

## **BREAKING THE NETWORK NOT THE VICTIMS – A PAPER ON TRAFICKING**

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Nigeria is a country with a population of 170 million and 40% of the population are poor while some statistics have shown that up to 70% of Nigerians are affected by the scourge of poverty in one form or the other.

Due to this excruciating poverty and high unemployment levels the illegal trafficking in women and girls began to thrive in Nigeria. Countries in Europe being the usual destination most especially Italy. Our President stated recently that trafficking in women is the third largest illegal business ranking after drugs and gunrunning. Trafficking in Women has created immense wealth for the traffickers and death, sickness, misery and all sorts of dangers for the victims.

The victims are usually lured from their homes in the villages where they are told of job opportunities in Europe. As soon as the victims assent to travelling they become slaves to the traffickers. They are then transported to Europe, all their travel documents seized from them and forced to go into prostitution. In Italy, the victims often sign a bond with their sponsors to serve them for about 3 years after paying back a debt of approximately \$100,000 for being brought to Italy. They are detained in hotels and are not free to move about. They are often beaten if they refuse to co-operate and sometimes killed.

The shock of their situation is very traumatic for a lot of girls. We have received reports of some losing their minds and being kept in institutions. Some have been killed by their patrons and we have also received reports of bestialities. Some become HIV positive. The girls become free after paying back the money demanded by their sponsors. If they do not pay, the sponsors send their agents to terrorize their families back home. Once the girls become free they send thousands of dollars back home to their parents who now become extremely wealth . They build new houses and ride flashy cars and don't want to know where the money is coming from.

When the women are deported to Nigeria they come with only the dresses on their back and are escorted under tight security back to Nigeria. The Nigerian Police authorities have complained that they only receive about 3 days notice from the Italian authorities before these girls are returned.

On their return they become a public spectacle. They are paraded as prostitutes and detained in the police station before they are compulsorily tested for HIV/AIDS. Thereafter they are released to their state governments.

Our interaction with these girls show that they have undergone a character change because of the terrible things they have been forced to do. Some become extremely withdrawn and feel that they are failures. Their family members are also not happy with them because instead of bringing back wealth in dollars they have brought shame. Our records reveal that 1180 trafficked Nigerian women were deported between March 1999 and December 2000, mainly from Italy.

The Nigerian Government has responded by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other related Matters (NAPTIP) which came into being on the 26th of August, 2003,

with the appointment of its pioneer Executive Secretary/Chief Executive, Mrs. Carol Ndaguba. The Agency which is the creation of Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003 is the Federal Government of Nigeria's response to addressing the scourge of trafficking in persons in Nigeria and its attendant human abuses in its entire ramification. It is also a fulfillment of her international obligation under the trafficking in persons protocol supplementing the Transnational Organized Crime Convention (TOC). Nigeria became signatory to the Transnational Organized Crime Convention and its trafficking in Persons Protocol on the 13th December, 2000. Article 5 of the said trafficking protocol enjoins State parties to criminalize practices and conducts that subject human beings to all forms of exploitation which includes in the minimum sexual and labour exploitation...