

Trafficking in Girls

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REPORT OF A STUDY

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in
Akwa Ibom and Cross River States of Nigeria

**GIRLS' POWER INITIATIVE
(GPI) NIGERIA**

towards an empowered womanhood

**GIRLS' POWER INITIATIVE
(GPI) Nigeria**

Edited by:

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HTRODUCTION

Trafficking is a violation of basic human rights and constitutes a serious form of violence against girls and women. Most trafficked girls are in vulnerable position because they find themselves in individualised work situations like domestic service and entertainment. Hence, they cannot defend themselves against exploitative conditions of work.

We have also heard that poverty is at the root of this crime. It is therefore mainly children from economically, culturally, intellectually, socially and emotionally disadvantaged groups that are most exposed to the risk of trafficking.

Causes: Poverty, unemployment, economic crises, poor income, insecurity, unequal distribution of wealth are conditions that encouraged trafficking in girls. Trafficking exists because there is a market. It is driven by consumer demand. Trafficking profits many actors in the recruitment process: the facilitators or sub-agents that recruit, the trip organisers, the overall “master” agents who supply and the “masters” who exploit the labour of the victims. Each of these has a specific role and profit in the process, at the expense of the victim.

Hence, it is important that the problem has to be tackled comprehensively by dealing with the causes and the chain of beneficiaries. Most importantly, the issue of

discrimination against girls and women and the social, gender stereotypes have to be addressed as these are at the root of the perpetuation of this violence against girls and women. Effective measures would therefore require practical and visible poverty alleviation, basic free functional education, awareness-raising on gender discrimination, sexuality education and social mobilisation for social responsibility as well as rehabilitation and skills development for victims. This present publication highlights issue of trafficking in girls in Akwa Ibom and Cross River States as a contribution of GPI to finding solution to the problem.

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July, 2002

BACKGROUND

In recent times, the incidence of trafficking in persons has assumed an alarming proportion with its attendant effects on the society and specifically the victims who in the majority, are girls. This understandably attracted the curiosity and concern of scholars, NGOs and other well-meaning Nigerians. Therefore, in October 2001, a research on "Trafficking in Girls", was carried out in two states of the south-east (Akwa Ibom and Cross River States) of Nigeria. Specifically, two Local Government Areas (LGAs) each in these states were purposively selected for the study. These LGAs were:

- (a) Uyo and Ikot Ekpene LGAs, both in Akwa Ibom State
- (b) Calabar Municipality and Yakurr LGAs, both in Cross River State.

It was purposive because of the high incidence of trafficking in these LGAs. In each of these LGAs, two communities that have high prevalent rate of trafficking in persons were chosen for the study. The concern was to gather data based on actual experiences of trafficking in persons that will be representative enough for extrapolation and generalisation. The communities and LGAs were as follows:

Akwa Ibom State

- (a) Uyo LGA (Urban) - Uyo Metropolis and Aka Offot
- (b) Ikot Ekpene (Rural) - Ikot Oto and Ikot Inyang

Cross River Stan

- (a) Calabar Municipality (Urban) - Mbukpa and Akim
- (b) Yakurr LGA (Rural) - Ekori and Nko

In executing the study, Consultants, Research Officers and Field Workers were recruited and specifically trained to gather and analyse data. Data gathered from the two states and communities were systematically analysed using statistical methods. However, for the purpose of specificity, data from the two states were analysed separately. Therefore, the analyses presented here are based on the report from the two states.

Furthermore, secondary data on trafficking in persons were collected and reviewed. In other words, existing, but relevant literature in the area of study were collected in order to clarify the findings of the study. It was also to help confirm, or dis-confirm whatever revelations or findings that the study was to elicit.

Finally, efforts were made to bring out the summary of findings from both states with major focus on factors that make girls more susceptible to trafficking and on measures to assist girls that do not wish to be trafficked.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The concern of this study was to examine the incidence of trafficking in persons, and precisely girls in the society. More specifically, the study sought to achieve the following:

1. To find out what makes girls more susceptible to trafficking;
2. To find out the age, nature and mode of trafficking;
3. To find out what can be done with girls to enable them to resist being trafficked, and
4. To identify the services that need to be put in place to help those who do not desire to be trafficked.

METHODOLOGY

The study was essentially a descriptive one, and because of the widespread nature of variables that needed to be covered, we adopted the descriptive research design. Two main instruments of data-gathering were used and these were Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and In-Depth Interviews.

(a) Focus Group Discussion

This method was used in gathering data from adolescent girls, adolescent boys, female parents and male parents. Eight (8) FGDs were conducted in each state; four in the urban and four in the rural areas and evenly distributed between the sexes. In all, 16 FGDs were conducted from the two states: Akwa Ibom and Cross River. Each FGD involved between 8 to 10 persons, with a Facilitator, Field Officer and

recorder and supervised by a Research Officer.

To make for uniformity, questionnaire guides were constructed for each category of persons for the discussion. However, this does not mean that the facilitator did not change the questions to suit specific circumstance as might present themselves in the field. The questions were all tested to make sure the instruments/questions ensured the objectivity of the data needed.

(b) In-Depth Interviews

A structured interview guide was used and was meant for the following category of persons: Victims, adolescent boys and girls, traffickers (business men/women) and opinion leaders/NGOs CBOs, traditional leaders, religious leaders, policy-makers and other government representatives. Eighty (80) in-depth interviews were billed to be conducted in each state, and in the two states, a total of 160 interviews were designed to be conducted, however, this was not to be and therefore, 74 interviews were conducted in Akwa Ibom State, while 65 were carried out in Cross River State, bringing the total to 139 in-depth interviews in the two states.

(c) Library Research

In addition to the two qualitative methods of data- collection, an extensive library research was done. This was meant to collect secondary data for literature review.

All the three methods were used in gathering the necessary data for analysis.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

An impressive volume of literature exists on girl-trafficking and child-labour. Most of these however are derived from newspapers and magazines and some from the electronic media (television and radio). The contention is that though the phenomenon of trafficking in persons and prostitution has existed from immemorial, the scope, prevalence and momentum have increased progressively and assumed a wider dimension. It is now solely a 'business' whose products are nice looking young girls and women between the ages of 10 and 25 years, who are exported to countries like Italy, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ukraine and Saudi Arabia and made to engage in prostitution. Other African countries like Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Congo are not left out. Girls are made to work in plantations, engage in prostitution and other menial jobs given to them by their masters/mistresses.

There is also the spectre of internal trafficking where girls between the ages of 7 and 18 are recruited from states such as Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Bayelsa, Benue to work in cocoa and rubber plantations as well as house-help jobs.

Like slave trade before it, this has brought shame and condemnation to those involved and incidentally, this has put the image

of Nigeria in the mud. This development and others necessitated NGOs and other well-meaning Nigerians to take on this hydra-headed phenomenon headlong with a view to putting a stop to it. This literature will examine the phenomenon of trafficking in girls and child-labour, its scope and dimension and solutions towards ending it.

In a one-day workshop organised by an NGO, Women's Consortium of Nigeria, (WOCON), participants had maintained that one of the dastardly effects of trafficking has been the escalation of incidence of child-labour in Nigeria and other parts of the world. In order to stem this problem. WOCON aims at helping to withdraw at least 300 child-domestic servants for its re-integration programme. Furthermore. WOCON according to its co-ordinator, is to provide assistance for the targeted kids, their parents, guardians and employers to alleviate conditions which could have necessitated their reliance, either on the earnings or the services of children. The workshop among other things, figured poverty' as the main cause of child-labour and women trafficking, (*The Guardian*, March 29, 2002).

Allied to the issue above, in *The Guardian* of November 20. 2001, two Nigerians and 23 Togolese girls allegedly being trafficked to Akwa Ibom State were arrested by the police. The two men and a driver with the girls were paraded before journalists. This same story was carried by

The Punch newspaper of Wednesday, November 21, 2001.

In spite of these reports and publications in the print and electronic media, the phenomenon continued to raise its ugly head not only in Nigeria, but in other neighbouring countries of Ghana, Togo and others. In *The Guardian* of October 28, 2001, the Ghanaian Attorney-General was reported to have faulted the law on human trafficking. He was reported to have argued that the law which seeks to address the issue of human trafficking was inadequate in dealing with the new forms of cross-border and global trafficking. This law has remained unchanged since 1960. He contended further that there are no relevant laws to punish offenders, because scores of girls have continued to be lured into prostitution outside the country. The minister therefore urged ECOWAS member countries to establish anti-trafficking units within their law enforcement agencies, ministries and other relevant bodies to serve as focal points in handling such issues.

In another development, Mrs Eki Igbinedion (*Vanguard* November 2, 2001) had argued that in order to win the war against trafficking, there would be the need to reach out to the grassroots (that is the crusade must be carried to the market places, to enlighten parents). Other measures listed were that the trafficked and their collaborators will be prosecuted in line with the provisions of the law as well as the provision of gainful employment for young girls.

In *The Punch* of November 21, 2001, it was reported that a 20-year-old Nigerian business man who kidnapped a class one pupil from Accra, Ghana was sentenced to (3) three years imprisonment with hard labour. The convict, Mahamadu Nasiru from Sokoto State was said to have committed this offence in Accra by wanting to lure the boy to Nigeria with a promise of sending him to school, but the boy refused, and he reportedly therefore resorted to force.

From the story above, it shows that trafficking is not limited to females (or girls) alone, but includes boys also. For instance, it was reported that 90% of young soccer players recruited in Africa end up in French teams and end up as illegal workers without any hope of getting integrated into the French society.

Also, a Paris news magazine *Marrainne*, reported recently that there are many child-traffickers out there masquerading as big-time soccer agents. Hundreds of these young African boys include persons under the age of 13 who are enticed with the dream of a dazzling sport career: (*The News*, Vol. 17 No. 15 of October 15, 2001).

The issue of human trafficking is a booming business in Nigeria, especially in Edo, Delta, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States. *The Punch* of October 19 2001 had reported that Calabar, the Cross River State capital is now the transit point for human trafficking in Nigeria. According to the paper, because of the declared war on the illicit trade,

especially recruiting of girls for prostitution abroad by Edo State government and consequent security alert at the nation's western borders, dealers in human beings and their agents have discovered Calabar as a safe haven. Most of the barons of the human trade

have now relocated to Calabar where they recruit natives of the state with promises of good jobs and clamorous lifestyles abroad. The barons have cashed in on the relaxed security in the state because of low crime level. They now use the Calabar ports and the various creeks in the area to transport girls to neighbouring countries of Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon, among others.

The *Newswatch* of July 26, 1999 (pg. 17) reported details of young Nigerian girls being sent to Europe for prostitution. The barons as described by one Chiei Nosakhure Ijekhure, a chief priest of the Oba of Benin, maintained that they have formed themselves into a cartel and many of them are super rich with properties developed over the state and Lagos. The chief who is so disturbed that such girls are often stopped in their prime from continuing their education, argued that “it is troubling that a time may come when you might not find a marriageable girl in Edo State.”

According to the *Newswatch*, some parents are also There are cases of sons and daughters who sold *or parents' properties behind their backs and went to Italy ?r.ev. Specifically mentioned was a case of a r Yoruba street, Benin where the son wanted to

our society and equally detested by the Qur'an and Bible.” He however, traced the problem to the moral decadence in the Nigerian society and political instability, occasioned by military rule. According to Mr. Fasuyi:

There is moral decadence in the Nigerian society which has its root in the economic quagmire arising from political instability and the economic mismanagement of the nation's resources. This moral decadence has reached a stage that it has become embarrassing to Nigerians both within and outside. Consequently, there is an urgent need to halt this trend if Nigeria is to be respected in the community of nations.

{The Punch, Tuesday, November 2, 1999}

In supporting the contention by Fasuyi (1999) another scholar traced the scope of trafficking in women to the military era when the national economy was brought on its knees due to the insensitivity and dishonesty of the leaders. As such, an average Nigerian family became not only paupers but found it difficult to fend for themselves. This brought with it struggles by young men and women to seek for greener pastures elsewhere outside the country.

The Oba of Benin, Omo N'Oba Erediauwa has also appealed

to the Reformed Ogboni Confraternity, Italian branch, to help reform the lives of the girls who had gone to Italy for prostitution. This he said could be done through education in order to make them live exemplary lives. (*The Guardian*, Monday, December 24, 2001).

The issue of trafficking, especially as it affects girls and efforts to stop it have gained international attention. On the 6th of January 2002, an international conference on sexual exploitation of girls was held in Yokohama, Japan. The gathering which was an off-shoot of a similar conference held in Stockholm, Denmark in 1996, was attended by 138 countries, including Nigeria. The Yokohama conference, according to NTA news of Sunday, January 6, 2002, was called to seek for solutions to the sexual exploitation of girls.

Under the causes and consequences of trafficking, some literature have classified the causes under sub-heads such as push factors, pull factors and facilitating factors, while the consequences have been categorised under victimisation by the traffickers and re-victimisation by government.

According to a publication by the International Human Rights Law Group, “the phenomenon of trafficking requires the right set of circumstances to flourish. It necessitates situations that ‘push’ people to migrate for work or other reasons, persons who demand the labour or services of persons from afar (the ‘pull’ factors) and the possibility of 17

and 47 of them were young women who were suspected to be prostitutes. In 1997, the German police, while on the trail of a Nigerian who eventually divulged the identity of an international organisation which armed Nigerian women with forged documents to engage in prostitution, were able to fish out 36 prostitutes from Nigeria in Essen-brothels. In the same year, one Hajiya Gambo Nasiru, alleged to be recruiting Nigerian prostitutes for a thriving racket in Saudi Arabia appeared before “Hajj Malpractices Tribunal” in Kano. Nasiru, alias 50-50 was reportedly arrested at the Malam Aminu Kano International Airport, with young girls she was exporting to Saudi Arabia. About the same time that Nasiru was nabbed, the security agents at the Murtala Mohammed International Airport recorded a string of hauls when about 50 girls and their financier, a Benin-based traditional chief were arrested. Some of the girls who could not speak English, claimed they were on their way to Ukraine for further education; (*The Punch*, November 2, 1999).

A number of reasons have been given on why girls easily fall prey to these barons on human trafficking. According to Ogunmakin (1999), recruiting young girls and women for prostitution outside and (even within Nigeria) is done under various pretexts. Often, the girls would not be aware of the motive of their so-called “uncles” and “aunts” who arrange the trips.

Nelson Odili (1999, *The Punch* of November 2) maintained that economic problems in Nigeria push some of them into such acts, while some are either lured into it or may not be aware of the motive of the initiators. Some of them in their warped views believe that leaving the shores of Nigeria will

provide a better avenue of livelihood without a fore knowledge of the danger inherent in such adventures.

Apart from Europe, most of the young women are also sometimes taken to neighbouring West African and Central African countries of Ghana, Togo, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Cameroon, to mention but these few. In August 2001, a three-person prostitution syndicate was smashed by the Nigerian Immigration Service near the Seme border, during an attempt to ferry eleven (11) girls out of the country, carrying forged passports without visas. This gave reason to the postulation that those behind the act had no intentions of taking them to any country in Europe. According to the then Comptroller-General of Nigerian Immigration Service, Alhaji Sahib Dange, “investigations have revealed that the men usually lure these girls to some West African countries, and force them to take to prostitution under the pretext that they had no money to continue the journey.”

The argument has been pushed further into the legal and moral spheres. Legally, sections 225A and 222A of the criminal code Act, Cap 77 of the Law of the Federation, consider prostitution as an offence. But the business still flourishes. According to Mr. Segun Fasuyi, a legal practitioner: “when you look at it from the moral point of view cum-religion, it is frowned at by the moral values of

sell his father's only house after his death, but that she stopped it when she inscribed on the wall the sign "THIS HOUSE IS NOT FOR SALE." She maintained that this sign is now a common feature on the walls of houses in Benin.

Even women (barons) have now adopted new methods now posing as good Samaritans with the evil intentions to kidnap babies. The *Newswatch* of October 22, 2001 (pp. 14-17) reported a case of babies rescued from being sold at the Umuoji Orphanage. One Ejiofor allegedly admitted to selling baby girls and boys at #15,000 and #20,000, respectively and was arrested for child stealing and trafficking. The police it was reported, through Ejiofor's confession, unearthed a booming child-selling racket involving Nnalusi, Elorubia and Ejiofor at Ebelechukwu Maternity and Umuoji Orphanage.

The phenomenon of girl trafficking assumed a disturbing proportion that for two days running, it was the subject of discussion on the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) network news on the 26 of September, 2001. The NTA reported that the police intercepted a boat carrying six (6) girls on the high seas on their way to the Republic of Cameroon. According to the news item, each girl confessed of having paid the sum of #3, 500 to one business man, simply known as Ike. The investigation showed that (3) three of the girls were from Edo State, one from Delta, one an Ibo girl and the other a Hausa girl.

Alarmed by this spate of trafficking activities, the wife of the Vice-President of Nigeria, Mrs. Titi Abubakar was reported on NTA news of 27 September, 2001, cautioning those who engage in the business of trafficking to leave Nigeria alone. Similarly, the wife of the Vice-President organised a national workshop on

women trafficking and child-labour and migration. At the end of the three-day workshop, serious deliberations on women's issues and of children were held and a communique calling for the establishment of Nigerian Women Trafficking Law Enforcement Agency (NWTLEA) was issued. The proposed agency is to be structured like the Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) to curb the menace of women trafficking, (*The Punch*, Tuesday, November 2, 1999).

According to the communique, the NWTLEA when established should be charged with the responsibility of enforcing laws that deal with women trafficking, prostitution and child-labour. It also called for new laws that would impose stiffer penalties for traffickers in women and their accomplices, regardless of their status, either as parents or relatives of the victims. The recommendation was hinged on the premise that the current menace in women trafficking and child-labour has reached an alarming level.

Several other instances of Nigerian women/girls that have been affected exist and are worthy of mention here. On March 16, 2001, 64 Nigerians were deported from Italy

high financial rewards at relatively low risk (the ‘facilitating’ factors)”. In enumerating this the report went further explaining the factors as follows:

The Push factors include:

i.: Poverty, A'ty GEVATT wr otycoEArtyf sc: The transition to market economies world-wide has increased poverty in rural areas and pushed people to migrate in search of work. Women are more likely to have limited access to jobs paying a living wage. Women are also increasingly responsible for supporting their families, either because they are widowed or divorced or their husbands are unable to support them. Additionally, many women from relatively affluent communities migrate for increased opportunities to advance their careers. Persons seeking to migrate often depend upon unscrupulous agents who turn out to be traffickers.

■ Vulnerable living situations: Homeless persons and refugees are vulnerable to being trafficked. The majority of refugees from armed conflict are women and children. Persons, especially women and children, who live in poverty, have no parents, are widowed or divorced, limited education or sudden financial crises are more likely to be desperate, willing to migrate for work and thus extremely vulnerable to being trafficked.

Abusive living conditions: Women and children are often forced out of their homes through physical abuse.

Discriminatory laws depriving women of their rights, for example, to equality in the family, to inherit property or to own a share of their marital assets render women vulnerable inside and outside the

family.

■ Gender discrimination in employment: In home and in the community, trafficking is highly a gendered phenomenon, the majority of trafficked persons are therefore, women and girls. Women and girls are universally devalued and treated as second class citizens. They are typically either uneducated or under-educated, which makes them less able to compete in a market economy. They are valued at home only for their house-keeping skills and reproductive role and in many societies are viewed as a burden upon the family.

The pull factors include:

3 Demand for cheap, exploitable, particularly young female labour: International capital searches the globe for cheap and exploitable, labour and this lacks government controls. Government compete for capital by offering to ensure a compliant, non-unionised workforce. As a result, the demand is high for young, pliant female workers to work in factories and for illiterate, desperate men to work in construction companies.

a Demand for 'exotic' sex workers: In many developed countries, where women can find other work or otherwise live a comfortable life, women no longer are willing to work in the sex industry. Sex workers are imported. Additionally, men in developed countries have fantasy about the 'exoticism' of women from other cultures and so they either travel abroad for sex or look for foreign women at home. Men in developing countries have similar fantasies, particularly about women who are lighter-skinned than the ones in their own communities and also demand sex with

children, either out of preference or due to a belief that sex with a minor makes them more virile or protects them from contracting HIV/AIDS.

- A very small risk to traffickers for very large financial rewards: Many traffickers move away from drugs/merchandise trafficking, to trafficking in human beings because the profits are high and the risks are low.

The facilitating factors are:

- Corrupt government officials, who at times actually own the factories or brothels into which persons are trafficked. Police, prosecutors and judges often take bribes from traffickers and ignore the human rights abuses suffered by trafficked persons.

- Organised criminal gangs are often involved because trafficking is an international criminal activity worth billions of dollars. The criminal networks are organised throughout the world on a large and a small scales. The large networks are relatively sophisticated, while the small ones are entrepreneurial. Nonetheless, they all operate with co-

operation from crime gangs across borders.

- Highly developed and mobile labour force, weak or non-existent legal protections for victims, also facilitate international transport and communication.

Under the consequences of trafficking, the same sources contend that trafficked persons can be victimised twice:

(a) by the traffickers

(b) by the government

Traffickers deprive victims of almost all of their human rights, often reducing them to the status of societal dregs Governments also frequently deprive victims of the basic human rights because they focus solely on prosecuting traffickers and ignore the needs and rights of the victims. We shall be seeing how the reserach findings were able to corroborate or disprove these existing practices.

REPORT FROM AKWA IBOM STATE

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AREAS UNDER STUDY

Uyo Local Government Area

Akwa Ibom State was created on the 23 of September 1989. The state is made up of 31 LGAs and three senatorial districts namely, Uyo, Ikot Ekpene and Eket. This study/research focused on two senatorial districts i.e. Uyo and Ikot Ekpene. Out of these two senatorial districts, two LGAs were chosen for the study. These were Uyo LG A for urban and Ikot Ekpene LG A for rural.

Uyo LGA is said to be the pioneer LGA which was created as early as 1906 with Mr. R. B. Brooks, a Briton as its first Assistant District Commissioner (ADC). In 1919, Uyo was given the status of an urban centre and later became a district headquarters in 1950. Between 1970 and 1975, it remained a divisional headquarters, comprising six other LGAs. The present Uyo LGA was created in 1976 as one of the administrative reforms in the then old Cross River State.

Uyo LGA is made up of four clans and 75 villages and is populated mostly by the Ibibio stock. The LGA is hosting the state capital and is mainly a civil service state and LGA, though a few people have ventured into entrepreneurial artisan occupation and other commercial ventures. Uyo LGA occupies a flat land terrain with slope gently running southwest. It occupies a total land mass of 1,350,000 sq. km. and 22

west. It occupies a total land mass of 1,350,000 sq. km. and by 1991 population census, the population is put at about 359,300

people. The LGA lies between latitude 51 degrees and 61 degrees north of the equator, and longitude 647 degrees and 753 degrees east of the Greenwich Meridian. It was within the Uyo LGA that two areas were selected for the research/study.

Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area

As early as 1910, Ikot Ekpene was penetrated by the British and English explorers and came under the British sphere of influence. It is regarded as the traditional headquarters of the Annang people of Akwa Ibom State. The population by 1991 census is put at 156,304 people and has a land mass of 355.447 sq. km. More than 90% of the land in the area is very suitable for palm planting. Ikot Ekpene lies within the rainforest and the people are predominantly farmers and some do engage in local craft. It has 48 villages. Out of these, two villages were chosen for the study these were Ikot Inyang and Ikot Otto.

DETAILS OF THE RESEARCH/STUDY

The number of FGDs conducted in Akwa Ibom State were 8 (eight), while a total of 74 persons were interviewed. The distribution in terms of the number of persons interviewed across the various categories (policy-makers, adolescents, victims, adult males and females. NGOs, CBOs, traditional leaders, business men and women) is shown below:

Table 1: Data showing the distribution of respondents according to the categories listed above for in-depth interview

Category of Respondents	Number of respondents by area and sex								
	Uyo LGA (Urban)				Ikot Ekpene LGA (Rural)				Total
	Uyo Metropolis		Aka Offot		Ikot Otto		Ikot Inyang		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Policy-Makers	-	-	3	1	4	-	3	1	12
Adolescents	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	16
Victims	-	-	3	1	1	6	1	2	14
Adult	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	9
Business Men/Women	-	-	1	1	8	5	1	-	16
NGOs/CBOs					2			1	3
Traditional/Religious Leaders					1			2	3
TOTAL	10	2	9	5	18	14	7	9	74

From the table above, it shows that the total number of persons interviewed was 74 out of 80 proposed in Akwa Ibom State. Other distributions according to sex, LGA and community are accordingly displayed.

Similarly, the distribution of FGDs conducted in the state is as follows:

Table 2: Data showing distribution of FGDs across the two LGAs

Category of Respondents	No of respondents by area and category for FGDs								
	Uyo LGA (urban)				Ikot Ekpene (Rural)				Total
	Uyo Metropolis		Aka Offot		Ikot Otto		Ikot Inyang		
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Adolescents	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	4
Parents	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	1	4
TOTAL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	8

A total of 8 FGDs were conducted in the two locations, 4 in the urban and 4 in the rural area. The distribution shows that 4 FGDS were conducted for females (2 for adolescent females and 2 for female parents), and 4 FGDs for males (2 for adolescent males and 2 for male parents).

Data analysis and diacuaavon

The fwTdhvgs of \h\s study \s based, ow the 3 4 m-depth interviews and 8 FGDs conducted in Akwa Ibom State. Since both methods of gathering data are qualitative and sometimes difficult to reduce to graphic analysis, attempt was made to provide verbatim responses from the respondents to strengthen points raised. However, some 25

other data are presented in graphs for a clearer picture, using statistical methods of analysis.

In analysing data from this study, the focus was on the main objectives of this study, the concentration is therefore, on the following:

1. The meaning and understanding of trafficking in persons/ nature of trafficking.
2. Factors that make girls more susceptible to trafficking
3. Strategies to make girls resist being trafficked and;
4. Services/needs that could be put in place to help girls who do not desire to be trafficked.

In other words, the analysis is arranged according to the objectives outlined above and special attempt made to document clearly the responses of victims and traffickers (business men and women in this study) for factual experiences.

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« Trafficking in persons is as old as human society and its meaning and understanding has attracted varying descriptions and interpretations. These different meanings, suggest the many dimensions of trafficking that had existed and have continued to exist today. No wonder then that data from FGDs across the sexes (adolescent boys and girls, female and male parents) and others interviewed show varying descriptions of what "trafficking in persons" is all 26

about. For instance, the result of FGDs for adolescent girls and boys elicited the following responses:

Respondent 1;

“It means people going into the villages to take girls in the name of enriching 'them overseas but later turn them to prostitutes ”

Respondent 2;

It is using money to entice people to overseas and then abandoning them thereafter ”

Respondent 3;

“It has to do with deceiving parents into taking their children into slavery”

Respondent 4;

“ It is carrying girls and boys to go and work in cocoa and rubber plantations in Ikom, Sapele and Asaba for money-making. ”

„ The responses above suggest that trafficking in persons involves using several methods, ranging from deceit, persuasion, enticing with money and carrying girls or boys away to either outside or within the country for the purpose of making money. Trafficking in persons, as shown in the findings is both internal and external.

The age and nature of trafficking in persons seems to cut across cultures and communities. In other words, there is a seeming unanimity in terms of age of girls trafficked, nature and mode of transportation. Generally, data from the study have shown that age range of girls that are trafficked fall between 12-20 years. This finding is supported by 93% of data gathered and this takes care of girls who are trafficked internally and externally.

Respondents from (female FGD Uyo Metropolis);

“internally, age depends on the nature of work that the victims would be exposed to, but 12- 15 years is very common ”

“ They are packed in lorries and taken in batches, age ranges between 10-20 years. ”

On the nature and mode of transportation, data have shown that the so-called “business men and women” would arrive town or villages in exotic cars in the name of sugar daddies or mummies, with sugar-coated tongues, and sometimes splashing money' here and there with the intention to entice and recruit young girls and boys for their “companies” abroad. The study further discovered that young girls would get carried away with the display of wealth and deception, induced with the money and sometimes with promises of marrying them, they would fall victim:

“girls from 18-20 years upwards are told lies like marrying them and giving them jobs ”

*“Girls from 18years are taken using charms or other means
”*

Some of the traffickers are also believed to use charms to hypnotise their victims, others persuade parents using flamboyant stories of monetary gains/rewards. In extreme cases, the traffickers may resort to abduction and abuse or use of authority. The girls who finally succumb to these "sugar daddies and mummies" are transported using lorries, cars hired by the traffickers.

Some of the stories shared by victims and recorded are as follows:

Story 1: A 16-year-old girl from Nung Ikono Ufok in Uruan LGA was deceived into abandoning her schooling and she followed a man that came from Lagos. Until date, she has not been seen.

Story 2: A girl who was schooling at Adiaha -Obong Secondary School was picked after school and taken away in a car. She was told that the parents had sent them to carry her.
On

the way the girl was charmed and taken away and has not been seen up till da®

The stories above go far to support the contention states above on how most girls are deceived and charmed and taken away for trafficking. It goes further to also suggest that the traffickers employ a number of waxes and means get their victims in their desperate way of making money.

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V

to trafficking

Data from the study show that a number of factors make girls more susceptible to trafficking. These factors are mainly socio-economic than political. The political factors create the enabling conditions for the socio-economic factors to thrive. It has been contended that the Nigerian political environment, is characterised by bad leadership and widespread corruption, occasioned by fraudulent military regimes of Generals Babangida and Sani Abacha and their cohorts. These regimes created hardship among Nigerians, especially the post-SAP era which pauperised Nigerians and many were thrown out of jobs without corresponding!} creating alternative job opportunities. Therefore, many girls and parents were pushed into such acts of trafficking in persons in order to survive.

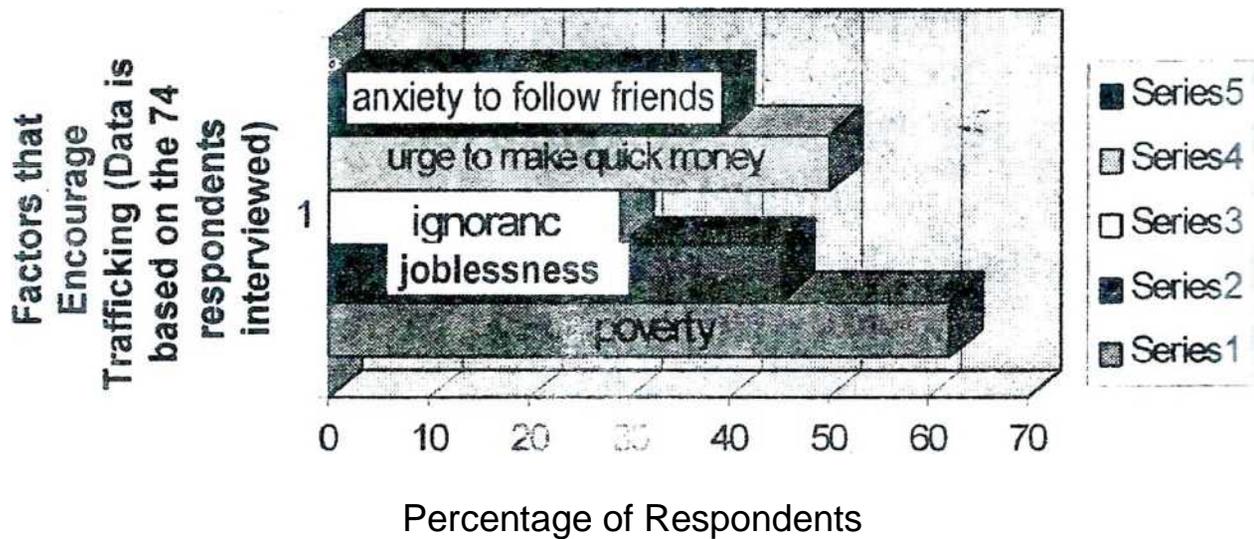
Given the political environment analysed above, there is no wonder then that one of the major factors responsible for girls being more susceptible to trafficking is poverty. Out of 14 victims that were interviewed. 12 representing 71.43% maintained that they were driven

by poverty into following the traffickers. The other four girls, (victims 2 representing 14.29% said they were lured by friends who have made it, while the other 2 (14.29%) argued that it was out of joblessness that they were forced to join the trade.

The views of parents and opinion leaders (policymakers, traditional leaders) seemed to correspond with the view of 71.43% of victims above. The contention is that parents who are poor are easily persuaded by traffickers to give their daughters to be taken away with the hope of getting monetary rewards/Girls from poor parental background would want to do anything to improve on their means of livelihood of their parents. Data showed that parents and girls see going to Italy, America, Gabon as the easiest way of making money and would not bother about what happens to them. These findings tend to corroborate the contention of existing literature on trafficking in persons, which have identified poverty as the major cause of girls getting more involved in trafficking. Poverty occasioned by misrule, mismanagement of national resources.

The picture on the factors that make girls more susceptible to trafficking is shown below for a better comprehension.

Fig 1: A Bar chart showing factors that make girls more susceptible to trafficking



Allied to the factors of “poverty” identified above and shown in Fig. 1 above is the urge to make it quick in order to wear expensive clothes, and drive flashy cars. A story was told of a girl from Ntak Inyang in Akwa Ibom State who was taken, to Europe and came back with so much money which turned her fortunes and that of the family overnight (building houses over the place and driving expensive cars). Other girls who saw this were carried away and only waited for their opportunity to also make it. Whatever preaching to them to dissuade them would fall on deaf ears. Nobody would want to listen to you on the effects of such business. Fifty-seven 57 respondents, representing 77.03% of all categories of persons interviewed maintained this position.

Thirty-five (35) respondents, representing 47.30% of all categories of those interviewed argued that the other factor has to do with “the anxiety of girls to follow friends who had travelled out and have made it (become wealthy) and sometimes, girls who are already in the “business” of trafficking, are sent by their masters/mistresses to recruit others with or without the consent of parents.

The non-availability of job opportunities, the study has shown, serves as a catalyst for the booming business of trafficking in persons. Young girls and boys who have completed secondary and university education, but are faced with stark realities of lack of job openings caused by poor planning and widespread corruption are easily persuaded to join the business. Girls therefore see trafficking as the way out of their joblessness and hardship in the society.

The same factors above are responsible for the many able bodied boys who are recruited from Akwa Ibom State ■ work in cocoa, rubber plantations in Ikom and Etung LGAs Cross River State, Ondo and Oyo States; and 45 -esr indents (that is 60.81%) held this opinion.

-irty (30) respondents (40.54%) of those interviewed ■ eaid that most girls are recruited into trafficking out of rance. The contention here is that girls are deceived by riffickers by offering them non-existing jobs and monetary rds and other opportunities that they would contemplate ' t't in Nigeria, but only for them to be forced into jobs ■txh ordinarily they wouldn't do.

Consequences of trafficking in girls

The study has been able to elicit a number of responses in terms of effects of trafficking in girls. These effects are mostly felt by the victims that are trafficked, their families, the community and the country in general.

Data have revealed that the effects of trafficking on girls who are mostly the main victims can be grouped into health, psychological, socio-economic, educational, etc; 71 respondents, representing 95.95% of the total persons interviewed maintained that traffickers recruit girls and turn them into prostitutes and other menial jobs which are debasing. Most of the girls end up contracting Sexual Transmitted Infections such as HIV/AIDS, syphilis, herpes, etc. Such infections would eventually lead to death. Study revealed also that most of the girls repatriated home are those whose health has deteriorated seriously. This factor goes far to confirm where it has been argued that most girls repatriated to Nigeria are found to have contracted one disease or the other especially, HIV/AIDS. These reports were supported with figures of girls who have tested positive to HIV/AIDS after screening.

In addition, most of the girls would end up with unwanted pregnancies/teenage pregnancies and are carelessly abandoned to suffer by the traffickers responsible. Other girls passed through unsafe abortion and its attendant complications. Faced with these circumstances and coupled with the difficulty to survive without money, some of the girls would give birth and abandon the babies.

The study has equally revealed that the phenomenon of

trafficking in girls has brought negative reports and shame to their communities on one hand and the entire nation on the other. This further supports the contention that the practice has helped in tarnishing the image of the country. It shows a country that has reduced her citizenry into slaves

and HIV/AIDS - infected people. Moreover, trafficking in girls, data have shown, has brought about frustration and psychological trauma and 40 respondents (54.05%) argued that girls who were drafted into the business but later abandoned often times, find themselves engaging in menial jobs that were debasing, just to survive. This leads to low self-esteem, psychological trauma and frustration. These problems are compounded by the forced repatriation of the girls. The girls are looked upon with disdain and shown on television and pages of the print media.

There were also indications that trafficking in girls affects educational and human resource status of girls in the society. The study shows that since 90% of girls trafficked are of school age, and some recruited from schools, the phenomenon has helped to perpetuate illiteracy among girls and increased the rate of girls who have dropped out of school. The consequences of trafficking in girls can further be displayed in figure 2 for a clearer view of the

effects. See Figure 2 below.

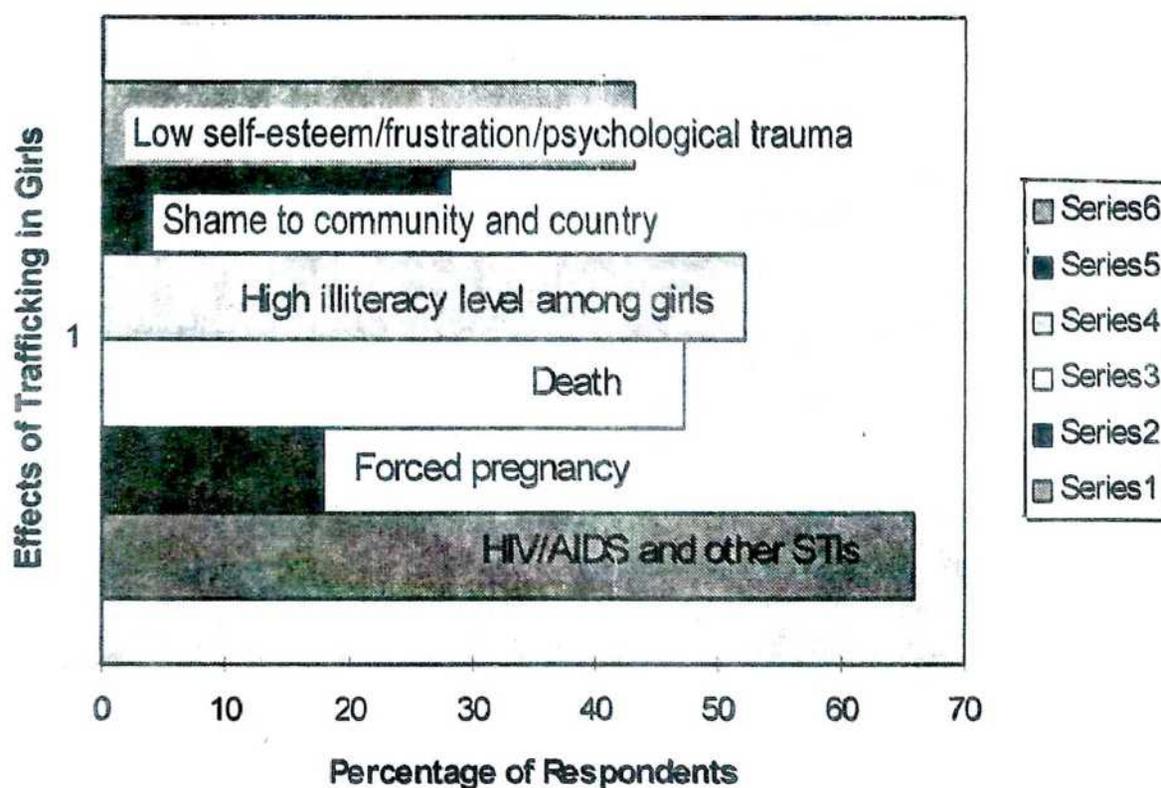


Figure 2: Bar chart showing the consequences of trafficking in girls

The effects of trafficking in girls were supported by data gathered from the various Focus Group Discussions conducted in the state.

OPINIONS ON TRAFFICKING IN GIRLS

Data from the (eight) 8 FGDs and 74 persons interviewed showed that respondents have mixed feelings about trafficking in girls.

Some traffickers maintained that there was nothing wrong in taking girls abroad or to other areas, especially if the reason or motive is to enhance their well-being; some responses of the traffickers are reproduced here for emphasis:

Trafficker 1s

“It depends on why they travel, if it is for good motive, better”

Trafficker 2:

“It is a way of helping themselves and to earn a good living and exposure ”

Trafficker 3:

“It is for girls to get jobs since they can’t get one in their home and they cannot sit down and cross their legs in their respective villages and communities. ”

Another trafficker interviewed contended that trafficking in girls has tremendous gains. Apart from exposing the girls to the outside world, the parents gain a lot from their daughters when they come back home. According to him, 37

“they come back as millionaires and therefore the business of girls travelling depends on the outcome, if they go out for good business, fine.”

Others, and specifically the victims; some parents, opinion leaders, traditional leaders and religious leaders, all have negative views about the phenomenon of trafficking in girls. They said it is a bad business that destroys girls. Some of the victims had this to say:

Victim 1:

“It is not good business, something should be done to address the issue ”

Victim 2:

“Never the best way of making money, it should be stopped ”

Victim 3:

*“It is a great injustice, something should be done to stop it, and I will never try it again nor allow any of my relations to be **trafficked**”*

Victims 4:

*“People should be discouraged from following others out, even if it is their **relations**. ”*

Parents also had this to say about trafficking in girls:

Parent 1:

“It is not a good thing, I wouldn't allow my daughter or any of my children to be trafficked”

Parent 2:

“Parents should be educated with the word of God against the evil of trafficking ”

Parent 3:

“It is a problem to society and should be discouraged”

Parent 4:

“It is a problem caused by poverty in families, parents should go for family planning in order to stop fathering children they cannot take care of ”

The responses by victims and parents show that trafficking in girls is very bad and that it is caused by poverty in the society.

STRATEGIES TO ASSIST GIRLS WHO DO NOT WISH TO BE TRAFFICKED

A number of strategies/suggestions have been deduced that could assist girls who do not want to be trafficked. These suggestions are based on the expected role of government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), communities and parents. Therefore, this section has been analysed and discussed, taking the views of gender mentioned above.

(1) The role of government in assisting girls that do not wish to be trafficked.

Data from the FGDs and in-depth interviews showed that 60% of the respondents blamed government for what is happening to girls that are trafficked and believed therefore that in order to restore normalcy, government must provide a number of things. First, respondents maintained that the federal government should enact laws with stiffer stipulations to punish traffickers and offenders. In other words, there should be laws on human trafficking with very strict enforcement. Such will act as a deterrent to any would-be trafficker and 80% of respondents interviewed supported the contention on the enactment and enforcement of laws.

The findings of the study also showed that 46% of respondents argued that trafficking flourishes because of poverty and joblessness. Therefore, government should create job opportunities for the teeming unemployed youths in order to stem the spectre of unemployment. One way of doing this, it was argued, is for government to establish agrobased industries that will absorb these unemployed youths. Another way would be for the government to establish skill acquisition centres to train girls in various trades in order to sustain themselves or in the alternative, grant the girls and other unemployed youths, credit facilities, like small or medium-scale loans to help them establish cottage industries.

Other measures suggested by respondents were that government should mount enlightenment programmes to educate girls, parents and the entire citizenry on the dangers of trafficking in persons. The proponents of this position were of the view that

there was need for government to create the necessary awareness about the phenomenon of trafficking and that only this can help reduce or check the incidence of trafficking in persons in our society. Another measure was a call on government to declare free education for all, at least, to the senior secondary level. The contention here is that most girls are school drop-outs who could not continue their education because of lack of funds . Therefore, in order to check this trend, free education for all should be made a matter of government policy.

(2) Role of parents

Data gathered showed that parents have a lot to do to change this situation. The respondents for example, argued that parents must show love to their children and not always allow people to just give them away. Other responses on the role of parents were as follows:

Respondent 1:

“Parents should engage in family planning to have the number of children they can cater for properly ”

Respondent 2:

“Parents must discipline their children and be patient and always wait on God’s time”

Respondent 3:

“Parents should take proper care of their daughters and introduce good moral instruction to children. ”

(3) Role of community

Respondents had these to say on the role of the community in stopping trafficking in girls

Respondent 1:

“Communities should initiate scholarship schemes to help financially handicapped students ”

Respondent 2:

“Communities could help in enforcing laws forbidding trafficking in girls/persons and report defaulters to the police for prosecution

In the same vein with respondent 2 above, it was the contention of another respondent that communities could enact laws forbidding parents from giving out their children for trafficking. They argued that such will help complement government laws and policies on trafficking and make the enforcement stronger. In other words, it is the argument of respondents (32%) that communities have a role to play in ending trafficking in girls after all.

(4). Role of NGOs

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), respondents maintained, could be of help in the fight to obliterate trafficking in persons in our society and 70% of the respondents, were of the view that NGOs could help in enlightenment campaigns in the society and particularly the girls who are the target group. NGOs could prepare special educational programmes with girls as the target for deliberate enlightenment.

Another group, 26% of respondents argued that NGOs could plan and establish vocational training programmes for girls. Such vocational training programmes, they believe, could on one hand, assist girls 43

who are jobless and engage them in skill acquisition like tailoring, soap and pomade-making, weaving, etc., and on the other hand, rehabilitate victims of trafficking who have been repatriated back. The contention here is that the issue of ending trafficking should be the concern of all stakeholders: government, communities, religious bodies, parents, NGOs. etc.

Also, 4% of the respondents argued for the establishment of counselling centres by NGOs for victims, parents and other girls on the dangers and effects of trafficking in girls or persons. The understanding here is that counselling is a powerful tool for attitudinal and behavioural change and to this can assist in addressing this very ugly phenomenon.

(5) . Role of religious bodies

Data analysis revealed that religious bodies have a role to play in stopping the phenomenon of trafficking in girls/ persons. For instance, a few of the religious leaders interviewed had these to say:

Respondent 1:

"The church should pray for spiritual victory"

Respondent 2:

"Churches should join hands with communities to assist girls/children out of this mess."

Generally, respondents called on all religious leaders. to commit this problem into prayers, saying it was a spiritual warfare.

Conclusion

The study on trafficking in girls in Akwa Ibom State has revealed interesting outcomes/findings for policy decisions/action. The research findings have suggested that people, both in the rural and urban areas understand, to some extent, the phenomenon of trafficking in girls. It is now fully appreciated and more so with the emerging effects of trafficking in girls that it is a dangerous "business." Therefore, respondents, including the victims of trafficking themselves have suggested a number of measures that could help curb this dangerous trend.

Furthermore, the study has shown that a number of factors were responsible for girls being more susceptible to trafficking. Chief among these is absolute poverty. Others are joblessness, desire to follow friends and the urge to make it quick This involvement in the "business," the study has revealed, leads to a number of consequences on the girl-child (victim) and their community. These include.

chances of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections: sexual harassment, rape, forced pregnancy, unsafe abortion and even death.

REPORT FROM CROSS RIVER STATE BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF AREAS UNDER STUDY

The areas of the study in Cross River State were Mbukpa and Akim in Calabar, representing urban areas and Ekori and Nko in Yakurr Local Government Area, representing rural areas. The choice of these places was occasioned by the high rate of trafficking in persons.

Calabar Municipality

This is one of the eighteen Local Government Areas in Cross River State. It also the capital city of Cross River State. It has a population of about 328.876 persons according to the 1991 population census. At present, it has the Big-quas, Akim-quas, Ikpai-quas, Ikot Ansa and Ikot Nsisuk as its major inhabitants. Their main culture is the Ngbe (ekpe) which remained the government of the day before the advent of modern government. The drum is still seen despite the advent of civilisation as their symbol of unity as it is used to convey sensitive messages to the people. The municipal council plays a dual role as the capital of Cross River State as well as the headquarters of the municipal council government. It is located in the southern senatorial district and covers an area of about 331.551 sq. kilometres.

Traditionally, it has the “Ntua” as the clan head while the

Ndidem is the paramount ruler. With the advent of modern politics, the municipality has been broken into 10 political wards. Occupationally, the people are noted for fishing due to their proximity to the Cross River. Farmers, hunters, traders and blacksmiths are also found along the hinterlands. They are very hospitable, accommodating and peace-loving people.

Yakurr Local Government Area

Yakurr LGA was carved out of Obubra Local Government Area in 1987. It has a projected population of over 140,000 people. It is inhabited by the people of Agoi Ibami, Ekom- Agoi, Assiga, Ekori, Idomi, Mkpani, Nko and Ugep. The people of Yakurr are predominantly farmers who produce crops such as yams, cassava and other cash crops mainly for subsistence. Yakurr has boundary with other LGAs such as Abi, Biase, Obubra and Akamkpa. The dominant language is the Yakurr language.

The communities selected for this study are inhabited by 95% indigenes and about 5% non-indigenes, especially Igbos and Akwa Ibomites. The educational level of the people is above 75% and even the aged can speak at least pidgin English. Yakurr is located in the central senatorial district of Cross River State.

DETAILS OF RESEARCH IN CROSS RIVER STATE

A total of 65 persons were interviewed via a well structured in-depth interview questionnaire; while 8 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held. The category and spread of the respondents is as shown on Table 3 below:

Table 3: Category of respondents in Calabar and Yakurr

Category of Respondents Number of Respondents

	Akim (Calabar Municipality) Urban	Mbukpa (Calabar South) - Urban	Ekori, (Yakurr) Rural	Nko, (Yakurr) Rural
Traffickers	3	2	2	2
Victims	3	3	8	2
Adolescent Boys and Girls	4	4	7	3
Opinion Leaders, CBOs, NGOs, Traditional/ Religious Leaders	2	2	3	3
Policy- makers / Government Representatives	4	4	3	1
TOTAL	16	15	23	11

Data presentation

For clarity of analysis and findings, the data were analysed categorically. That is each of the categories of respondents were analysed separately. At the end, there was a cross - examination of the views of these different categories in line with the objectives of the study.

Traffickers

Nine (9) out of the target population of 16 were interviewed owing to the difficulty in getting the traffickers as some of them were out of the state. Attempts by the research team especially the Calabar team, to get the traffickers through records by the immigration, customs and police officers, proved rather abortive as such offices claimed that revealing the traffickers was against their practice. All the nine traffickers were from Cross River State (4 from Ekori and Nko in Yakurr LGA, while 5 were resident in Calabar). Eight (8) representing 88.89% were males, while 1, representing 11.11% was a female. The age of traffickers ranged from 19-49 years (agents inclusive).

Four, representing 44.44% of the traffickers were married, while 3, representing 33.33% were single, and 2, representing 22.22% were however co-habiting. All the traffickers were Christians. While 44.44% of the traffickers were of Yakurr ethnic group, 22.22% were of Mbembe ethnic group. There was however one representing 11.11%, each of Ejagham, Efik and Igbo ethnic groups, respectively.

In terms of educational level, 5 representing 55.56% had primary 6 as the highest level of education, while 1, representing 11.11% had senior secondary school certificate, 1 had West African School Certificate, 1, a senior school certificate and 1 had ordinary national diploma, respectively. Prior to their taking on this business of trafficking, one was an applicant and driver, seven claimed that they were into other forms of business before they came into the business of trafficking. Their pre-trafficking businesses were diverse. Some were plantation managers in Ondo, some were hotel business persons, while others were mini-contractors.

On how they got into trafficking business, table 4 below shows the methods:

Table 4: Showing how traffickers got into the business of trafficking.

Reasons	No. of Respondents	%
1. I was invited by an old time trafficker	2	22.22
2. I travelled and got to know the business	1	11.11
3. By living in Ondo or the town receiving trafficked persons	2	22.22
4. Required by the boss to bring in househelps	2	22.22
5. By initiating and accompanying friends who are in the business	2	22.22
Total	9	100%

From the table above we can see that traffickers get into the business through various ways and all the traffickers interviewed revealed that they trafficked in boys and girls . Although they had no restriction in terms of age of the boys and girls trafficked, some of them disclosed that the age of persons they carry is between 18-25 years as this age bracket is most appropriate. They also revealed that though Ondo,

Akure, Ashawele were the places those trafficked are taken to, new places have come to have a high need for the trafficked. Such other places as Okitipupa, Ikorodu, Shagamu, Ile-sha, etc, were listed to have come to feature prominently as destinations for trafficked persons.

With regards to why girls are trafficked, 9, representing 100% said that many jobs, such as hairdressing, house-help, hotel reception, petty-selling, etc. require the services of girls. These jobs are to them, in high demand of girls. On what encourages girls to seek traffickers, the traffickers said that idleness, joblessness and poverty were the chief factors with 55.56% score, while the other 44.44% were encouraged by the benefit their friends earlier trafficked had shown them.

Although all the respondents claimed that they were no deliberate efforts to recruit girls, a further probe indicated that 44.44% of the traffickers had forms which they would sell to the would-be-trafficked through their agents at a rate that ranged from #50.00 to # 100.00. It was also shown that those agents were often sent up-front by their masters with the forms about November to December, to seek for girls and boys who are interested in the business. This revelation suggests that since the agents act on commission, they usually help to advertise the business to young girls and boys thereby recruiting them deliberately.

Eight (8) out of the 9 respondents, representing 88.89% maintained that the parents of the victims benefited 53

from the trafficking business in cash and in kind. Among the benefits are often cloths, sewing machines and food items. On the part of the traffickers, all the respondents claimed that their benefits were just the refunds made to them by the victims. Although they made some good benefits from this business, 4 representing 44.44% agreed that the business was not good, 44.44% rather maintained that the business was very good, while 11.11% argued that the business was good.

Victims

A total of 16 victims of trafficking were talked to and all the 16 were from Cross River State, 10 were from the rural areas while 6 were from the urban areas; 12 (75%) respondents were from Yakurr (Ekori and Nko) and 4 (25%) were spread across Mbembe, Ejagham, Bekwarra and 14 of the victims, representing 87.5% were females, while 2, representing 12.5 were males. This shows the disparity in the sex that is being trafficked most. It is also interesting to note that there was no male in all the victims that were interviewed in the urban areas. On the average, the age of victims of trafficking was 18 years; 93.75% of the victims were single, while 6.25% were married. All the victims were Christians and 6, representing 37.5% had completed primary 6 prior to their being trafficked. The same number of victims had already completed senior secondary school programme before they were trafficked, while 2, representing 12.8% stopped their education at junior secondary school 2 and 1. representing 6.25% of the victims stopped at primary 3 and JSS 1. respectively. Prior to their being trafficked. 12. representing 75% had nothing doing,

while 25% were engaged in either of the following: petty-trading, hawking, farming or had to drop out of school due to lack of funds.

Although they were all victims of the act of trafficking. 10. representing 62.5% did not know what was meant by trafficking in persons. 6. representing 37.5% who claimed to know what it meant gave varied definitions of the term. According to a respondent who resides in Calabar, trafficking in persons simply means 'the act of taking people from one place to another.' Another respondent who resides in Akim maintained that trafficking in persons "is the process of taking somebody from his home to do an unknown job in another place, usually these jobs are later seen and known as slavery." These varied definitions suggest the variation in the understanding of the act of trafficking for which they were victims.

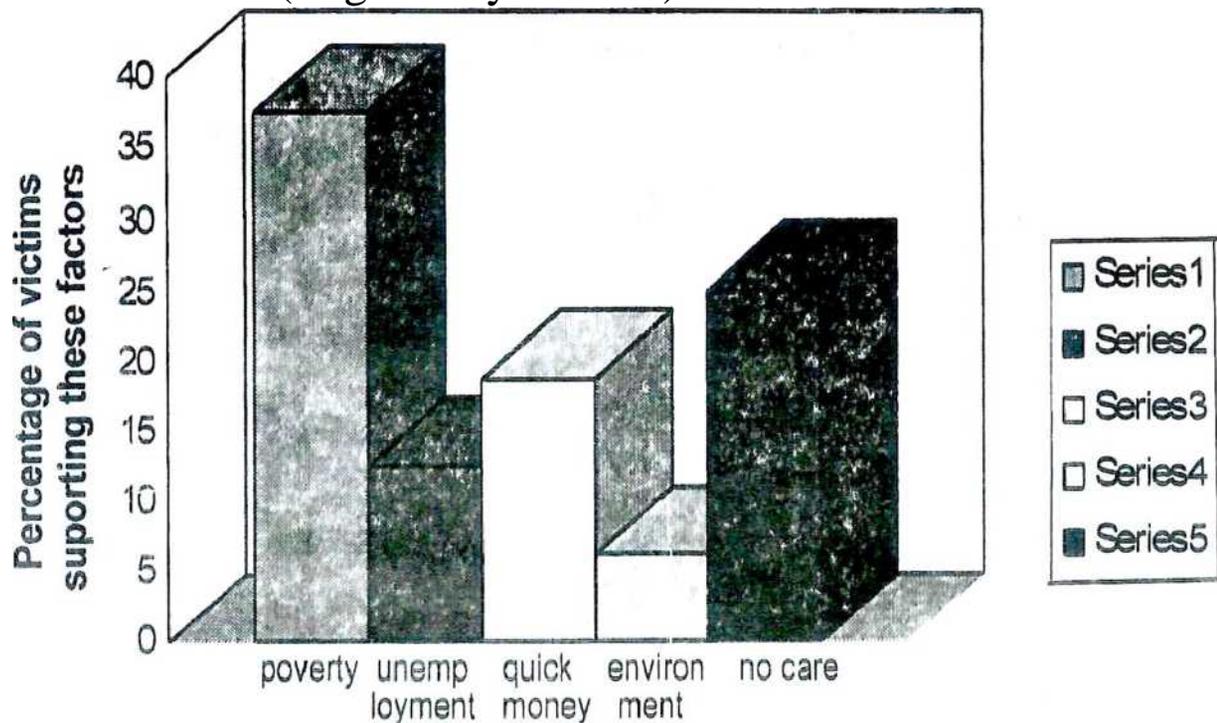
On how they were trafficked, 62.5% revealed that they got into the business through their friends who gave them the information. To some of them, friends acted as agents to some traffickers whose names were given by the respondents. On the other hand, 6, representing 37.5% disclosed varied ways on how they were trafficked. An examination of these ways revealed that 33.33% were trafficked through their elder ones or relatives who suddenly

became exploitative: 4 became victims out of their own free will and intention to get rich quick. In other words, they were not forced into it, they gave themselves willingly to be trafficked and 90% of the victims were trafficked to Ondo with the belief that they will be given lucrative jobs. The other 10% were trafficked to some other places such as. Ashawele. Akure, Lagos Okitipupa. Shagamu. etc.

When asked about whether their parents were usually ware of their agreement and subsequent trafficking. 99% maintained that there was no agreement or pre-discussion with their parents before their departure, even though they were living with them. While 80% revealed that "911" trucks were usually used to convey them (boys and girls) with as many as 300-350 persons in one truck like slaves to their destinations, 20% said that buses and peugeot 504, station wagons were at times used. This 20% however maintained that such vehicles became necessary because of the many times lorries have had to be intercepted by the police.

With regards to what encouraged them to be trafficked, the victims gave varied responses which ranged from poverty, idleness,¹, urge to make it quick and turbulent environment at home. The relative score of respondents in these variables is shown in the bar-chart below

Fig. 3: A bar-chart showing factors that encourage girls to be trafficked (as given by victims)



From the chart, it is clear that poverty has the highest score of 37.5%, followed by lack of care with 25%, urge to make quick money 18.75%, unemployment 12,5% and hostile environment 6.25%.

An in-depth observation of the response of these victims revealed that victims from urban centres were more encouraged by the urge to make quick money than victims from rural settings. With regards to effect of their business on them, 2 of the victims claimed that they made some

profits/gains, while 14 saw the entire business as dehumanising and wasteful. All the victims revealed that a token amount ranging between #5,000 - #7,000 was usually given to them at the end of one year. Usually their second masters would pay as much as # 12,000-# 14,000 to their first masters, who deduct out what they want and give the balance to the victims. Any victim who cannot afford to stay till the stipulated time of 12 months even if the-victim had stayed for 10-11 months would forfeit the money. Whatever is paid by the second master is withheld by the first master. If a girl decides to run away from the second master due to ill- treatment, and comes back to the lodge, she is starved, sexually abused, beaten and then sent back to the second master or given to another master.

AH of the victims condemned the business. Among the reasons for this were: 41% due to sexual harassment. 38% due to slave-like labour. 21% high rate of death of victims. This high percentage score for sexual harassment was evidenced by the use of girls as sex mates and for sex trade by both agents and masters/mistresses.

The victims believed that if government empowers them through skill training, small scale loans, they would not have consented to trafficking. They called on NGOs and philanthropic organisations to assist girls and families in this direction.

Adolescent boys/girls

A total of 18 adolescent boys and girls were interviewed out of these 11, representing 61.11% were females while 7. representing 38.89% were males and 10 representing 55.54% were interviewed in the rural areas of Ekori and Nko, while 44.44% were from the urban. The average age of the adolescents boys/girls were 19 years and all were drawn from Cross River State. And 17, representing 94.44% were single, while only 1, representing 5.56% was cohabiting. The same percentage score of 94.44% was recorded for the adolescent boy/girls who were Christians.

One (1) representing 5.56% did not give his religious affiliation. In terms of ethnic groups and educational level of the respondents. Tables 5 and 6 give a clearer picture:

Table 5: Spread of adolescent boys/girls by ethnic groups

Ethnic Group	No. of Respondent	%
Yakurr	12	66.66%
Ejagham	1	5.55%
Efik	3	16.66%
Igbo	1	5.55%
Ibibio	1	5.55%
Total	18	100%

Table 6: Spread of respondents (adolescent boys/girls) by educational level.

Educational Level Number of Respondents %

Undergraduates	2	11.11%
West African School Certificate	2	n.11%
Senior School Certificate	8	44.44%
Still in Senior Secondary School	4	22.22%
Completed Primary Six	2	11.11%
TOTAL	<u>18</u>	100

From the tables above, it can be seen that Yakurr ethnic group has the highest representation. In terms of occupation, the data revealed that 4, representing 22.22% were applicants while 3, representing 16.67% were either trading or selfemployed and. 11, representing 61.11% were still struggling to further their education.

As it was with victims, the adolescents did not know what trafficking in persons meant, many though were aware of the movement of people from one place to another deceptively. They did not see it as trafficking. It is interesting to note that of the 18 adolescents interviewed, 9, representing 50% did not give any definition of trafficking in human beings. A respondent who attempted defining, saw trafficking “as the movement of people aged between 18- 19 from their place of origin to another”. Two female respondents understood trafficking in persons “as the movement of people from rural to urban areas.” Yet, another respondent saw trafficking as “a journey with somebody to work in another

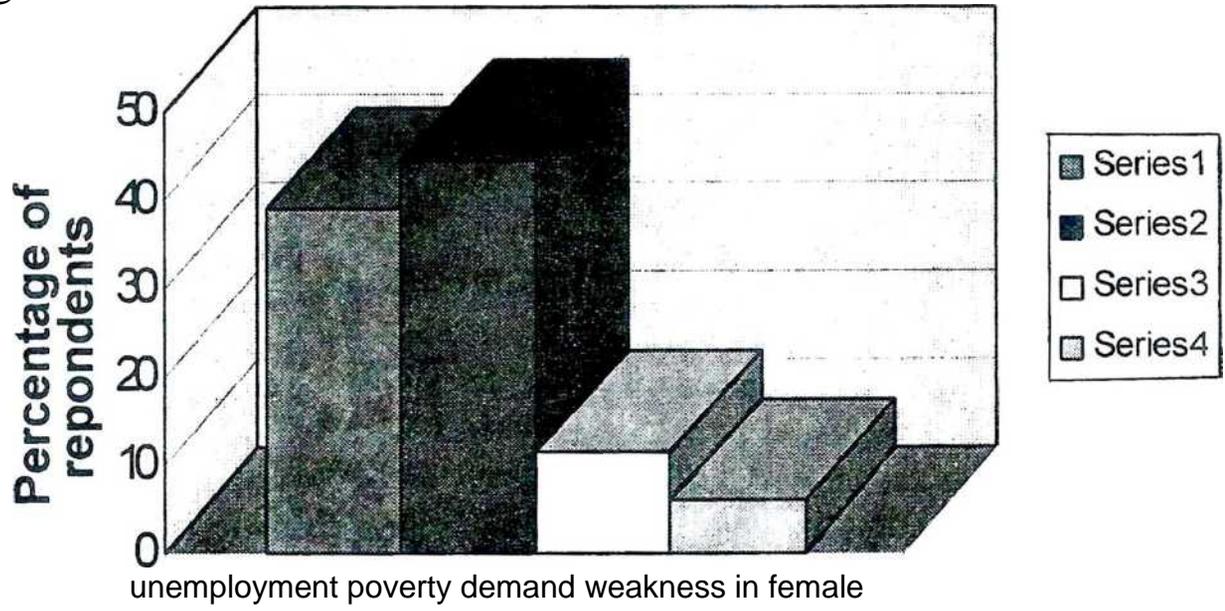
place.” Although it was difficult for them to give in clear terms, the definition of trafficking, all the respondents claimed awareness of the Ondo business. The respondents revealed that at about November and December of every year, agents of the business would visit them with big lorries and later big buses to register with a fee of #50.00. and then the girls and boys are taken by January to Ondo and other towns in the western part of Nigeria.

When asked about the age of victims of trafficking, all the respondents maintained that there was no specific age limit in the business. They however said that in as much as the boy/girl is able to work, they will be recruited. Although the respondents argued that no formal agreement was made between the trafficked and the traffickers, a respondent revealed from further probe that, “there exists an agreement between the last masters and the first masters at the final destination.”

And 12 out of the 18 respondents revealed that the mercedes 911 trucks were often used to convey the victims. Although the business is done through agents, 33.33% told our team that some of the victims would give themselves willingly to be trafficked. Only 27.78% maintained that elder brothers, relations of victims lured victims into trafficking. With regards to why girls are trafficked, the reasons given were not different from those given by traffickers. These reasons are as shown in Figure 4 below:

Fig. 4:

Reasons for trafficking in girls as given by adolescent boys and girls



Reasons for trafficking in girls

The figure reveals that out of 18 adolescents interviewed, 44.44% attributed the act of trafficking in girls to poverty, while 38.89% attributed it to idleness and joblessness; 5.56% attributed it to weakness on the part of the females and thus allowing themselves to be easily deceived. Only 11.11% attributed trafficking in girls to the high need for female labour in towns and cities. Although there is a high rate of trafficking, especially in rural areas of Ekor and Nko, respondents argued that there were virtually no benefits to the victims, family and the community. They however revealed that some victims do buy sewing machines for themselves, cloths and food items for their parents. Some would also use the fall-out of their business to further their education at least to junior secondary or senior secondary level. Those who claimed to have benefited are very negligible.

In sharing with experiences of trafficked girls and boys, respondents explained that there were a lot of ugly incidents involving trafficked girls and boys. For example, the money they make is often used to treat them of diseases and some might not even be treated, thus leading to death. Some of the diseases they come back with include HIV/ AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, mental problems and 22.22% of respondents said that many of the victims of trafficking die in the business, with some of them buried there because of lack of money to bring their corpses back, while 61.11% revealed that some of the victims would come

back from the business with one form of disease or the other and 16.67% disclosed that there had been incidents in which victims go back home pregnant. Some ended up prostituting while others ended up as thieves. The opinion of the respondents though varied, had a common message: that of seeing the business as being bad, and that “trafficking in persons is dehumanising hence traffickers should be jailed.” Another respondent saw it as “a form of slavery which is entirely dehumanising”. Being so condemned, adolescent boys and girls called on the government, philanthropic organisations, individuals, families and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) to help stop this business. A respondent further suggested that “government should empower families so that they can take care of their wards educationally and morally.” And 16.67% of respondents advised that government should help take care of the education of young people by making education free at least to SS3 level, while 77.78% maintained that job opportunities should be created for the teeming unemployed youths. This fact was buttressed by a respondent when he said “there is no girl in Nko who will not go to Ondo, unless she is in school or she is working...”. There is therefore, a high need for job creation in the society.

Opinion leaders, CBOs, NGOs, traditional leaders and religious leaders

A total of 10 respondents were interviewed to cover the above categories. The spread of the respondents in terms of social status, state, place of residence, sex and marital status is as shown on the table below:

Table 7:

Category	No. of Respondents	Marital Status			Sex		Place of Residence		State
		M	S	W	M	F	Rural	Urban	
Traditional Leaders	3	3	-	-	3	-	3	-	All C.R.S
Opinion Leaders	5	4	-	1	3	2	3	2	"
Religious Leaders	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	"
NGO/CBO/	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	-
Total	10	9	-	1	8	2	6	4	

From the table above, it becomes clear that of the 10 respondents, 9, representing 90% were married, while 10% were widowed: 80% of the respondents were males, while 20% were females and 60% were from the rural areas, 40% were from urban areas and 3,

representing 30%

were traditional leaders, while 5, representing 50% were opinion leaders. All the traditional leaders were from the rural areas, while the opinion leaders from both rural and urban areas had a ratio of 2:3. One religious leader, representing 10% was interviewed and 10% covered the category of NGOs/CBOs, respectively. These last two categories had their respondents drawn from urban centres.

In terms of educational level, 50% of the respondents had completed standard six while 10% held the West African School Certificate; 20% of the respondents had first and second degrees, respectively. There were 3 civil servants, 1 social worker, 1 clergy and 1 driver.

When asked the meaning of trafficking all the respondents maintained that they did not know its meaning but on further probe, they revealed that they knew about the "Ondo" business and what it entails. They explained that "Ondo" business is a business in which at a certain period of the year, usually December, a group of persons would come home to take some young girls and boys to Ondo with the hope of giving them jobs. Some, and specifically a respondent, claimed that he had been to Ondo between 1962-71. Others who defined trafficking saw it as **"an illegal taking of people from their place of residence to other places?"** The religious leader in this category defined trafficking as an act of getting people for prostitution in other places. This same view was shared by the other 3 opinion leaders in this category.

In terms of the reasons for trafficking, different reasons were given. These reasons were classified into 5 categories viz.: poverty, unemployment, urge to make quick money, poor background and ignorance. The percentage score of respondents supporting these categories as revealed were poverty and unemployment 30% each, while 20% supported the idea of making money quick 10% each, went to ignorance and poor background, respectively.

All of the respondents saw the act of trafficking as a social problem. They argued that the act was morally wrong, dehumanising and embarrassing. They revealed that most of the victims would contract sexually transmitted •/ infections, some even die in the process, while some have unintended pregnancies. To them, the victims were usually exposed to dehumanising practices. They said that although attempts have been made to stop the practice by government and individuals, that such attempts have often failed because of the level of poverty and unemployment in these communities. They further noted that the acclimated little gains made by some of the victims, measured by cloths and food items bought have been used to lure the idle "Ones to be trafficked. They all condemned the business and suggested some control measures. These measures include: . eation of jobs ywhich was suggested by 40% of the -espondents. placing a ban on the business by government and other organised groupings in the society, suggested by 20 of respondents, organising of proper enlightenment programmes on the effects of trafficking suggested by 10% of respondents, empowering families and encouraging them to take

good care of their children as contributed by 20% of respondents, and instituting death penalty for traffickers as supported by 10% of the respondents.

Policy-makers and government representatives

A total of 12 respondents were interviewed, of these, 6 were policy-makers, while the other 6 were government representatives. Both government representatives and policy-makers were all from Cross River State and 8 resided in Calabar urban, while 4 lived in the rural areas of Ekori and Nko in Yakurr LGA: 11 were males while only one was a female. The average age of respondents was 40 years and 10 of them were married at the time of the interview. The other 2 were single and widowed, respectively. All the respondents were Christians.

In terms of ethnic groupings, 7 were of Yakurr ethnic group, 3 Igbos, 1 Efik and 1 Mbembe. All the respondents were literate and well educated with at least an ordinary national diploma. They were 7 public servants, 2 civil servants. 1 lawyer and 2 local government councillors.

On the meaning of trafficking, various definitions were given. To Hon. Odong (2001) trafficking in persons is synonymous with taking to a neighbouring village, on deceit.

a person by another person or a group of persons. On the same line, Dr. Denis Basse (2001) and Hon. Basse Ewa (2001)

argued that trafficking in persons means carrying boys/girl to a different location or enticing people to other places and exploiting them respectively.

On her part, Theresa Offor, a LGA councillor saw trafficking as an illegal carrying of people to other places, from the perspective of the police, the police public relations officer in charge of zone 6 Calabar saw trafficking as a deceitful transfer of people to other places. In the same vein, was the police public relations officer in the Cross River State police headquarters, who noted trafficking as an act of a syndicate or group of people who decide to trade on humans. He however argued that trafficking does not imply a person, but an act of trading on human beings by either an individual, group or syndicate.

On the reasons for trafficking, the respondents identified the following:

Estimated 50% of the respondent saw poverty, (family, individual and general poverty) as a reason for trafficking; 32.33% identified)oblessness and idleness as a factor. 8.33% identi fied poor parental upbringing and low level of morality, while 8.33% identified the urge to make quick money and ignorance as factors responsible for trafficking.

All the respondents condemned trafficking in persons as

they saw it as an embarrassment to the community at large. In fact, some said the practice was debasing since it is “a form of slavery.” They therefore, expressed concern on the high rate of the trade, especially as it was affecting the morale of the community and the country. They called for a stop, even though there were of divergent views on how this act can be put to check. Accordingly, 41.67% called for compulsory and free education for young people at least to the senior secondary level to be financed by the government, 2.5% called for the creation of awareness by the print and electronic media and any other agency on the dangers of the trade and on how to avoid this act: 16.67% called for creation of job opportunities to be offered for girls so that they wouldn't be idle. The other 16.67% called for a legislation to be made and be implemented to ban this business. Although as narrated by some respondents, efforts by communities and the state were made to no avail, there were high hope that with seriousness on the part of government, such legislation and policies would take effect.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

A total of 8 (4 in the rural and 4 in the urban) FGDs were held. Two for parents (male and female) 2 for adolescents (male and female). For the adolescents, the average age was 17 years while the average age for parents was 46 years.

All the discussants resided in Cross River State at the time of the research. The adolescents comprised those 70

who were out of school and those in school. For the parents, majority of them were farmers, while others fell in one of the following occupations: tailoring, teaching, trading, contractors and civil servants. Many of them were semi-literate who had as their educational level, standard six, while a small proportion were literate.

The analysis of the discussions held with these categories showed as much as the in-depth interviews that 80% of the adolescent boys/girls did not know the meaning of trafficking in persons. Although they did not know the meaning, all of them demonstrated a knowledge of the "Ondo business". When asked about Ondo business, Christiana Sunday Ibor a 17-year-old girl and petty-trader explained that "Ondo is a place where young people go to get cheap jobs and employment.". Thus her view cut across the views of others who claimed ignorance of trafficking, but knew very well the "Ondo business". The other 20% of the adolescents who attempted a definition of trafficking saw it as the movement of people from their place of birth and residence to other places for cheap jobs and employment. Some saw it as the coercing of people by individuals by exchanging their labour continually for monetary returns. Others saw trafficking as slavery by proxy, the loaning out : somebody to another person for monetary returns.

Perhaps Pamela Eyong a 15-year-old Elik girl, I' er.n I moh an 18-year-old girl and Queeneth Ovat a 19- ear-old girl from Mbembe gave a definition that met the views of others when they described trafficking as the taking

away of a person or persons from his/her home to another place or country⁷.

This definition did not differ from that of parents as 98% of the parents claimed ignorance of the word trafficking but knew the Ondo business. Those who attempted a definition of the concept defined it as “the movement of young people, mostly girls from their place of residence to other places in search of cheap jobs and employment,” (Eja Essien, Kinglsey Obo, Samuel Edet and Umoh Asuquo). When asked about the nature of the business and how girls were trafficked, the respondents said that agents of serious traffickers in buses and 911 lorries would carry the girls to Ondo and other cities in the western parts of Nigeria where they are employed as house-helpers, hairdressers, cooks, waiters in hotels, market sellers, hawkers of wares, etc. Some were said to be employed in cocoa plantations, while some are contracted by their masters for sex work. They explained that although no formal agreement is often reached between the trafficked and the trafficker, there was usually an agreement between the first and second masters who would agree on the amount of money to be paid annually to the first master on behalf of the victim. This money may range between #5000-#7000. The first master then would deduct what he perceived as amount used in transporting the victim to Ondo and thereafter would give the balance to

the victim (which is usually smaller than what the master has taken). They revealed that in some instance the victims may approach the traffickers to traffic them, while in some, the traffickers, relations of victims would lure the victims to be trafficked, with promises of lucrative job offers.

The respondents also maintained that girls were usually preferred to boys because most of the services were such that require young girls. The respondents also argued that the victim must be mature enough to be able to do things for her/himself.

The discussants revealed much as the other respondents in other categories concerning what was responsible for the high incidence of trafficking. The factors given were, poverty, poor parental background, unemployment, ignorance and the urge to be rich quick. Giving a real life experience, a 17-year-old student (victim) said that she went into the business because her parents were unable to pay her school fees. When she got there, she was employed to sell palm oil and food. At the end, she realised a little amount that she used in paying her fees though the money was far less than what she had expected, given the long hours she spent selling and the risks and horrible things she passed through (she could not say what horrible things there were).

The act was generally condemned in totality by all discussants. The victims among the FGDs for adolescents said they went to Ondo because they were frustrated due to

the poverty situation and so saw no option, but that they could never encourage anyone to go because it is an “act of wickedness and slavery”. They want the government and other well-meaning citizens and parents to help put a stop to it. Traditional leaders as well as CBOs and NGOs should also not be left out in this fight. They suggested enlightenment campaigns to expose the ills of the business.

From all ramifications, it can be seen that these different groups identified trafficking in persons as a social problem. Though many were yet to grasp the full meaning of trafficking in persons, they were very familiar with the business as they call it “Ondo business.” They observed that although boys/girls were trafficked, trafficking in girls was higher than trafficking in boys because of the jobs available to girls and for girls being seen as easy preys, etc.

All the categories of respondents believed that the act of trafficking was dehumanising as it represents a new form of slavery. They suggested that for girls to be discouraged from trafficking, they should be empowered economically, socially, etc. This task will not just be for government alone, but for every body in the society.

Discussion

In this section, the data presented above were discussed in line with the fundamental objectives of the research. In this, the three broad objectives of the research were taken sequentially.

REASONS FOR TRAFFICKING IN GIRLS

From the presentation above, it can be seen that several reasons have been given by the various categories of respondent as factors responsible for trafficking in girls.

These include:

1. Girls are mostly to be trafficked: This is because girls are the ones that are easily contracted out to the second masters without having to wait for too long after arrival. Ekpenyong Juliet (2001) put this clearly when she observed that “the females are trafficked because they sell most:” selling most refers to the rate of contracting girls out to masters. This rate is higher for girls than for boys. One of the reasons given for this is that many jobs in towns require the services of girls. Arit Etim also noted similarly thus “ The girls are trafficked more than boys because in the cities, the girls have more places whereby they can serve e.g. hotels and as housemaids and in some cases as harlots.”

Ayo Charles, a business man (trafficker) buttressed this when he maintained that “girls are carried more because of the fact that most jobs in town need girls e.g. housemaid, hairdressing, waiters, etc,”

Besides, the girls are easily deceived when they are promised lucrative jobs. This weakness, argued by Eka Kingsley, has nothing to do with biology⁷ but with the ability

to cope with the economic and financial difficulties of life. In her own words, “I don’t know why girls are trafficked, but I suspect that it is because of their weak nature in terms of economic capability that makes them cheap to deceive.”

2. Idleness and unemployment: Girls were discovered to be most abandoned after primary six, especially in rural settings. To this end, they are more in the village with virtually nothing doing to earn a living. The few who had something doing engage in petty-trading that fetches them little or nothing at the end. Faced with this condition, they have no other alternative than to give themselves to traffickers who offer “good” promises and prospects.

Answering a question as to why girls are trafficked most, Chief Moses I. Effiom revealed that: “Girls are forced into travelling (trafficking) because they have nothing to do at home here. Their parents also do not take care of them...”. Mary Felix Ita a victim agreed that idleness forced her into trafficking. To her *“wetin make me make I go Ondo na because I no get wetin to do for house that is why I go there”* This same idleness was identified by Felix Ita a 19-year-old, adolescent boy during a Focus Group Discussion. To him, “Girls go to Ondo because they do not have anything doing, they are idle, they are not in school and would continue to go to Ondo, unless they are given something that will keep them occupied.”

In a confessional statement, Martha Asuquo Ojong, a

victim of trafficking, attributed the reasons of her being involved thus: when I passed my SSCE there was no money to go to school and no work, so I decided to go to Ondo. When my elder brother who just died last month came, I told him I have not got something doing and asked if I should follow him. He said yes, when we arrived Ondo, we were kept at Ashawele. A woman came and took me to her local government area.

Idleness is therefore, one of the most common factors that make girls susceptible to trafficking. They are idle as said because they do not have anything tangible doing at home. With this, they fall cheap preys to trafficking.

3. Poverty: For girls, poverty is seen to be the highest factor that makes them more susceptible to trafficking. The degree to which they are left with virtually nothing to earn a living with is unimaginable. No money, to go to school and nobody to take care of them. Being in this kind of situation, they would see trafficking as a means to improving their lot; a means of gaining employment, making money from which they can earn a living and perhaps train themselves. Although this dream as revealed by them was already actualised, it served as a gingering force to girls who give themselves to trafficking. In his contribution in an FGD for parents in

Ekori. Chief Ofor Arikpo had this to say:

“The only thing I will say is that those girls are going there (Ondo) because of parental neglect, there is no adequate funding of their education; they travel to that place because they

do not have someone to assist them at home and they feel that instead of being useless at home they can go for their daily bread and at the end of their tenure of 12 months, the people would take them and bring them back.” /

Nancy Usang Eta put this more clearly when she said that “Girls are trafficked because there is no work here now and to get money to go to school.”

Same was revealed by Stella Ebughe, a victim of trafficking when she argues thus: “I was encouraged by deceit and because I thought of getting enough money to train myself with.” Poverty is therefore a very potent and propelling force for trafficking in girls. Girls who have no parents to take care of them, who are not in school and cannot be in school because of lack of sponsorship would easily get themselves into the business of trafficking.

Besides, some with parents see the financial support received from them as inadequate to meet their needs and would choose to travel because they want to get the money for themselves, and be financially independent of their parents. T’as fact came up in several contributions by victims. One of such was that corroborated by Priscillia Njok who went into trafficking because she wanted to get money for herself. In her words, “I became a victim of trafficking because I wanted to get my personal money. I am sure many girls are trafficked because of this very fact.” Responding to a question as to why girls are trafficked, Charity Romanus also affirmed the above, saying 'Girls are trafficked

because they are the ones that really need favour and because of their poor background they need assistance from men.”

Other reasons for trafficking in girls include the urge to be like other friends who came back home with some money and material things; neglect by parents and fear of untimely death from disputes at home and ignorance by both parents and victims. Summarising the role of ignorance in trafficking, Nelson Ejukwa spoke the minds of others when he said that "A lot of parents do not know the dangers in allowing their children to the hazards of trafficking. The victims are on their part also ignorant of the hazards prior to their being trafficked.”

What needs to be done to enable girls to resist being trafficked

Many suggestions have been given by respondents to assist girls resist being trafficked. These include:

1. Conscientisation of the females on the hazards of trafficking. This can be done through massive campaigns against trafficking. Arguing in support of this, an 18-year- old adolescent male during a focus group discussion suggested that “there should be massive campaigns to end trafficking and all hands must be on deck.” A 24-year- old undergraduate also observed that An established truth is that all human relationship is based on some degree of exploitation, therefore all individuals, government, nongovernmental organisations, the private sector should come together to offer a new orientation to the public,

especially the young ones, through education and the creation of awareness. The government should consider the welfare of everyone in the society as of utmost importance.”

This was further buttressed by another respondent who stated thus “I think that it is time to start raising youths of high moral standards through education for all. Government should ensure that every child has access to good education or vocational training. Parents should also try and live up to expectation.”

Parents also noted this during their discussion. One of the discussants, a female teacher, aged 33, suggested that “Government has a big role to play here, they have to organise seminars and enlightenment programmes on Tv and radio to create awareness.”

Another woman, aged 40 years, suggested that teachers should be given adequate training on this issue so that they can use the parent teacher association fora to pass on information to parents.

2. Banning the act of trafficking by law: It was revealed through our findings that the law will be a potent way of stopping trafficking in girls. Respondents called on the government to enact a law and create an agency that would see to the implementation of the law. The law should also have severe punishment provisions such as death penalty or life imprisonment, with or without option of fine and hard labour for

defaulters:

A 51-year-old widow threw more light on this when she maintained that “To me, traffickers should face death penalty because some of them kill innocent souls. Government should make a law to ban trafficking, teachers should also enlighten their students in schools.”

3. Creating job opportunities: Since almost all the respondents attributed the business of trafficking to poverty, idleness or joblessness, a respondent suggested that creating job opportunities for girls would be a sure way to helping them resist being trafficked. It is said that “an idle mind is a devil’s workshop”, so it is with a young girl who is idle. So. it is also with the trafficker who is idle and therefore sees the business (though criminal), as the sure means of livelihood. Mary Efiom Eta a victim from Yakurr requested

that government should save her from idleness by putting her in school or by giving her something to do. In her words, “Government should send us to school and give us work to do.” Another respondent, Blessing Usarig reiterated this when she argued thus “As long as people finish school and there is no work and some people do not have help to go to school, you cannot stop Ondo business in this place.” This same fact was repeated in a focus group discussion for women and girls as all of them maintained that government and philanthropic agencies should give them help, “*make them give us help*”, says a victim, Christiana Sunday Ibor, “Create employment opportunities, *give us work and something to do, open business or give us money so that person go start business,*” says other victims, (Mary Igri Ibor, Arit Itam Ofem and Obasesam Asuquo) all adolescent girls.

4. Institution of policies and programmes that would help alleviate poverty: This can take the form of educational support for girls, free education, compulsory education or skill acquisition programmes. This, the respondents believe, will empower the girl-child and keep her occupied through out life.

Services that need to be put in place to help those who do not desire to be trafficked

Many services have been suggested to be put in place to assist girls. To Chief Igri Otu Eteng, a traditional leader in Yakurr, establishment of plantations, farms and getting youths to work there will help keep girls away from trafficking. Put in his own words: *“We don try but we no succeed for council for Yakurr, they call us say make we stop people and we gree, but as jobs no dey to give them to do we no go tie them for rope... I tell them for council say make them come open place here like cocoa farm to chapier (cut grass), dry cocoa and other things. If we get that kind thing we go the work there then people no go go Ondo again.*

Other suggested services that should be put in place include, welfare services that would take care of families and children. Poverty eradication programmes, good educational policies that would guarantee employment after graduation, as well as make for equity in the sex proportion that are offered educational chances. In fact, there should be free education, especially for girls. There should be an enlightenment or orientation agency that would enlighten - the masses on the need to stop trafficking, train girls and create job opportunities for them.

Conclusion

Careful data analysis had been the ba[^]is for these findings. And the research has been able to highlight some of the reasons that make girls susceptible to trafficking as well as reveal some of the things that need to be put in place to eradicate this practice. The entire exercise was, though tasking, very interesting as it offered us the opportunity of discussing with traffickers and victims directly. A lot of interesting experiences were shared with these people in the process and a lot of lessons learnt from the exercise.

Appendix

INTRODUCING GIRLS' POWER INITIATIVE (GPI), NIGERIA

Girls' Power Initiative (GPI), is a non-governmental, non-profit making, non-sectarian and non-religious organisation. (GPI) focuses on the education, leadership and other non-sexist life management skills as well as information on sexual and reproductive health and rights of adolescent girls aged 10-18 years, in Nigeria. GPI is coordinated from two centres in the country, namely, Benin - City in Edo State constituting the South-West Zone and Calabar in Cross River State constituting the South-East Zone. The national secretariat is housed in the South-East centre, Calabar. GPI was founded in 1993 by Bene Madunagu and Grace Osakue who now coordinate the South-East and South-West GPI centres, respectively. GPI commenced regular weekly educational classes for girls in July 1994 . It is a three-year programme for each participant. Hence, there have so far been three sets of GPI graduands. GPI now has a consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, (ECOSOC).

BACKGROUND

Going by the 1991 Nigerian Census, the Nigerian population was put at over 120 million people. Adolescents aged between 10 and 19 years constitute approximately 22 million, that is, about 20 per cent of the Nigerian population. Ignorance about sexuality issues in the largely conservative communities in Nigeria continues to expose girls to exploitation. Increasing poverty and attendant sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation continue to pose health risks to girls. Media influences and poverty are strong factors that influence increased sexual activity among teenagers. Teenage pregnancy is a problem - with more than 150 out of every 1,000 girls giving birth before 19 years of age. Teenage pregnancy rates have been reported to have trippled from the period of Nigeria's independence in 1960 to 1990 with about 40% of girls getting pregnant before they are 20. There are high mortality and morbidity rates from unsafe abortions with over 60% of patients presenting abortion complications in Nigerian hospitals being adolescent girls. Many do not have the chance or the means to get to hospitals. In addition, it is estimated that 72% of all deaths among young girls under 19 years and 50% of Nigeria's high maternal mortality

rate are adolescent girls who procure abortion. With increasing sexual activity coupled with ignorance about sexuality issues plus gender power relations placing girls in a disadvantaged situation, there are increasing cases of sexually transmitted diseases, STDs, including HIV/AIDS, with most of the HIV positive persons presently being in the age range of 15-25 years. School drop outs from poverty and unwanted pregnancy continue to be on the increase among adolescent girls. Thus, women who constitute about 49.7% of the total Nigerian population, according to the 1991 census, continue to be subjected to stereotype low status careers and a continuous cycle of low self-esteem for daughters and mothers.

There are still strong biases exhibited in words, actions and cultural norms and practices against the girl child. The girl-child spends her time taking care of her siblings, including older brothers. Thus, the attendance at school of the girl is compromised as she spends most of her time doing the household chores.

Female genital mutilation still continues as a message to the girl-child of her inferior position as a mere commodity to be made "beautiful" for her future husband. Girls are still being raised to aspire to be wives and mothers rather than first achieving a good career. This background, with serious implications for

population, human development, reproductive health and rights and sustainable livelihoods form the basis for the activities of Girls' Power Initiative (GPI) in Nigeria.

MISSION STATEMENT

GPI seeks to empower girls, especially those between the ages of 10 and 18 years. It seeks to promote their sexual and reproductive health and rights, to impart leadership skills, through gender-sensitive education and analysis, counselling and referral services and social intervention actions. Our activities started in Cross River and Edo States of Nigeria. Our activities are still concentrated there for now, even though the organisation does carry out a number of outreach programme activities from both centres.

VISION Our vision in GPI is to create a strong gender sensitive and social policy institution to inculcate critical consciousness and develop capacity for analysis on social and gender prejudices. GPI is committed to managing and educating girls into healthy, self-reliant, productive and confident women for the achievement of positive changes and feminist transformation of patriarchal values in Nigeria to achieve greater gender equality in this society.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Adolescent girls should be able to remain free of diseases, disability or death associated with sexuality, or sexual and reproductive health and rights . Adolescent girls have the right of access to education and correct age - specific information and reproductive health , rights and responsibilities which must be gender-sensitive, free from stereotypes and presented in an objective, non-judgemental, constructively critical and pluralistic manner. All adolescent girls have the right to sufficient education and information to ensure that any decisions they make relating to their sexual and reproductive life career and future status, marriage and child-bearing are made with full, free and informed consent. All adolescent girls have the right to be provided with full information about STDs, including HIV/AIDS and Pelvic Inflammatory Disease, (PIDs). All adolescent girls have the right to information about all methods of birth control and contraceptives. Sexually active teenagers should be provided with non-judgemental information, services, and counselling on contraceptives, reproductive tract infections and complications from unsafe abortion. Girls have the right to live their lives free from violence. Every adolescent girl, irrespective of ethnic origin, or

tribe, religion or class has a right to information and services offered by GPI. The organisation must therefore remain a secular institution, that is, nonreligious. All adolescent girls have the right to protection from rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse and sexual harassment. All adolescent girls have the right to be fully involved in all aspects of the development of their lives and that of their communities as leaders and as equal participants. True freedom and the exercise of these rights can only be achieved in a just society with gender justice, equality and equity.

