

EXTERNALISATION OF BORDERS

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The phenomenon of re-trafficking of women repatriated in Nigeria

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Introduction

Trafficking in Persons (TIP) or Human trafficking (HT) is regarded as a modern form of slavery (UN, 2001). Human trafficking is one of the most egregious human rights violations (Annan, 2001) and violations of human rights are seen to be the cause and consequence of trafficking in persons (UN, 2014). Since 2000, soon after a global treaty to combat HT was adopted, the term modern slavery is now the catch-all term to describe human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, sex trafficking, forced marriage and other slave-like exploitation. Human traffickers are said to be motivated by *greed, driven by quota, devoid of respect for human rights, preying upon the vulnerable, and damaging the psychological and physical well-being of their victims* (Toney-Butler & Mittel, 2019:1).

Human Trafficking (HT), especially in women and girls, is the most visible of the categories of modern slavery in Nigeria because of its international dimension. Nigeria has remained a source, transit and destination country for women and children in human trafficking for forced labour and sex trafficking (Okojie et al, 2003; Maicibi 2008; US TIP Report 2019). Although women, men and children may all be trafficked for various purposes, trafficking is often a 'gendered' crime. Available evidence suggests that those who are trafficked into the sex industry and as domestic servants are more likely to be women and children (USDOS: 2011; WHO 2012). According to Annan (2001), HT thrives on discrimination against women, especially the increasing "feminization of poverty" and it is driven by organised gangs of traffickers, who ruthlessly exploit their victims for the easy profit they hope to gain.

As horrific as some of the consequences of trafficking are for most women and girls, it is unimaginable for a victim of trafficking (VoT) to be subjected again to trafficking a second or more times. Jobe (2010) claims that defining the term "re-trafficking" is problematic, *and wider debate within research on trafficking is needed to reach a common understanding of the term and to assist accurate comparison between data sets, along with facilitating improved case management* (Jobe,

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2010:17). Re-trafficking is usually a situation where a person has returned to her country of origin and is then trafficked from there for a second time. However, the problematic issue in the definition is the failure to include VoTs who do not have to return to their countries of origin before they are re-trafficked. In the context of this presentation, we are referring to a situation where a VoT has returned to her country of origin and is then trafficked from there.

Return, deportation/ repatriation of Nigerian victims of trafficking

The issue of re-trafficked victims can be said to have started as soon as HT was made known in Nigeria. In the early 1990s, irregular migration in the form of human trafficking was not seen as a national problem. The Nigerian government was said to be in denial of the existence of human trafficking until the late 1990s. Specifically in 1997, the attention of the Nigerian Government was drawn to the menace of trafficking in women, when the Nigerian Ambassador to Italy, Judith Attah, made mention of it to Nigerian delegation at the 63rd Interpol General Assembly (Okojie et al, 2004). Also, the problem became obvious as a result of the awareness created by some NGOs most especially Amina Titi Abubakar's Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) which was established in 1999 (Egede, 2011). In response to the growing problem of human trafficking, NAP TIP, as a focal agency in Nigeria responsible for combating human trafficking in all its ramifications, was established on the 8th of August 2003.

As the trafficking in women and girls rapidly gained ground, a large number of Nigerian girls and women have over the years been deported and repatriated from Europe and elsewhere. The numbers increased each year, with 10 in 1997, 225 in 1999, and 1,092 in 2000 (Ojomo, 2001). According to the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), between March 1999 and the year 2000, some Nigerian girls who were trafficked to Italy and Saudi-Arabia for prostitution were deported. Some records showed the deportation figures, that 17 women were deported from Saudi-Arabia, 76 from Italy while 200 from the Netherlands (CLO, 2000). Furthermore, it was reported that more than 500 Nigerian prostitutes were rounded up in Italy between 1999 and 2000 and deported to Nigeria at very short notice. Women's Consortium of *Nigeria* (WOCON), a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), also reported that between March 23 and July 19, 2000, a total of 247 girls and women whose ages ranged from 18 to 38 were deported from Italy, Saudi-Arabia, Holland, South Africa, Togo and Mali to Nigeria: 163 were from Italy, 17 from Saudi-Arabia, 2 from South Africa, 41 from Togo while 4 came from Mali. According to the report, Edo State has the highest number of deportees with a total number of 162 (Akor, 2011).

Other reports (Lipede, 2007:16; Jungudo, 2014) reflected that between 1999 and July 2000, about 454 trafficked Nigerians, mostly women and children, were deported from Saudi Arabia. Also, a large number of 9,952 women and 1,231 underage unaccompanied children were deported from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between March 2002 and April 2004. "The first mass deportation of Nigerian women from Italy came as a nasty surprise to the Nigerian authorities" (Ojomo, 2000:15).

The Guardian Newspaper of 17th January 2001, reported that Mrs. Titi Abubakar, founder of WOTCLEF and the wife of the then Vice-President, mentioned that at least, 1,116 trafficked girls were repatriated from various countries in 2001 (Okojie et, 2014). Furthermore, from data collected in 2003 from Nigerian Immigration Service, Lagos, repatriated persons from European, African and other countries between January to December 2002 were 1,957 with 1,012 (males) 945 (females).

The majority of the repatriated persons were sent back from Italy and the Netherlands (Okojie et al 2003: 39-40). The records revealed that Spain and Italy were two major entry/destination countries for trafficking in women and irregular migration to Europe. While most of the repatriated persons from Spain were males, almost all those repatriated from Italy were females, 592 (93.7%) out of 632 persons. The trend was similar in 2003 when several repatriations took place from Italy, Spain and the Netherlands. The number of repatriation flights increased and the numbers of repatriated persons also increased, reflecting an increase in the numbers of trafficked women or illegal immigrants, or a greater desire by the authorities of destination countries to repatriate victims to their countries of origin. An overwhelming majority of repatriated persons from European and African countries are citizens of Edo State (Okojie et al 2003:40-41).

Some of these figures of deported VoTs were recorded and trafficked victims were getting deported even before NAPTIP was set up. CLO (2000) further claimed that no matter how many times some of these women were deported, they seemed to be able to procure travel documents to return to the same or different foreign lands to continue in the illicit trade. During this period many of the trafficked victims that were deported arrived at the international airport violent and angry that they were back home. Most of the VoTs encountered were not happy to be back in Nigeria. In general, most of the VoTs displayed unruly behaviour on their arrival from Europe. For example on the 17th of May, 2003, the author witnessed victims brought back from Italy as they behaved uncontrollably and had to be dispersed with teargas. Some VoTs were said to have also set fire on one of the offices in the Police Headquarters at Alagbon in protest, while another batch had burnt some offices and another set had threatened to go naked at the airport (Okojie et al, 2003:71).

Under the Trafficking in Persons Protocol on residence permits and repatriation of trafficking victims, according to Article 7:

...each State Party shall consider adopting legislative or other appropriate measures that permit victims of trafficking in persons to remain in its territory, temporarily or permanently, in appropriate cases. In implementing the provision, each State Party shall give appropriate consideration to humanitarian and compassionate factors. According to Article 8 of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, in returning victims to their home countries, the return shall be with due regard for the safety of that person and the status of any legal proceedings. The return shall preferably be voluntary (UNODC 2009:9).

However, many of the immediate deportation/repatriation listed above violated the rights that should be accorded to trafficked victims under the UN Protocol. A problem faced by many trafficked women is that when they are arrested in the destination countries, they are often locked in police cells and deported without having been allowed to collect their belongings or money. Some adult victims were not always recognized as trafficked victims but often viewed as illegal migrants, or illegal migrant prostitutes (Jungudo, 2004:19). In spite of the agreement, most of the Nigerian deported victims from Italy testified to being found on the streets and detained until they had a planeload of victims and security escort before deportation, This is often without access to judicial redress to claim for lost wages or compensation for the human rights abuse by their traffickers. Most of the victims are deported with just what they were wearing at the time of arrest and are denied the opportunity to retrieve their belongings as provided in the agreement (Jungudo, 2004). They claimed that they experienced inhuman treatment in the hands of the authorities before deportation. Most of them arrested on the streets, are treated as illegal migrants, detained, criminalized and eventually deported

forcefully to Nigeria. According to a 2004 report on trafficked returnees from Italy, 37.5% were forcefully repatriated, 16.3% came voluntarily while 12.5% received assistance from NGOs in Italy (Olateru-Olagbegi and Ikpeme 2004).

Over the years, many Nigerian VoTs have been repatriated. The issue of repatriated VoT and irregular migrants reached a peak in 2017 when CNN launched a series of investigations into the plight of modern slavery victims from Nigeria. The Nigerian government got actively involved in the repatriating of Nigerian migrants from Libya. The majority were from Edo State as at the beginning. According to the Zonal Coordinator of *National Emergency Management Agency* (NEMA), Martins Ejike, “Like, in the first batch, out of the 485 migrants that came in, 309 are from Edo State alone. Over 85% of the returnees are from the South-South region” (Yafugborhi. and Iheamnachor, 2018). Furthermore, out of 2778 Nigerians found in 'accessible' detention camps in Libya as of January 2018, 1400 are from Edo State (Okah-Donli, 2018). In June 2018, the *United States Department of State* noted that: “There were reports of re-trafficking among the trafficking victims repatriated from Libya” (US TIP 2018:9).

Why Re-trafficking: Victims Experiences (2003 -2019)

The question we should ask is why would VoTs desire to be re-trafficked. Part of the answer to this question can be obtained from the VoTs themselves. Some victims' experiences and re-trafficking described below are based on over 17 years period of interacting with VoTs specifically in Edo State, Nigeria. Since 2003, interactions and interviews have been held with over 250 female VoTs.

2003-2008

Between 2003 to 2008, female VoTs were encountered in the field through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), In-Depth-Interviews (IDI) and use of questionnaires (Okojie et al 2003; Okojie et al 2004; UNODC, 2006; UNAFRI, 2006a; UNARFI, 2006b). From the VoTs encountered during this period, 35 Edo girls and women were personally interviewed. They were not willing returnees but deportees. They were aged between sixteen and twenty-eight years old when they were trafficked. They were all trafficked/repatriated between 1999 and 2008. They were repatriated from Europe and specifically Italy and Spain. All the victims unanimously claimed that the main reason they travelled abroad was as a result of poverty and the unavailability of jobs. Those who had jobs claimed that the income from such jobs was not sufficient; some could not go further in education or learn a trade. They cited cases of other young women like them who had travelled abroad and were successful in lifting their families out of poverty. The main nature of their experience was sex trafficking. They worked under Madame and pimps whom they frequently referred to as Madame's black boy and trolleys. All the victims claimed they had no idea of the nature of the work they were going to do in Italy (Europe). They were recruited from Benin by sponsors and assumed they were going to work as nannies, hairdressers and in tomato factories.

Many of the young women travelled by air but with fake passports and papers. All victims got their false travelling papers with ease. They ranged from Beninoise, Ghanaian, Togolese and Senegalese indigenes' passports. Nigerian passports were used, with victims photographs superimposed and called "duplicated or transplanted passport". Some victims who travelled by land had no papers or travelling documents until they got to a transit country. Trafficking arrangements were seen as a joint

effort or as some respondents put it "50-50". Some of the VoTs borrowed money, had property sold by their families to enable them to meet the requirements of their sponsors. It was fashionable to travel out by any means during this period. Many of the survivors and family members openly abused NGOs and people who were against trafficking in persons. A trafficker or the agent was elegantly called a sponsor having had a positive note. Sponsors were on the lookout for victims and the vulnerable on the other hand, were on the lookout for sponsors. The attraction according to many respondents was that many Benin women had travelled out before; they came back to build houses and drive cars thereby giving the impression that there is money outside the country and the money has good value in Nigeria. Few victims that went with their relatives were spared from taking oaths in shrines. Initiation /oath-taking was more emphasised and it was seen as part of the trade-legal agreement. Above all, these victims are kept in check through oath-taking and rituals of all sorts sometimes involving a vow of secrecy before they leave the shores of Nigeria.

The majority of these VoTs, had the desire to return to Europe. Re-trafficked victims were encountered. One victim had travelled abroad and had been repatriated three times, six others had travelled abroad and have been repatriated twice. They blamed their deportation on household witchcraft, envious family members as well as friends back in Europe. On further inquiry on why they wanted to return to where they were deported, two of the respondents claimed they knew how to operate and would fare better with the experiences they have gathered. Families of the VoTs were not happy about their returning home, especially as some of them were not able to send back money or had not finished paying the debt incurred for their travelling (Eghafona, 2009). During this period under review, trafficking could be described as:

...so ingrained in Edo State, especially in Benin City and its immediate environs, that it is estimated that virtually every Benin family has one member or the other involved in trafficking either as a 'victim', sponsor, madam or trafficker. Many families pride themselves on having their daughter, wife, sister, or other relation in Italy, Spain or the Netherlands, pointing to houses, cars, boreholes and other material things acquired with the money sent by their daughters. This is especially noticed in obituary announcements where all surviving children are in one European country or the other (Okojie et al 2003:43).

2009-2014

Several VoTs were interviewed in separate researches, (Eghafona, 2009; Uniben Observatory 2012^a; Uniben Observatory 2012^b; Ikhidero, 2013). During this period, 45% of survivors claimed they had ideas however vague that they may be involved in prostitution but not to the extent experienced. Many VoTs were less interested in being re-trafficked. These were mainly women who were down with diseases and those suffering from psychological problems. Some others were interested in being re-trafficked. Some also indicated interest in travelling to other countries with the thought of better prospects. The majority of the victims claimed that their family members were not pleased to have them back home. Two survivors described in detail horrific experiences and desired to stay in shelters for the rest of their lives as they felt rejected by family members. These VoTs travelled by land and air with false papers. A survivor recalled drinking her urine and being molested all through the journey on road. Some victims began their prostitution while waiting for papers in Lagos. Oath taking was still a common occurrence.

Between 2015 and 2019, more VoTs were personally encountered (Ayodele; 2017, Agbontaen-Eghafona, 2017, Ohonba & Agbontaen-Eghafona 2019). VoTs were more willing to talk about their experience. Some desired to return with the hope of being lucky. Many VoTs suffered from more psychological problems. Some sounded uncoordinated during interviews. Along with health issues, unwanted pregnancies and babies delivered by VoTs were also causes of instability. Many partook in oaths, but some were not bound by oaths but allegiance to pay the cost of trafficking to their "connection man" or " boga"; Many families were still opposed to victims being returned home without being successful. From anecdotal evidence, a brave returnee from Libya narrated how she was mocked at home for only having as her achievement, a handshake from the Edo State governor. However, during this period, the mass returns from Libya from 2017 brought more awareness to families and the proclamation of the Benin monarch, Oba Ewuare II against oath taking, on Saturday 9th March 2018 brought a reduction to the effect of oath-taking.

Why Re-trafficking?

Some factors are seen as the impetus for the re-trafficking of Nigerian women. These are:

- 1. The attitude of families of the victims of trafficking:** It was observed that the stance of family members hindered effective rehabilitation of returnees and encourage re-trafficking. In Edo State, for example, a high percentage of the trafficked victims, were trafficked with the knowledge, cooperation and encouragement of parents and close relatives (DIS 2007; Eghafona 2009, Eghafona 2017, Ohonba and Agbontaen-Eghafona, 2019). Trafficking of family members was seen as a survival strategy and expectations of becoming wealthy. Many of the VoTs were very often trafficked with the full consent of their family members, for example, a parent. Trafficking became a necessary sacrifice to ensure the family's economic survival or even a bright future. Many families were ready to sacrifice a daughter or even a wife to fulfil a dream of a better life for the remaining family left behind in Nigeria. The families involved are willing to pay the price and sacrifice a family member as long as there is money to be earned as soon as the debt to the trafficker has been paid. VoTs who cooperated with police abroad to prosecute their Madams or traffickers face a very difficult situation when they return to Nigeria, and some may prefer a life in prison or to stay abroad, instead of being disowned by the family and the humiliation of being considered a failure because the family has lost its investment, that is the money paid to the trafficker to send the girl or woman abroad.

Returning victims are exposed to psychological and emotional violence and pressure from their families and, commonly, victims who have returned before the debt has been paid are re-trafficked. If the family rejects a victim because it is considered that she has spoiled the chances of becoming wealthy, the victim will most likely be re-trafficked back to Europe by her family. The families of a returned victim often consider that the victim is the reason why the investment failed and this could easily result in the victim being excluded from her own family or even killed. Repatriated victims were derided for being fallen victims of repatriation, rebuked and told to find their way back to Europe. Families also tend to see children as an investment for the family and even push them into the hands of traffickers and later tolerate their exploitation, insofar as they can lift their families out of poverty and improve the economic status of the household.

- 2. The Oath Factor:** The swearing to an oath or *juju* factor is an instrument of control. In the administration of oaths on victims, they are made to swear oaths before traditional shrines or

spiritualists that they will repay an agreed sum of money when they get to their destination. The sums ranged from U.S.\$40,000 – U.S. \$55,000 or €40,000-50000. The victims have the impression that they can repay the money in a few months. The oath sworn was to emphasize that terrible thing would happen to the victim if she does not pay this agreed sum or if she revealed the trafficker's identity. The victims swore to this oath before leaving Benin City. Some victims are made to take another oath in Europe. Some victims mentioned that there are Nigerian shrines in Turin Italy, for this same purpose. Fear of the unknown generated from the oath has been a major psychological manipulation of victims that can last as long as possible. They are so scared of the oath, and during the swearing, victims supply their pubic hair, nail cuttings, their pants, menstrual pad that were left on the shrine until the money was repaid. Victims could be controlled from anywhere by telephone as a reminder of the oath or reinforcement of the oath through a photograph. Some victims claimed that it is dangerous to have their photos in the shrine. This has resulted in a sort of conspiracy by traffickers to silence victims. The juju mechanism and oaths of loyalty make victims to believe that they cannot get their freedom easily, and as such they are not willing to cooperate with law enforcement (Okojie et al 2004). The initiative of Oba Ewuare II of Benin, who released victims of trafficking from their oath of secrecy and placed a curse on traffickers, has produced results and said to have a great impact on the lives of thousands of women and girls in Nigeria and abroad.

3. At the earlier years of VoTs deportation/repatriation for example in 2003, the **Nigerian government was not able to fulfil its obligations** in the provision of protective shelters, reception areas and official allocation for upkeep for VoTs. Many VoTs arrived scantily dressed and near-naked, as they were taken off the streets in Europe. They are not allowed to take their belongings. Some of them arrive without any money and some had to be given clothing items to cover up and money to buy food or transport themselves home. Then the Screening Centres at both the Immigration Service and Human Trafficking Unit (Police) were not conducive. These centres are converted detention rooms for suspected criminals. There are no beds and they have a few mattresses donated by IOM and UNICEF (Okojie 2003: 71).

In 2003, at the Edo State Liaison Office in Lagos, the Immigration Service and the Police (Interpol) from time to time brought victims of Edo State origin to their office to be sent to Benin City, the capital of Edo State or to be released to their relations. Unfortunately, the office was not in a position to offer the needed assistance to VoTs in terms of shelter and upkeep. According to the Liaison Officer, as soon as the Immigration or Police brought VoTs in through one gate, they escape through another gate almost immediately. Many of them went to their original recruiters to help them go back to Italy. So within 2 to 6 months, nearly half of repatriated persons have found their way back to Europe. At this stage, the issue of reintegration by NGOs or Government agencies did not apply for most of them. Therefore, several VoTs ended up being re-trafficked. Some of them escaped from their traffickers or employers and voluntarily sought refuge with Catholic NGOs in Italy. Such victims are usually met on arrival by the IOM and other Catholic sisters and assisted to reintegrate themselves back into society (Okojie et al 2003:72).

4. **The age of VoTs** has also been a factor in the re-trafficking of Nigerian women. The age range of most of the VoTs encountered between 2003 and 2019 was 15 to early 30s. The majority of these very young women, especially in rural communities, saw travelling abroad by any means as a way out of poverty. Some VoTs repatriated were seen as failures. *"If others can make it, why*

not you?" was the common question posed to them. Jobe (2010) lends credence to this Nigeria (Edo State) situation. *The majority of the 79 re-trafficking cases were said to involve minors or young adults under the age of 25. Most of the trafficked persons were aged 25 and under when first assisted by IOM missions A minority of cases involved VoTs assisted by IOM when they were over the age of 25 Some of these cases involved trafficked persons who were over the age of 30* (Jobe, 2010:14). Majority of the victims of re-trafficking cases were under the age of 25 years. This indicates that younger VoTs are at risk of re-trafficking. The younger women still had hope of venturing back into the trafficking situation with better chances.

5. Some victims of trafficking were also subjected to the **fear of retaliation by the traffickers or 'madams'**, especially when the debt owed was not paid. Some sources find it more likely for the victim to be re-trafficked than subjected to physical violence as retaliation (European Asylum Support Office, 2019):

...reported examples of reprisals include physical violence, kidnapping, intimidation, burning of the victim's home, killing of family members, etc. Victims of trafficking may be unwilling to testify against traffickers due to fear of reprisals. Most victims do not want to return to their home region in Nigeria to avoid being re-trafficked; however, many victims of trafficking may return to a trafficking situation. They may do so on their initiative or be forced by the trafficker or the 'madam', or by their family. This is, in particular, the case when they have not repaid their 'debt' or they have not fulfilled the expectation of becoming wealthy" (European Asylum Support Office: 60).

6. The legal guide by Anti-Slavery International and Eaves Poppy Project (2010) warned that **lack of compensation** can lead to the re-trafficking of VoTs. It specified that VoTs forced into prostitution and forced labour were vulnerable to being re-trafficked *because of a failure of the criminal justice system to provide financial compensation for their ordeal. Trafficked people are subjected to emotional trauma, physical suffering, and unpaid wages. Many are raped, beaten, threatened with physical violence and deportation and forced to work long hours. While trafficking gangs make millions of pounds, the victims of trafficking are left financially insecure without compensation, which leaves them vulnerable to becoming re-trafficked.* Compensation of VoTs is seen as acknowledging the victim's pain and suffering and serves as a first step towards overcoming the trauma inflicted and abuses suffered by the trafficked person as well. (www.antislavery.org/lack-compensation-leads-re-trafficking-victims)

7. **Social stigma of victims of trafficking:** VoTs can easily be subjected to discrimination and marginalisation. According to Ezeh (2017):

The victims of human trafficking encounter considerable obstacles when they return home. On their arrival at the Airport, they are seen as undignified persons. People isolate themselves from them. They receive lots of discrimination and ostracization because of their involvement in prostitution. Despite the stigma on the victim, they are ashamed of themselves. Some of the victims suffer from psychological disorder which hinders them from communicating and trusting other people." (Ezeh, 2017, section 5.6.1.)

VoTs are also seen as most vulnerable in the community especially when they return empty-handed. They face obstacles and discrimination with the assumption that they were prostitutes who may have contracted some deadly sexually transmitted diseases. (Women's Link

Worldwide, 2015; Ezeh, 2017). This rejection and the “lack of protection and options for reintegration...place many women and girls at risk for re-trafficking.” (Women’s Link Worldwide, 2015: 68)

8. **Victims of Trafficking may return to the same difficulties that led them to migrate in the first place.** Conditions such as poverty, unemployment, insecurity, lack of basic amenities (personal communication, 2017). When reintegration is not adequately carried out, some VoTs are vulnerable to being re-trafficked.
9. **Inadequate rehabilitation of victims:** In 2008, a former Attorney General of Nigeria, Michael Aondokaa reiterated that *...victims of human trafficking are usually subjected to various forms of physical assault, exploitation and abuse resulting in highly traumatized individuals. Trafficked persons are often rejected and exposed to health hazards, such as HIV/AIDS, STIs, mental disorders and other related problems. Unfortunately, victims are further traumatized by the absence of appropriate intervention to remedy these experiences* (NAPTIP, 2008:1). *The National Policy on Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons in Nigeria* (NAPTIP, 2008^b) was, therefore, a response to the needed intervention. In the policy document, steps in the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims are specified. NAPTIP as at February 2018 (Okah-Donli, 2018) had a well-designed programme for rehabilitation, offering sheltering services and rehabilitation to VoTs. However, in search of effective rehabilitation of VoTs/, the need to look at their unique experiences in further recommending treatment is essential.

Psychological Rehabilitation

As recommended by Robjant (2016), in the psychological rehabilitation of victims of modern slavery, for effective psychosocial therapy, generalisations and assumptions should be avoided as every survivor is unique and has different needs. The psychological needs of each victim must be properly assessed by mental health professionals/psychologists taking factors such as individual, systemic and cultural into consideration before proffering treatment. The psycho-social rehabilitation of these categories of women is very essential to help them to return to a meaningful life reintegrate better into society. According to Anyagbenam et al (2015), the experiences of VoTs creates complex psychological disorder in victims that should be attended to by psychologists. Trafficked victims are said to experience nightmares, depression, anxiety, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and other mental health-related ailments. Furthermore, VoTs, health issues can be cumulative, from every stage of the trafficking process, as illustrated in figure 1 below (WHO, 2012 :3).

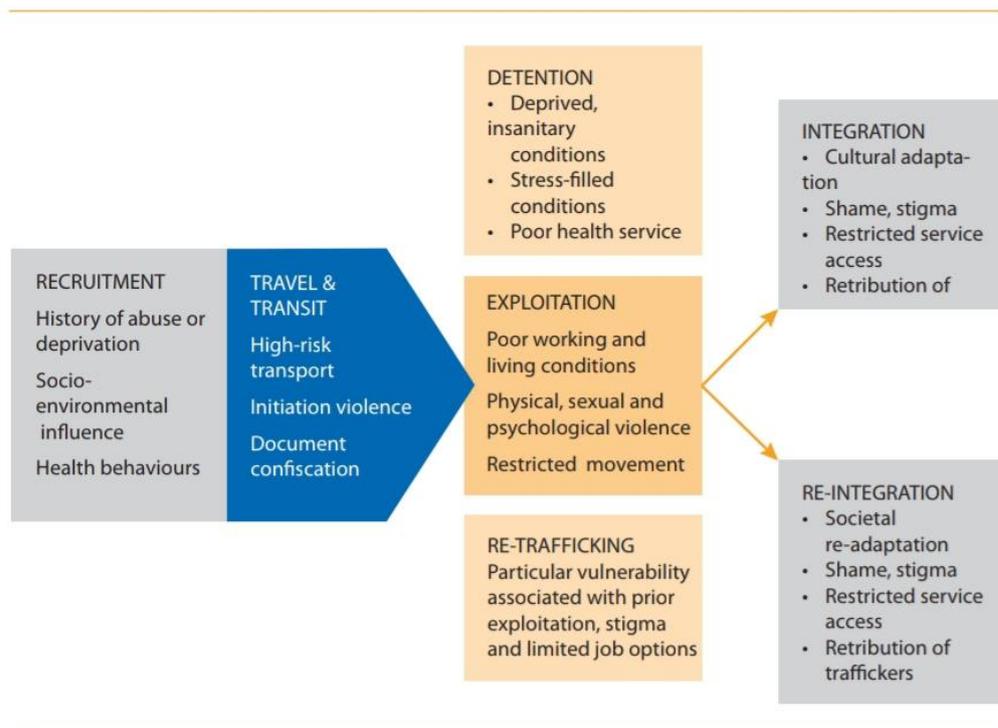


Figure 1: Influences on health and well-being at various stages of trafficking (WHO, 2012:3)

Four stages of recovering from human trafficking and preventing re-trafficking

Many of the female VoTs that get assistance usually move up one step when they get help and are usually known as survivors, or goal-getters like in the Edo State Task Force on Human Trafficking calls them. However, according to Rondon, in understanding the four stages of recovering from sex trafficking (2017), the process can be in four stages:

1. Victim/Outcast

Victims are subjected to on-going trauma, which may include one, some or all of the following: physical, psychological and emotional abuse (beatings, degradation, humiliation, torture, rapes, gang rapes, their healthcare needs are probably going unmet). Unaddressed traumas can cause victims to be fearful and to hang their heads in shame. They live in survival mode. While being trafficked, they navigate through life under the victim mindset. They have blinders on and they can't see that they 'are victims all the while their trafficker is exploiting and abusing them. Their reality is distorted. To family and society, they are a disgrace. Some are even trafficked by their own families.

2. Survivor

Most victims are called survivors by NGOs who take care of them. At this stage, they already have help and are living in a safe place. They are no longer being victimized.

- *they may be reluctant to fall asleep because of nightmares*
- *they relive the traumas over and over through flashbacks*
- *the intrusive and negative thoughts are overwhelming to them*
- *the shame, guilt, and fear overwhelm them*

At this stage, in the life of many Nigerian survivors, they are relatively safe and maybe getting their medical and legal needs addressed and learning skills. In reintegrating VoTs into the society, appropriate skills acquisition programmes should be designed for them. VoTs are trained in fashion designing (tailoring), hairdressing, photography, bead making and catering. These are viable enterprises in Nigerian society today. Some VoTs are said to have also acquired formal and tertiary education (Okah-Donli, 2018).

According to Rondon, from time to time they are tempted to go back to their trafficker and “the life”, to what is familiar, because they doubt their abilities to make it in society. At this stage, counselling will be most beneficial. Many VoTs personally encountered in the field end up at the survival stage.

3. Thriver

Thrivers move beyond merely surviving like the survivors. At this stage, erstwhile victims should have been gainfully employed, and contributing members of society. Thrivers should have settled on their own without depending on assistance from NGOs or the government "living more independently and out of survival mode and looking forward to a promising future " (Rondon, 2017:4). Thrivers differ from survivors "know their traffickers' true, malicious intentions. They're determined never to go back to “the life” or their trafficker". Thrivers still need counselling from time to time. It is also necessary at this stage to form support groups for thrivers and empowerment schemes should be successfully executed. Former trainees of the skills acquisition programmes should also be equipped with managerial skills. With the skill acquisition programmes still going on, it is necessary to train the thrivers in managerial and entrepreneurship skills to enable them to manage and sustain their businesses in the future.

4. Victor/Leader

According to Rondon (2017), victors/leaders are leaders of their own lives. They've faced their fears, processed their traumas and came to understand and accept themselves and others. They know they have been victimized and they understand how they fell prey. They have acquired good skills and they know how to set boundaries. They are careful who they allow into their lives and they navigate through life with their eyes and ears open. They can be leaders such as mothers/fathers leading their children, or a leadership position at work, or they can start their own business and/or be leaders in sales of a product or service.

Conclusion

Victims of trafficking are said to be vulnerable to re-trafficking within two years of first being trafficked (Toney-Butler & Mittel, 2019), and upon return due to many factors as explained above. These can also be categorised as debt bondage, psychological, emotional, social and economic conditions. Furthermore, rehabilitation and reintegration into society can be traumatic for an already traumatized person who has been exploited by traffickers. Re-victimization/re-trafficking then should be avoided by enacting protective measures (Toney-Butler & Mittel, 2019). It is necessary to also provide longer-term assistance locally and nationally that goes beyond just the immediate needs of the VoTs. Such assistance includes legal, financial, employment and health needs (IOM, 2007).

The trauma VoTs have gone through should not be ignored in their rehabilitation process. Their health issues should also be of grave concern to all. Therefore, rehabilitation and reintegration packages

should include trauma healing that will move victims to become victors. Rehabilitation should begin in the originating country and conclude effectively in the receiving country.

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