

THE VICTIM'S WELFARE, RE-INTEGRATION AND REHABILITATION

A PAPER PRESENTED BY MRS OBIOMA E. AGOZIEM, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CENTRE FOR CORRECTIONS AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AT THE WORKSHOP ON MANAGING THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF VICTIM'S OF HUMAN/ORGAN TRAFFICKING, CHILD ABUSE, RAPE AND DRUG ADDICTION.

WHO IS A VICTIM:

A victim is anybody who is lured, coerced, abducted, kidnapped, lied to or misled to engage in or submit to exploitative activities such as prostitution, sexual exploitation, forced labour, or other forms of criminal activities (e.g. smuggling) or for organ harvesting/sale. A victim is in a form of modern slavery.

A vast majority of victims are children. By the laws in most countries including Nigeria and the EU a child is any person under the age of 18. A child can still be a victim of human trafficking, even where there is no force, deception or abuse of power. However, given the confusing posture at the Nigerian Legislature in recent times and the conflict in the religious laws in some countries, it seems debatable whether this classification of child victim of 18 years will truly reflect the acceptability of such religious cultures even though that is the best that can be done to protect the girl child.

How to identify or determine a human Trafficked Victim:

- Are you being cajoled, lured or coerced for a better life of pay somewhere?
- Did someone take away your identity card or passport?
- Were you deceived about the nature of job, location or employer?
- Are you working excessive days or hours, performing hazardous work?
- Are you isolated, confined or under surveillance?
- Is someone forcing you to work, to engage in criminal activities or have sex against your will?
- Is someone threatening to hurt you or your family?
- Is someone forcing you to take oaths and incantations?
- Are you constantly beaten at the slightest provocation?
- Are you sexually harassed by a close family member or friend?
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If you answered "yes" for you or someone you know, You or that person may be indeed a victim of human trafficking. You should contact the Police or contact Centre for Correction and Human Development office. Hotline : 08184515808

POTENTIAL VICTIMS:

Potential victims are those individuals that have higher propensity to fall to traffickers. Individuals that look seemingly free today but might be trapped the next day. These are people in rural areas and some in Cities but are highly uninformed about the activities of Traffickers. Students, particularly those of poor background are most vulnerable because they easily fall victim to the lies of the traffickers.

PROTECTION OF VICTIMS:

Protection is a process of activities geared towards the successful **rehabilitation** and re-integration of victims to the society, **prosecution** of abusers who exploit others for profit and **prevention** of further activities of Traffickers through awareness creation.

The United States offers a good victims protection mechanism. Under the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) 2008 a human trafficking victim is a person induced to perform labor or a commercial sex act through force, fraud or coercion. Any person under age 18 who performs a commercial sex act is considered a victim of human trafficking, regardless of whether force, fraud or coercion was present. The TVPA enhances pre-existing criminal penalties in other related laws, affords new protections to trafficking victims and makes available certain benefits and services to victim of severe forms of trafficking once they become certified by the US Dept. of Health and Human Services.

In 2003, (amended in 2005) the Nigeria government passed the trafficking law. This is the government response to addressing the scourge of trafficking in persons in Nigeria and its attendant human rights abuses. It is also a fulfillment of her international obligation under Trafficking in Persons Protocol supplementing the Transnational Organized Crime Convention (TOC). Nigeria was a signatory to the TOC and its trafficking in Persons Protocol in 2000. The protocol enjoins States to criminalize practices and conducts that subject human beings to all forms of exploitation.

The Acts includes various provisions protecting minors and punishing the practice of human trafficking and violation of free will. Victims of trafficking are protected under the Act and will not be detained, imprisoned or prosecuted for offenses relating to victimization, including use of false travel documents, illegal immigration status. The Legislation also promotes education and awareness by requiring companies to include information about human trafficking like Airlines in their flight magazines, tickets and videos. (See trafficking Act)

REHABILITATION:

Interestingly the US approach to combating human trafficking is encapsulated in their adoption of “3P” acronym of Prevention, Protection and Prosecution. Rehabilitation is evidently the fulcrum of victim’s protection. It is the most challenging part of victim’s protection. What is protection without sustainable rehabilitation for the victim? The principal goal of rehabilitation, in our view, is the restoration of a person to normal life such that he becomes useful both to himself and to the society. It is a holistic exercise comprising therapeutics, counseling, educational/training, reorientation and more importantly empowerment. The assumption of rehabilitation is that people are not permanently bad, but that with proper care and supervision the condition can be restored.

Rehabilitation is most effective when it is under an in-house arrangement but it can be an expensive venture. It requires the establishment of a rehabilitation facility. We prefer that arrangement the victim would be subjected to a programme of supervised or monitored reorientation and mentoring. It is under the atmosphere of a rehab centre that most activities of the restoration take place.

So much is involved in the process of victim’s protection through rehabilitation. It involves:

- Reception and Identification
- Health checks
- Sheltering
- Counseling
- Training, Skill Acquisition Programme and Empowerment,
- Family Tracing
- Repatriation
- Follow-up, After-care
- Disengagement

ENGAGING THE REHABILITATION PROCESS:

Having looked at protection and processes involved, a sustainable protection promotes the policy of “3Ps”, Prevention, Protection and Prosecution.

- As a preventive strategy more awareness should be created, in Schools, Churches, Mosques, Local Government Councils, Cities and Rural Communities. Continuous campaign should go on. Local government councils should be fully mobilized for effective coverage.

- The establishment of well funded and managed rehabilitation facilities in various locations. Considering the number of people requiring rehabilitation, each local government council should endeavour and have at least one centre.
- The corporate bodies, churches, mosques, civil societies should take more than passing interest in rehabilitation and management.
- There should be comprehensive rehabilitation programme with constant re-orientation, re-directing, and re-focusing these individuals. Emphasis should not on skills alone but human development course. This will help to
 - a. Increase their personal efficiency
 - b. Help them attain maximum success and excellence in any chosen skill.
 - c. Equip them to be purpose driven.
- Counseling is indispensable in the rehabilitation process. Therefore the services of certified counselors are needed to be able to identify the specific orientation of every victim. They could be grouped or categorized depending on the assessment of each need.
- Victim's security and medical needs should be addressed in the course of rehabilitation programme. Security issue is really important because some of the victims can be difficult or even have psychological, spiritual or other conditions and could make things difficult for rehabilitation facility. There should be strict rules and regulations to which the victim should comply with. Prudence also demands that some arrangement be put in place to address the victim's health care needs.
- At the point of disengagement, proper arrangement should be made to establish each person on the learned skill. This will entail some the arrangement of funding which could be made with finance companies to assist them with soft loans, under monitored supervision.
- Follow-ups and after care services should be continued for up to two years.

In all, there is no doubt that the process of protection and rehabilitation of human trafficking victims is expensive in terms of human and financial resources. But the dividend to the peace and security of the society cannot be quantified.

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