HUMAN TRAFFICKING: NATURE, CAUSES, AND EFFECTS.

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INTRODUCTION

Prior to the abolition of slave trade and slavery in the early 19th century, human beings were sold as commodities to merchants by kings and warriors in exchange for goods. These merchants provided weapons and fueled crises between communities to increase the supply of slaves. The inhumane treatment meted out to these individuals gave rise to the abolition of slave trade and slavery. Unfortunately, in the past two or more decades this obnoxious trade and dehumanizing trade has resurfaced in a more dangerous and horrific manner vis a viz human trafficking otherwise known as modern day slavery. Unlike the trans-Atlantic slave trade where the European merchant come to Africa to take away the slaves, the new form of slavery involves traffickers taking away the victims not for the benefit of the receivers or the victims per say but for the benefit of the perpetrators. Trafficking in Persons is therefore, a global and serious security threat to all the countries of the world. The UN Trust Fund for Human Security to buttress the issue states that Trafficking in Persons separates families, erodes social bonds, and undermines the political, social, economic and cultural prospects of communities. By creating an environment of violence, crime and fear, criminal networks undermine the rule of law, weaken public safety and threaten the overall safety and development of a community. Human trafficking is a human right violation and every year; thousands of men, women and children are trafficked by those known to them and in their own communities too.

DEFINITION.

Trafficking in Persons was first defined in the International law through the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. This Protocol popularly known

Article 3, paragraph (a) of the Protocol states “Trafficking in Persons (TIP) shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of office or of a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, services or the removal of organs”.

This definition is the most widely endorsed and provided the essential basis for national law reform.

Further to this definition, article 3 paragraph (b) states “the consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in paragraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in paragraph (a) have been used”.

In other words where ever any of the elements of trafficking in persons is used the consent of the victim is meaningless.

The three elements of trafficking include:

a. THE ACT (what is done).
   This the operational concept of movement and transportation for example recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons.

b. THE MEANS (how is it done).
   This means the intervention of an intermediary noting that most often the means is present before the act could take place namely threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, of vulnerability or giving payments or benefits of a person in control of the victim.

c. THE PURPOSE (why it is done)
For the purpose of exploitation which includes exploiting the prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or similar practices and the removal of organs.

NATURE AND SCOPE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING.
Human trafficking is clandestine in nature and is carried out in most cases unnoticed and not indicated as a criminal network. Trafficking either occurs within the shores of a country (internal) or outside its shores (external). Internal trafficking involves trafficking of a person from one community or village to another, within the states or outside the states. It is trafficking of persons within a country. The purpose of internal trafficking is usually for domestic labour, child labour, illicit adoption, begging, sexual exploitation, ritual, organ harvesting etc. External trafficking of persons on the other hand is carried out outside the shores of the victim’s country. In other words, a victim’s exploitation occurs outside his/her country of residence. Sexual and labour exploitation are the major purpose for external trafficking. Others are begging, organ harvesting, etc.

The process of human trafficking is hidden and shrouded in secrecy making data collection and empirical studies very difficult. As a result of this accurate statistical data is hardly available. Nevertheless it is estimated that no fewer than 1 million and 2 million people are trafficked worldwide annually. Virtually all countries of the world are involved in one form of trafficking or the other. They always fall within countries of origin, transit or destination. In most cases, some countries especially developing countries fall within the three categories. In Africa, no one has been able to trace the origin of this new form of slavery, but one thing is sure, that is the fact that it was not regarded as a major concern until in the 90s when it became obvious that many countries within the continent had acquired the unenviable position as source, transit and destination countries for human trafficking. Trafficking of women to Europe for sex is more prevalent in West Africa than elsewhere in Africa. It is estimated that no less than
60% of foreign prostitutes in Italy hail from Africa the majority coming from Nigeria.

On forced labour, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO), Africa has the highest percentage of child labourers in the world with 80 million or 40% of African children of between five and 14 years working under wholesome conditions, many of them are victims of human trafficking. The ILO estimate indicates that 200,000 to 300,000 children are trafficked each for forced labour and sexual exploitation in West and Central Africa. UNICEF on the other hand estimates that between 10,000 and 15,000 West African children work on coca plantations in Cote d’Ivoire, after being sold by middlemen to farmers for up to $340 each. The ILO further estimated in 2005 that 980,000 to 1,225,000 children both boys and girls are in a forced labour situation as a result of trafficking. From the Polaris Project “An estimated 17,500 foreign nationals are trafficked annually in the United States alone. The number of US citizens trafficked within the country are even higher, with an estimated more than 200,000 American children at high risk for trafficking into the sex industry each year (http://www.polarisproject.org/polarisproject/trafficking_p3/trafficking.htm). 27 million people are estimated to be trafficked all over the world out of which 80% are women and children

CAUSES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING.
Many factors have been adduced to encourage human trafficking globally. It is convincingly true that majority of the victims of human trafficking are from developing countries in Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern Europe while destination countries are mainly developed and rich countries like North America and Western Europe. In discussing the causes of human trafficking there is the need to know what propels it in the countries of origin and destination.

POVERTY.
Poverty is a major characteristic of a developing country and is seen as a major cause of human trafficking. The quest to improve the standard of living in these families makes them accept
whatever promises the traffickers offer them. It is also an issue in cases of internal and external trafficking.

**LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES/UNEMPLOYMENT.**
There is no gain saying the fact that most people who give their consent to be trafficked did so believing there are better opportunities at destination which goes to say that the origin countries had limited or no opportunities for its citizenry.

**IGNORANCE/ILLITERACY.**
It is said that knowledge is power. Those who are not aware of the ills and effects of human trafficking are more susceptible to fall prey to the traffickers than the others. Information on trafficking empowers people to be on guide and take measures to avoid being a victim.

**SITUATION OF ARMED CONFLICT.**
Armed conflict is a two edged sword. On the part of origin or source victims would be willing to escape from the conflict area thereby becoming vulnerable. On the other hand, destination countries in conflict or war would demand for victims to help them.

**GLOBALISATION**
The world they say is a global village and as such recruitment has been made easy. The vulnerable only knows that his chance of survival economically is higher in developed societies.

**GREED**
The get rich quick syndrome has eaten deep into the minds of the young people in developing countries. Unfortunately, the society pays little emphasis on the source of wealth of their people making the youths eager to find ways to acquire wealth and be celebrated.

**DESIRE TO EARN A LIVING**
In Nigeria and most other African countries for instance, where person will graduate from the university and remain unemployed for 3 to 4 years without any form of employment would not want to
miss any opportunity that he feels will eliminate his desire to earn a meaningful living.

**EFFECTS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING**
The effects of human trafficking will not be meaningful without mentioning the purpose for which trafficking occurs. This will give a clear view of how individuals, families, communities, societies and the world at large are affected. Moreover, the purpose of human trafficking is a key element in identifying trafficking cases.

**Purpose of human trafficking.**

**SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.**
Sexual exploitation is the main crux of human trafficking and explains why majority of its victims are women and girls. They work in brothels, massage parlours, prostitution rings or strip clubs, or used to produce pornographic materials. The US government estimated in 2003 that 600,000 to 800,000 were trafficked out of which 80% were women and 70% were trafficked for sexual exploitation.

**LABOUR EXPLOITATION**
As stated early, boys are trafficked in most cases for labour exploitation especially to work in plantations, mines or in other hazardous conditions, such as handling of chemicals and pesticides or operation machines. They are in most times isolated within the destination countries and are fearful of reporting the abusive work conditions to authorities.

**DOMESTIC WORK**
It is estimated that 80million or 41% of African children, most being girls and between 5-14 years are engaged in domestic work. These victims are sorely dependent on their exploiters for safety, food and shelter and most endure harsh working conditions. They do not have any form of identification and as such cannot attempt escape. In most cases parents are attracted with the promises of good education or job.
MILITARY CONSCRIPTION.
The Human Rights Watch, an international organization that conducts research on human rights violation, estimated that there are 300,000 child soldiers worldwide with 120,000 found in Africa. Children are very vulnerable to recruitment and they are in more than 30 ongoing or recent armed conflicts in almost every region of the world.

FORCED MARRIAGE
Families use the above as a survival strategy by trafficking the girl child as a bride. This is common in Central and Western Africa, where 40% and 49%, respectively, of girls under the age of 19 are affected.

SPORTS.
In this era where playing football (soccer) is a way of amassing wealth, young boys are deceived into being taken out of the country only to be exploited for other purpose.

ORGAN HARVESTING
In recent times, and with the persistence health issue, couple with the hidden mature has been on the increase.

ILlicit ADOPTION
There is an increase in demand for adoption and this has helped to propel the unlawful trafficking of babies and young children. In the developing countries, sometimes mothers sell their baby or young child and at other times the infant is stolen and mothers are told the baby was stillborn.

Taking all the above purposes of human trafficking into consideration, below are the effects of human trafficking.

EFFECTS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING.
Human trafficking is evil and will not have any positive effect on the victims who are exploited, their families, communities and states of origin. Granted that human trafficking is a money making
machine using human beings, only the perpetrator and in some cases the destination benefit from this obnoxious crime.

President Bush spoke to the UN 23rd Sept., 2003

“There’s another humanitarian crises spreading, yet hidden from view. Each year … human beings are bought, sold or forced across the world’s borders. Among them are hundreds of thousands of teenage girls, and others as young as five, who fall victim to the sex trade. This commerce in human life generate billions of dollars each year – much of which is used to finance organized crime”

The above statement by President Bush goes to show the magnitude of human trafficking. Human trafficking abrogates a person’s right to a healthy living, and production, rewarding and dignified life.

**EMOTIONAL EFFECT.**

Often times victims have heard ugly experiences for instance those who were trafficked into the commercial sex industry and are forced to have sex with close to 20 men if not more in a day while others are forced to have sex with dogs. This experience remove the humanity in the individual especially when it is prolonged. They are broken with very low self-esteem, ashamed, very angry if the perpetrator is trusted. In some cases the health conditions may lead to feeling of severe guilt, depression, anxiety, use of substance abuse and attempted suicide.

**PHYSICAL/HEALTH EFFECTS**

Victims are physically abused by the trafficker to gain control over the victim. They are susceptible to contracting sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS. Those in the begging industry are maimed to ensure they attract more to almsgiving. Physical torture and deprivation are also used on the victims to take charge of them and ensure they escape is minimized.

**SOCIAL EFFECT**
The victim of trafficking are deprived of a family life and cut off from normal social activities for a prolonged period, possible adjustment would be difficult. Even when all is in place for their rehabilitation and reintegration, the stigma the society puts on them tend to delay their progress.

**ECONOMIC EFFECTS.**
Although human trafficking is a high profit and low risk adventure, the lives of adults and children have been mortgaged for the selfish gains of the perpetrator. Any individual who is enriched from the proceeds of human trafficking a large number of adults and children have been grossly exploited. Human trafficking destroys the future of any society where a portion of its members cannot function effectively due to the trauma of human trafficking. The situation worsens when women and children are the most affected.

In conclusion, human trafficking is a form of modern day slavery, an ill wind that blows no body any good. It is a violation of the fundamental human rights of the victim and affects his/her normal functioning in the society. It is a global issue that must be addressed by all. We should do our bit as individuals, families, communities and the larger society to fight and eliminate this evil in our society and world.
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