue to intercede for us.

Reception

- The purpose of reception is to create a trusting relationship necessary for counseling, rehabilitation and investigation purposes. Here there must be collaboration with Law Enforcement Agents of the Country to carry out the investigation.

- Reception can be done at the airports and motor parks. For government agencies, reception can be at the nation's borders or points of interception.
- Those received include victims who are trafficked internally and externally.

Recognizing a victim

- A minor
- Trafficked to make money
- Debt bondage
- Travelling and identification documents are confiscated by traffickers
- Freedom of movement is denied or limited
- Subjected to violence or treats to violence
- Deceit, coercion or other forms of exploitation that violate the fundamental human rights of the victim
- suffered physical, mental or other sexual abuses
- Deceived to do a job in destination other than that promised in the origin country (where applicable)

Interview / Screening

The screening would ask questions to identify if a person in need is a victim of trafficking or not. The questions could be structured or unstructured. The structured questions should have fixed alternatives and open-ended responses while the unstructured interview will include in-depth interview.

Counseling

Counseling is defined as an advice or help given to someone in problem or in difficult situations.

Counseling is very essential in the life of a victim; it helps her to heal the wounds or hurts she carries within herself as a result of the experiences at the hands of the traffickers.

Types of Counseling

- Normal counseling: this is where, after hearing the victim's story, you advise her on what to do
- Spiritual counseling: in this process the victim will need prayers, like deliverance by priest or any other religious person who has such a gift.
- Psychological counseling: when a victim is in trauma or despair, she needs a psychologist or some other expert in counseling who will counsel her to determine the level of stress and trauma for proper healing.

Methods of counseling - it can be done in various ways

- One on one counseling
- Group counseling

- The Counselor has a listening ear
- Keep an eye contact with the victim
- Counselor must be an empathizer
- Counselor must be a professional in counseling
- Counseling must be carried out in a conducive environment

Accommodation

This provides a temporary shelter for victims. The duration of stay depends on each victim's adjustment. The victim rests and regains strength and capacity to face the challenges of the future. The victim is taken through various counseling sessions and her basic needs are provided. To ensure protection, shelters need to be in secret locations as well as the provision of security. While in shelter, the victim is taken through medical testing and/or treatment. The health needs of a victim must be free and accessible in a non-stigmatizing environment. Medical personnel are invited to educate/counsel them on their health needs. Networking with a hospital to take care of their health needs especially cases like STDs, HIV, Psychiatric, premature pregnancy, complications of abortion, skin diseases, e.t.c, is very important.

Engagement/Therapy

While in the shelter the Social worker or Directress makes effort to identify the needs of the victims. Generally, victims have physical, health and psychological traumas as a result of their experiences with traffickers.

What Is Trauma

Trauma is a psychic pain or physical injury caused by critical life events. It is defined as a severe physical injury or wound to the body caused by an external force or a psychological shock having a lasting effect.

Causes of trauma in victims

In Nigeria:

- High expectation of a greener pasture in the destination country
- Oaths-taking/voodoo (juju) (where applicable)
- Secrecy

In transit countries:

- Secrecy
- The tortuous journey
- Seizing of traveling documents
- Disconnection from family
- Changing of names
- Hostile attitude of the traffickers

- Violence
- Constant/consistent rape and prostitution
- Forced labor and seizure of proceeds thereof
- In the middle of nowhere, cannot go back
- No assistance and helplessness

In Destination Countries:

- Traffickers provide substandard accommodation on arrival at destination.
- Subjecting the victims to the indignity of forced labor/prostitution
- Perceived cheating in labor condition
- Helplessness and hopelessness
- Threat to victim's family in the country of origin

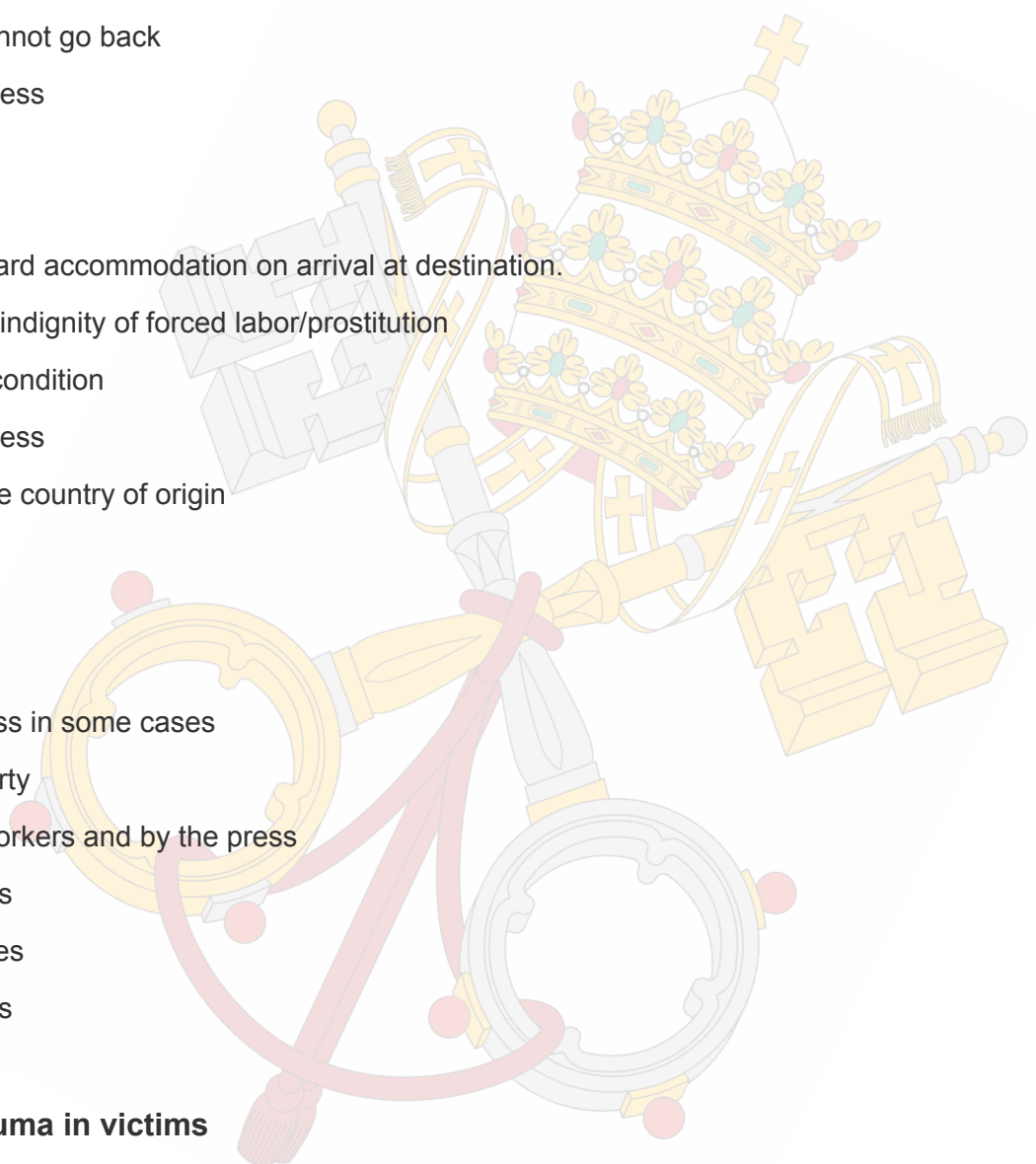
Upon Deportation:

- Police arrest and detention
- Inhumane deportation process in some cases
- Home-coming in abject poverty
- Embarrassment by Airport workers and by the press
- Rejection by families/relatives
- Seen by the society as failures
- Fear of reprisals by traffickers

Signs and symptoms of trauma in victims

The signs and symptoms of trauma among victims include:

- Psychoses manifesting as shame, guilt, humiliation, fear, loneliness, dread and anguish
- High anxiety level
- Stress manifestation
- Sexual dysfunction
- Sleep difficulties
- Recourse to drugs abuse
- Suicide thoughts/attempts
- Irrational behavior
- Unkempt bodily appearance
- Unkempt hair, untidy clothes
- Unsteady eye gaze



Family tracing

It is a process of identifying the families of the victims ahead of returning them home. At this stage, there is a need to counsel the families to predispose them to the reality of the homing – coming of their daughters who are victims. Family tracing helps to prevent re-trafficking. However, some victims are unwilling to go home for the following reasons:

- Reprisal attacks from traffickers
- Unfulfilled promises to their families
- Shame
- Debts to repay
- Stigmatization
- Returning to the same push situation

Fears of victims:

- That others may find out what had happened to them
- Bringing shame to the family
- Feeling of guilt for having made mistakes
- Feeling dirty
- A feeling of humiliation
- Powerlessness

Family Reunion and empowerment

Once the victim stabilizes in the shelter, she is re-united with her family. If she refuses to return to her family and community, she is assisted to re-settle somewhere else. From her place of abode she learns a skill if she did not already have one. Once the victim leaves the shelter, she is monitored and helped to make good use of the opportunity she is given. She learns any vocation of her choice that is available and what she can do. She is guided in making correct choices. Those who wish to continue their education are also helped to do so. Funds are sourced to help the victim start a vocation of her choice or become an entrepreneur.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Victims are monitored and evaluated periodically to assess the rehabilitation and empowerment programmes.
- Information gathered help to ascertain the level of progress made by a victim; and helps to take decision on her improvement.

Withdrawal/disengagement

While the victim is in the shelter she is made to understand that a time comes when she will be allowed to be on her own and live her own life. Withdrawal is done after a successful rehabilitation and reintegration of a victim. Withdrawal or dis-engagement takes place from the information gathered from monitoring and evaluation. The properly reintegrated women remain our friends even after withdrawal.

From the moment we come in contact with a victim, she is helped to see our Lord Jesus Christ as her friend who understands her better than any other person. The spiritual needs of a victim are addressed. One of the greatest needs of a victim is leading her to forgive her traffickers and where possible reconciling her and her traffickers. This will help her put the past behind her and move forward into the future. Helping her connect to her faith tradition will be a great source of healing for her. Priests, religious and other members of Christ's faithful play an indispensable role in the spiritual healing of victims. Trafficked persons trust priests and religious; these are therefore excellent resources for the victims. A victim of trafficking is created in the image and likeness of God. The victim has her dignity. Pastoral care for victims of trafficking is tailored towards restoring the victim to her dignity and to restore to her all her inalienable rights. In the care for such victims, they must be treated with utmost respect, care and compassion.

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 Bishops' Conference of England and Wales and organizations in the origin countries of the victims. Such networking will serve as a veritable tool for the following reasons:

- a) It will serve as a platform for the exchange of information on human trafficking and dissemination
- b) It will bring greater understanding on the multi-faceted nature of trafficking issues and associated problems
- c) It will ensure greater intervention in the investigation and prosecution of cases of human trafficking by Law Enforcement Agencies
- d) It will bring about synergy and cooperation and collaboration thereby ensuring a more productive approach in handling issues of human trafficking.
- e) Such platform will not only lead to the reduction of the incidence of human trafficking but will go a long way in bringing about a safer and better society.

Thank you for listening

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