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Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria: *Causes and Solutions*

Tim S. Braimah[1]

Abstract - Edo State, the 'Heartbeat of Nigeria', has been labeled as "the most endemic source of human trafficking in Nigeria". As a result of this negative label, a number of international organizations and non-governmental organizations have intervened to combat sex trafficking in the region. Despite these interventions, sex trafficking is still rife in Edo State. This article argues that political, economic, religious, social and cultural factors contribute to the difficulties in curbing sex trafficking in Edo State. To eradicate it, a joint effort between the government, traditional leaders, religious institutions/NGOs and members of the public is needed.

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I. Introduction

Edo State,[2] and in particular Benin City, has gained notoriety for human trafficking, particularly for sexual exploitation. As the world has experienced globalization, the trafficking of human beings for sex has taken yet another turn. Human traffickers, aware of the risks involved in the trafficking of human beings, have set up sophisticated channels and networks for the easy and undetected flow of trafficked persons. Irrespective of the interventions by international bodies, NGOs and national agencies to combat trafficking in Edo State, the region is still a hub for trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation.

Owing to this increase in sex trafficking, this study has been guided by the following research question: What are the obstacles in curbing sex trafficking in Edo State? The objective of the study is to examine critically the factors hindering the curbing of sex trafficking in Edo State. The major assumption that has guided this study is that poverty and unemployment have hindered the reduction of sex trafficking in Edo State. The arguments presented in this paper, reveal that until corruption is dealt with, stricter laws implemented, and there is greater involvement of traditional leaders and members of the public, NGOs and other organizations with an interest in eradicating sex trafficking in Edo State may never be able to achieve this.

Part I of this article begins with a discussion on international instruments relating to human trafficking. The definition of human and sex trafficking are provided in this section. Part II discusses Nigeria's involvement in combating and eradicating human trafficking. It also provides a discussion of Edo State's role in combating human trafficking, particularly for sexual exploitation. This part also discusses the influx of Edo girls into Europe. Part III presents reasons behind the continuing difficulty of curbing sex trafficking in Edo State. Part IV provides recommendations for the reduction of sex trafficking in Edo State, and conclusions are drawn.

II. International Instruments and Human Trafficking

Instruments relating to the abolition of trafficking in human beings date back to the 1926 Slavery Convention. Additional international instruments which include provisions dealing with the prohibition of human trafficking include: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948);[3] International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (1966);[4] the United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949); and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979). More recently, international instruments have been adopted to combat human trafficking, particularly for sexual exploitation, and these include: the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two Protocols: the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (UNTP); and the Protocol against the smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. According to Gallagher, the UNTP is the most significant international instrument on trafficking[5] because it

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[2]Edo State is an inland state in central southern Nigeria. Its capital is Benin City

[3] Article 4 states that "no one shall he held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms"

[4] Article 8
1. No one shall be held in slavery; slavery and the slave-trade in all their forms shall be prohibited.
2. No one shall be held in servitude.
3.(a) No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour;

[5] Anne Gallagher, 'Recent legal developments in the field of human trafficking: A critical review of the 2005European Convention and Related Instruments', *European Journal of Migration and Law* 8 (2006),p.165

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provided the 'first ever internationally agreed definition of trafficking' which has now gained worldwide acceptance.[6]

a) Definition of Human Trafficking

Article 3 of the UNTP defines human trafficking as:

(a) Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring 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 power or of a position of vulnerability or of 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.[7] Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.[8]

Other than providing a detailed definition of trafficking, the aim of the UNTP is fairly straightforward. In its preamble, it requires states parties to adopt the 3 Ps: "prevention", "punishment" and "protection".

Gallagher identifies a weakness in the substance of the UNTP. She states that the mandatory obligations contained in it "are few and relate only to criminalization, investigation and prosecution; cooperation between national law enforcement agencies; border controls; and sanction on commercial carriers".[9] Similarly, Baker states that the UNTP only focuses on the criminalization of trafficking.[10] Moreover, states parties to it are under no legal obligation to provide trafficked victims with support, protection or to avoid involuntary repatriation.[11] They only need to provide support to trafficked victims at their own discretion, an act which may contradict laws of international protection.

However, irrespective of the flaws identified, the Protocol presents important statements on the curbing of human trafficking. In order to prevent human trafficking, Article 9 urges states parties "to take or strengthen measures, including through bilateral or multilateral cooperation, to alleviate the factors that make persons, especially women and children, vulnerable to trafficking, such as poverty, underdevelopment and lack of equal opportunity".[12]

b) Types of human trafficking

The trafficking of human beings is typically divided into two categories: labour trafficking and sex trafficking. While the former relates to "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labour",[13] the latter involves the coercion of unwilling individuals into sexual practices. This article only focuses on sex trafficking.

c) Definition of sex trafficking

The definition of sex trafficking has no universal acceptance. However, for the purpose of this paper, sex trafficking is defined as: "Trafficking that involves moving people within and across local or national borders for the purpose of sexual exploitation".[14]

III. Nigeria and Human Trafficking

Nigeria signed the UNTP on December 13th 2000 and ratified it on 28 June 2001. As a state party, Nigeria accepted a declaration to prevent and combat trafficking in women and children and to punish components of the offence of human trafficking. According to Falola and Afolabi, "prior to July 2003, the trafficking of human beings could only be punished through legislation aimed at punishing components of the offence, such as some isolated provisions of the Nigerian Constitution, the Nigerian Criminal Code, as well as the Penal Code of Northern Nigeria".[15] Falola and Afolabi identify the problems with the legislation associated with punishing human traffickers in Nigeria prior to 2003. According to them, prosecutors had to use their own creativity to punish perpetrators of human trafficking which resulted in penalties which were not proportionate to the offence committed. Secondly, the strategies adopted by prosecutors also had the result of re-victimization. Thirdly, the application of the provisions by prosecutors also meant that traffickers were able to escape punishment.[16] Olateru-Olagbegi and Ikpeme describe the Nigerian legislation dealing with human trafficking prior to 2003 as "scattered",[17] because there

[6] Ibid, 165

[7] Protocol to Prevent , Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime, Nov. 15, 2000, 2237 U.N.T.S. 343

[8] Id. At 344

[9] Anne Gallagher, 'Recent legal developments in the field of human trafficking: A critical review of the 2005European Convention and Related Instruments', *European Journal of Migration and Law* 8 (2006),p.165

[10] Carrie Baker, 'The influence of international human trafficking on United States prostitution laws: The case of expungement laws', *Syracuse Law Review* 62 (2012),p.173

[11] Anne Gallagher, 'Recent legal developments in the field of human trafficking: A critical review of the 2005European Convention and Related Instruments', *European Journal of Migration and Law* 8 (2006),p.165

[12] Article 9 (4): Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

[13] Kimberly McCabe, *'The trafficking of persons: National and international responses'* (Peter Lang, 2008), p.40

[14] Leonard Territo, George Kirkham, *'International sex trafficking of women & children: understanding the global epidemic'* (Looseleaf,2010)

[15] Toyin Falola, Niyi Afolabi, '*The human cost of African Migrations'* (Routledge, 2007),p.191

[16] Ibid, p.191

[17] Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi, Anne Ikpeme, 'Review of Legislation and Policies in Nigeria on Human Trafficking and Forced Labour, *International Labour Organization*, p.18

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was no single legislation on human trafficking and legislation which dealt with human trafficking could be found in the criminal and penal codes.

However, "scattered" legislative laws on human trafficking and the problems faced by prosecutors to prosecute human traffickers were eradicated with the introduction of the 2003 Trafficking in Persons Law Enforcement and Administration Act (Trafficking Act).[18] The Nigerian Trafficking Act, amended in 2005 to increase penalties for trafficking offenders, prescribes a five year imprisonment penalty and/or a $670 fine for labor trafficking, and 10 years to life imprisonment for sex trafficking.[19] The adoption of the Nigerian Trafficking Act by the Nigerian National Assembly has been described as seminal.[20] This is because, according to Falola and Afolabi, 'it marked the first time in the history of Nigeria that the National Assembly passed a measure that addressed the problem of human trafficking holistically'.[21] They make excellent remarks regarding the adoption of the Nigerian Trafficking Act. The Act[22] provides detailed and well-spelled out penalties fort the trafficking of human beings and, in particular, children. In addition, with the ratification of the UNTP, there is no doubt that Nigeria has made a stance against the trafficking of human beings, particularly women and children. In spite of this, it still remains a popular trafficking destination.

According to the 2012 Trafficking in Persons Report on Nigeria,[23] the country remains 'a source, transit, and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking'.[24] This report is a result of the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in the United States, which requires the Secretary of State to issue annual Trafficking in Persons reports.[25] The Trafficking in Persons Report rates countries according to the origin and destination of victims of severe forms of trafficking[26] and Nigeria is currently listed as a Tier 2 country. This means that Nigeria is not complying, but is making significant efforts to comply, with the minimum standards in the fight against human trafficking. To support the assertion on the lack of progress regarding anti-trafficking, the 2012 Report stated that "roughly a third of convicted traffickers received fines in lieu of prison time, and despite identifying 386 labor trafficking victims the Nigerian government prosecuted only two forced labor cases".[27] The 2012 Report also detailed a decrease in prosecutions of human traffickers: "although court proceedings increased slightly in 2011, the number of cases prosecuted remained low compared to the large number of trafficking investigations."[28] This figure certainly shows Nigeria's minimal effort in combating trafficking. The 2012 Trafficking Report also identified flaws with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP).[29] According to the 2012 Trafficking Report, NAPTIP failed to increase its funding for the protection of victims which resulted in a lack of reintegration by trafficked victims and the lack of maintenance of shelters for trafficked victims.[30] NAPTIP's lack of funding for trafficked victims to re-integrate into Nigerian society has a detrimental effect on victims of human trafficking because trafficked victims who are not re-integrated are likely to fall victims of re-trafficking. Adams also documents NAPTIP's low reintegration of trafficked victims. According to Adams, although 2,285 victims of human trafficking have passed through NAPTIP since its beginning, only 45 trafficked victims have been successfully reintegrated.[31] She asserts that this is because trafficked victims are afraid to seek NAPTIP's help because of fear of testifying.[32] Adams states that this fear stems from NAPTIP's criminal-centred approach rather than a human rights-based approach.

a) Edo State

In the same way that Nigeria has adopted national laws to combat human trafficking, the State of Edo has also taken measures aimed at combating human trafficking, particularly for sexual exploitation. In 2000, the Edo State House of Assembly enacted a law (Edo State Criminal Code (Amendment Law))[33] criminalizing prostitution in the state. However, the law has been the subject of criticism despite its introduction to combat human trafficking. According to Olateru-Olagbegi and Ikpeme, although the state law was introduced to deter anyone participating in sex

[18]Hereinafter: Nigerian Trafficking Act
[19]Trafficking in Persons Report (2010, 10th ed.), p.256
[20]Toyin Falola, Niyi Afolabi, '*The human cost of African Migrations*' (Routledge, 2007),p.191
[21] Ibid, p.191
[22] See: TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (PROHIBITIION) LAWENFORCEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION ACT, 2003
[23] Heinafter: 2012 Trafficking Report
[24] United States Department of State, *2012 Trafficking in Persons Report - Nigeria*, 19 June 2012
[25] Carrie Baker, 'The influence of international human trafficking on United States prostitution laws: The case of expungement laws', *Syracuse Law Review* 62 (2012),pp.173-174
[26] See: U.S Department of State: Tier Placements – Office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons
[27] United States Department of State, *2012 Trafficking in Persons Report - Nigeria*, 19 June 2012
[28] Ibid
[29] The National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) is responsible for investigation, enforcement, and coordination of human trafficking
[30] United States Department of State, *2012 Trafficking in Persons Report - Nigeria*, 19 June 2012
[31] Cherish Adams, 'Re-trafficked victims: How a Human Rights Approach can stop the cycle of re-victimization of sex trafficking victims', *Georgia Washington International Law Review* 43 (2011),p.222
[32] Ibid, p.222
[33]See Criminal Code Amendment Law (2000), Laws of Edo State – Amendments to Sections 222, 223, 225, and 226 of the Criminal Code

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trafficking, it also penalizes trafficked victims for prostitution.[34] Irrespective of this criticism, the passage of the Criminal Code (Amendment) Law 2000 made its stance on prostitution and human trafficking clear. The amendments,[35] which make prostitution in Edo State a criminal offence, impose penalties of fines and imprisonment on those partaking in prostitution and trafficking. Stating reasons for this law, Babafemi asserts that the Edo State government enacted it as a "reaction to the perception that the State was the epicentre of trafficking in women for sex in Nigeria".[36]

b) Edo State 'Hub of Sex Trafficking'

According to the Danish Immigration Service fact finding mission on human trafficking to two States (Lagos and Edo State) and the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria Abuja, the majority of "female victims of trafficking are from Benin-City".[37] Similarly, the United States Department of State, in its 2012 Trafficking Report on Nigeria, stated that Nigerian women forced into prostitution in Italy were primarily from Edo State.[38] Other than Edo State, the International Organization for Migration has stated that Edo State is a source of human trafficking by listing known endemic local government areas which include: Oredo, Ikpoba–okha, Ovia North East, Uhunmwonde, Egor, Orhionmwon, Esan North East, Esan Central, Etsako West, and Ovia South West.[39] Additionally, Aronowitz states that "approximately 95 per cent of Trafficked Nigerian women to Italy come from Edo State".[40] Aronowitz shows his astonishment at the high percentage of trafficked victims from Edo State simply because of the fact that Edo State is not the most poverty-stricken region in Nigeria.[41] Similarly, Adams opines that it seems odd for Edo State to have the most trafficked victims because it "has a lower poverty rate than three quarters of the States in Nigeria".[42] More recently, Kara has asserted that up to 80 percent of victims trafficked from Nigeria to Italy for sexual exploitation belonged to a single ethnic group, the Edos. As a result of previous and current findings of high concentrations of human trafficking victims in Edo State, several NGOs have dedicated themselves to providing help to victims of human trafficking in Edo State. NGOs, such as IdiaRenaissance, which is notable for its pioneering efforts to eradicate human trafficking in Edo State, have helped raised awareness of the effect of human trafficking, particularly for sexual exploitation. In addition, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters has also made efforts to resettle victims of human trafficking and arrest traffickers. However, the convictions of human traffickers made by this National Agency in Edo State is relatively low. From 2004 to 2012 only 34 summary convictions were made in Edo State's capital, Benin City.[43] This relatively low figure of summary convictions begs the question: if Edo State is the hub of sex trafficking, why are the convictions of sex traffickers not higher than other states in Nigeria?

Irrespective of the efforts by NGOs, and national and international intervention to curb human trafficking in Edo State, the trafficking of victims there is still on the increase.

c) Influx of Edo girls and women into Europe

The influx of West African prostitutes, particularly girls and women from Edo State, is a recent phenomenon. The modern sex trafficking associated with Edo State is estimated to have begun in the late 1980s. [44] Cole and Booth state that women from Edo State were among the first generation of prostitutes in Italy, and over this period, some of the Edo women became madams who in turn themselves began recruiting young girls and women abroad for prostitution.[45] Cole and Booth are correct; the first generation of Edo women and girls who went to Italy initially went abroad to conduct legitimate business such as the buying and selling of goods which included clothes and jewelries. However, in the process of engaging in such business, a lot of women became compromised and augmented their business with prostitution. Carling agrees with this and maintains that it was Italy's demand for low skilled labor in agriculture and services in the 1980s that sparked the migration of Nigerians, particularly from Edo State to Italy.[46]

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[34]Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi, Anne Ikpeme, 'Review of Legislation and Policies in Nigeria on Human Trafficking and Forced Labour, *International Labour Organization*, p.21

[35] See Sections 222, 223, 225, and 226 of the Criminal Code Amendment Law (2000) of Edo State

[36]Odunsi Babafemi, 'Romancing the Foe: The HIV Epidemic and the Case for a Pragmatic Stance on Prostitution and Illicit Drug Use in Nigeria, '*Malawi Law Journal* 4 (2010),p.218

[37] Danish Immigration Service, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p.5

[38] United States Department of State, *2012 Trafficking in Persons Report - Nigeria*, 19 June 2012

[39] Danish Immigration Service, Cooperation with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other related matters (NAPTIP), April 2009, p.7

[40]Alexis Aronowitz, 'Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings: the phenomenon, the markets that drive it and the organizations that promote it', *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 9 (2001),p.183

[41]Ibid, p.183

[42]Cherish Adams, 'Re-trafficked victims: How a Human Rights Approach can stop the cycle of re-victimization of sex trafficking victims', *Georgia Washington International Law Review* 43 (2011),p.219

[43] Overview of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters: Summary of convictions 2004-2012

[44] Jeffrey Cole, Sally Booth, *'Dirty work: Immigrants in domestic service, agriculture, and prostitution in Sicily'* (Lexington Books, 2007),p.123

[45] Ibid, p.123

[46] Jorgen Carling, 'Trafficking in women from Nigeria to Europe', *Migration Information Source,* available at

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IV. The Reasons Behind the Difficulties of Curbing Sex Trafficking in Edo State

Several factors have contributed to the difficulties in curbing sex trafficking in Edo State. These are grouped into political, economic, cultural and social factors.

a) Political Factors

The first and major factor responsible for the inability to curb trafficking in Edo State lies with the Nigerian government. This article argues that, but for corruption which creates poverty in Nigeria, sex trafficking in Edo State would have been reduced.

i. *Government Corruption*

Although the Nigerian government enacts and implements anti-trafficking laws, the government has played a crucial role in the increase in sex trafficking. This difficulty stems from governmental corruption which, in turn, means that there is a lack of distribution of wealth.. Falola and Heaton identify Nigeria as a very wealthy country owing to Nigeria's role as the leading exporter of oil in Africa and one of the leading exporters of oil in the world.[47] Despite the vast amount of oil and mineral resources in the country, the majority of Nigerians continue to live in poverty. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2010, 60.9% of Nigerians were living in absolute poverty. Similarly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in its Paper entitled "*The role of corruption in trafficking in persons"* concurs that corruption and trafficking in persons (particularly for sexual exploitation) are criminal activities which are closely linked.[48] The UNODC also asserts that it is only when the actual impact of corruption on human trafficking is dealt with, that human trafficking can be effectively challenged.[49] Governmental corruption, which is a major cause of poverty in Nigeria, lies at the heart of the sex trafficking problem in Nigeria, particularly in Edo State. Therefore, the Nigerian government is very responsible for the difficulty in curbing sex trafficking in Edo State. As Evbayiroso rightly states: "It is true that we have a prostitution and sex trafficking problem, but we have to put the blames where they belong."[50]

ii. *Corruption of Public Institutions*

Another factor for the non-effective curbing of sex trafficking in Edo State is mainly centred on the Nigerian Police Force. Although the enactment of laws to combat sex trafficking in Nigeria and Edo State are clearly in place, the ability to implement them is non-existent. Like all other branches of government in Nigeria, corruption is endemic in the Nigerian Police Force. According to Human Rights Watch:

The police routinely extorts money from victims to investigate a given criminal case, which leave those who refuse or are unable to pay without access to justice. Meanwhile, criminal suspects with money can simply bribe the police to avoid arrest, detention, or prosecution, to influence the outcome of a criminal investigation, or to turn the investigation against the victim.[51]

Saleh-Hanna agrees with this, describing how police set up check points in most parts of Nigeria, wave down cars and collect bribes from some of the drivers.[52] In certain circumstances, drivers who refuse to co-operate are subjected to torture and, in some cases, killed. For example, on the 9th of February 2012, a policeman allegedly shot and killed a commercial bus driver over his alleged refusal to pay a 20 Naira bribe.[53]

Additionally, in a survey conducted by the CLEEN Foundation, it was stated that "among public officials who demanded bribes, the police were the highest at 70 per cent, and bribery and corruption was high in Edo State (42 percent)".[54] With the high percentage of police corruption in Nigeria, and Edo State in particular, there is a grave danger that the police may not arrest sex traffickers who offer them bribes. Astonishingly, the figures for convicted traffickers in Edo State is considerably low. As previously mentioned, from 2004 to 2012, only 34 summary convictions were made in Edo State's capital, Benin City.[55]

The recent claims by NAPTIP, that the Kogi State police released suspected human traffickers[56]

<http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=318> (accessed 22 January 2013)

[47] Toyin Falola, Mathew Heaton, '*A history of Nigeria'* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.11

[48] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 'The role of corruption in trafficking in persons', (2011),p.3

[49] Ibid, p.3

[50] Hilary *Evbayiro*"Nigerian Women's Involvement in International Prostitution: A Case for Edo Bashing." June 13, 2000. http://nigeriaworld.com/feature/ publication/*evbayiro*/o6131oo.html [accessed, 1st February,2013]

[51] Human Rights Watch, *"Everyone's in on the Game," Corruption and Human Rights Abuses by the Nigeria Police Force*, 17 August 2010, p.3

[52] Vivianne Saleh-Hanna, 'Colonial Systems of control: Criminal Justice in Nigeria' (University of Ottawa Press, 2008), p.197

[53] Kelvin, Policeman kills bus driver over 20N bribe- Anambra State News http://www.zimbio.com/Nigeria+Today/articles/fL6d6kPRUu9/policeman+kills+bus+driver+over+N20+bribe [accessed 4th February, 2012]

[54] Olusola Fabiyi, 'Police, Nigeria's number one bribe takers' http://www.punchng.com/news/police-nigerias-number-one-bribe-takers-report/ [accessed 4th February, 2012]

[55] Overview of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters: Summary of convictions 2004-2012

[56] See: Usman Bello, 'Nigeria: Kogi police deny NAPTIP's Claim on Suspected Human Traffickers'

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before their intervention, begs the question whether the trafficking of human beings can be curbed in Nigeria, without the co-operation of the two most important agencies responsible for the ending of human trafficking.

b) Economic Factors

i. *Poverty*

Poverty has been identified as a causal root of the global injustice of human trafficking and sex trafficking in particular. Patterson asserts that the desperate need for jobs to support their families makes women susceptible to traffickers who offer them high salaries.[57] Similarly, Iyen recognizes that trafficked women are either unemployed or earn no money.[58] The other effect of poverty is migration, and this was one of the conclusions of a field survey conducted by Okojie and others in Edo State in 2003.[59] Agreeing with this, Ellis and Akpalla identify poverty as one the factors that drives Nigerian migrants to seek the services of human traffickers.[60] The wish to be trafficked is linked with a desire to improve one's situation, as the following testimony shows:

I got to know that we were going to be fixed in paid employment outside Nigeria, especially in Europe and Benin Republic. Deep inside me I knew anything could happen. We may be raped or forced for sex or engage in prostitution. We were at their mercy. But we were prepared and determined to go out there and succeed.[61]

Although poverty has often been cited as a major cause of human trafficking, particularly for sexual exploitation, it is only a co-existing factor and not its root. As previously mentioned, governmental corruption which causes poverty is the major hindrance to curbing sex trafficking in Nigeria, and in Edo State in particular.

ii. *Unemployment*

Unemployment is another reason why the curbing of sex trafficking in Edo State has been difficult. Government corruption is inextricably linked to unemployment and poverty in Nigeria. For example, but for governmental corruption in Nigeria, several million Nigerians would be employed which would reduce the poverty rate, and, in turn, lower the trafficking of victims for sexual exploitation. Ikein, Alamieyeseigha and Azaiki acknowledge unemployment as a serious socio-economic problem in Nigeria.[62] Like poverty, unemployment is a visible feature in Edo State. Most individuals have carved out employment opportunities for themselves by becoming self-employed. Thus, the state, like most states in Nigeria, is overwhelmed with Okada riders,[63] taxi drivers and traders. In addition, owing to a lack of job opportunities, some girls and women use sex as a means of economic sustenance, not just in Edo State and Nigeria, but in most parts of the world. Therefore, unemployment, like poverty, is advantageous to sex traffickers because girls and women who become victims of sex trafficking are desperate to earn a living. Vergara, states that, just as in Nigeria, human trafficking for sexual exploitation exists in America, and that women and girls primarily targeted by traffickers are those who lack economic opportunities and are unemployed.[64]

c) Cultural Factors

i. *Preference for Sons*

According to Chambers, 'the preference of sons over daughters is found in many countries across the world.'[65] This is also prevalent in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. Similarly, Ojoh states that the reason for the lack of female empowerment in Nigeria is due to the importance that African culture places on sons, which renders the female folks a minority.[66]

In a study carried out in Ekpoma, Edo State, 89.5% of women preferred sons to daughters. According to Adeleye and Okonkwo, 'male preference to traditional inheritance pattern which had no room for female children, coupled with the fact that female children once married automatically lost their fathers name, were reasons presented for male preference to women".[67]

Primogeniture, a traditional practice whereby the eldest son inherits the father's title and property is a common practice amongst the Edos. This practice of primogeniture also extends to some of the traditional

http://allafrica.com/stories/201208100357.html [accessed 4th February, 2012]

[57]Kara Patterson, 'Sex trafficking from Thailand to Japan: Human Beings or Illegal Goods' *Dalhousie Journal of Legal Studies* 12 (2003),p.183

[58]Iris Yen, 'Of vice and men: A new approach to eradicating sex trafficking by reducing male demand through educational programs and abolitionist legislation', *Journal of criminal law and criminology* (2008), p.656

[59] Christiana Okojie, Obehi Okojie, Kokunre Eghafona, Gloria Vincent-Osaghae, Victoria Kalu, 'Trafficking of Nigerian girls to Italy' *Report of field survey in Edo State, Nigeria* (July, 2003)

[60] Tom Ellis, James Okpalla, 'Making sense of the relationship between trafficking in persons, human smuggling, and organized crime: The case of Nigeria', *Police Journal* 84 (2011), p.14

[61] Ifeanyi Onyeonoru, 'Pull factors in the political economy of international commercial sex work in Nigeria' 8 (2) *African Sociological Review*(2004),p.118

[62]Augustine Ikein, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, Steve Azaiki, *'Oil, democracy, and the promise of true federalism in Nigeria'* (University Press of America, 2008), p.425

[63] Commercial motorcycle in Nigeria

[64]Vanessa Vergara, 'Looking beneath the surface: Illinois' response to human trafficking and modern-day slavery' *University of Toledo Law Review* 38 (2007),p.992

[65] Deborah Chambers, 'A Sociology of Family Life: Change and diversity in intimate relations' (Polity press, 2012),p.136

[66] Akudo Ojoh , '*Empowering Nigerian women in the 21st century: Measuring the gap'* (2012), p.13

[67] Omokhoa Adeleye, Chukwunwendu Okonkwo, 'Ideal child gender preference in men's worldview and their knowledge of related maternal mortality indices in Ekiadolor, Southern Nigeria' *Asian Journal of Medical Sciences* 2 (2010),pp.146-147

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leaders in the region. For example, in Benin City on the death of the Oba (King) of Benin, his first son ascends to the throne. However, if in any given case the Oba does not have a male heir, and only has daughters, the title will not pass to any of the daughters. Instead, a male heir, preferably the Oba's brother becomes king.

This practice of primogeniture which both discriminates and devalues women, is one of the reasons for the difficulties in curbing sex trafficking in Edo State. For example, when the first male child inherits his father's property at his death, the women do not get any share of the property except in rare cases where a will has been written by the deceased. This lack of distribution of properties to women in the Edo culture leave the women in extreme poverty. In an already poverty-stricken country such as Nigeria, most of these women have to fend for themselves with some lucky enough to end up in matrimonial homes, while a great deal are forced to fend for themselves - this includes prostitution. Thus, some Edo women are more susceptible to traffickers because they are devalued and this has its roots in the Edo practice of primogeniture. Similarly, the UNODC stated that: "cultural practices also contribute to trafficking. For example, the devaluation of women and girls in a society makes them disproportionately vulnerable to trafficking".[68]

Furthermore, the advent of religions such as Islam and Christianity in Edo State has not helped in curtailing this practice of primogeniture or gender inequality. Rather, it has fueled the inequality of women in Nigeria, particularly in Edo State. For example, the strict interpretation of Shariah law discriminates against women. Under Shariah law in relation to inheritance, the male gets twice as much of the inheritance compared to the female.

d) Social Factors

i. *Education*

Preferential value of sons over daughters also extends to education in the Edo culture. Traditionally, the Edos thought that girls were less worthy of investment in terms of education since daughters were not viewed as future support and stability to the family. This was based on the notion that daughters would marry into other families. Unlike daughters, sons were viewed as support and strength to the family. This belief was developed through the fact that when sons get married, they would bring home their wives to support and strengthen the family. On the other hand, girls would leave their parents to form a new home with her husband and his family. This discriminatory denial of education to females, based on the notion that a female would eventually belong to another family by becoming someone else's wife, continues in the 21st century in certain communities in Nigeria and Edo State.

However, the introduction of Western values to Africa, through Christian evangelism, which also brought with it Western education, has been advantageous, particularly to Edo women who have begun to gain education at the same rate as men. Irrespective of this, various studies have revealed a high level of girls dropping out of school in Edo State. For example, the study carried out by Henrietta and Omotunde revealed a high dropout rate among Edo girls which was caused by poverty and poor academic performance.[69] Also, according to estimates by the Edo State Ministry of Health, "30% of adolescents aged 12-15 years and above, 50% of adolescents aged 16-19 years are out of school".[70] These shocking statistics reveal the high rate of persons, particularly females, who are likely to fall victims to sex trafficking. Due to the fact that most females who drop out of school only have basic education and no qualifications, job opportunitities become extremely difficult in an already poverty-stricken country such as Nigeria. Therefore, females have no choice other than to agree to whatever opportunity is presented to them and this includes sexual exploitation.

ii. *Illiteracy*

Illiteracy remains one of the key problems faced in the curbing of sex trafficking in Edo State. Whereas those who are school drop outs have basic education up to primary or secondary level, there are those who lack any basic education. The latter are the easiest prey of sex traffickers. Odigie and Patience further state that Nigerians of school age who are not in school easily fall "prey to sex traffickers who deceive them with tales of good jobs abroad".[71] Although some parents do make sacrifices to send their children to school, however, more often, lack of funds and uncertainty about the future discourages some poor families from letting their children continue in education, or sending their children to school. Poor families see education as futile and are more motivated in engaging their children in productive activities. Therefore, one could argue that there is a strong link between illiteracy and sex trafficking and that illiteracy is one of the reasons why curbing sex trafficking in Edo State has been difficult.

[68] UN Office on Drugs and Crime, *Toolkit to Combat Trafficking in Persons*, October 2008, 2nd edition, p.424

[69] See Alika Henrietta, Egbochuku Omotunde, 'Drop out from school among girls in Edo State: Implications for counselling' 2 *Journal of Counselling* (2009)

[70] Rosemary Moughalu, 'The problem of out of school adolescents: Who are they and what are they?' http://www.nigerianobservernews.com/05102010/05102010/features/features6.html [accessed 7th February, 2013]

[71] Dave Odigie, Chinenye Patience, 'Human trafficking trends in Nigeria and strategies for combating the crime' 1 *Peace Studies Journal* (2008), p.68

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iii. *Disintegration of family values*

With the subjugation and domination of Africa by Europeans, Arowolo argues that "western culture and European mode of civilization began to thrive and outgrow african cultural heritage".[72] He goes on to say that "western culture is now regarded as a frontline civilization. African ways of doing things became primitive, archaic and regrettably unacceptable in the public domain".[73]

An aspect of Edo culture greatly affected by Westernization is family values. Before Westernization, households were organized by familial bonds and cultural rules that emphasized male responsibility for protecting the whole family, including women and children. However, the family structure of male dominance and protection has now been broken. Currently, in most parts of Edo State, it is a case of 'he who pays the piper dicates the tune'. As a result of this, some wealthy women (i.e. madams in the sex trafficking trade) have been able to break the family structure which was a bastion of the Edo culture. This disintegration of family values is yet another difficulty faced in curbing trafficking in Edo State.

Due to a lack of regard for family values, coupled with illiteracy, poverty and greed, some parents, desperate for any source of additional income, have pushed their children into the arms of traffickers. The families of most trafficked victims from Edo State readily give their daughters away to traffickers sometimes knowing about the activities involved. However, although some of the parents and families have knowledge of the activities of their daughters, which is prostitution abroad, they lack an understanding of the risk involved in sex trafficking. Riddled with poverty, and in certain cases greed, families and parents of trafficked victims have only one thing on their minds - money.

The voluntary participation in sex trafficking by some families is one of the key factors for the difficulty in curbing sex trafficking in Edo State. Parents and relatives readily give their daughters to traffickers or put pressure on them to go abroad with the hope that they can lift the family out of poverty through prostitution. Thus, the girl or woman is seen as the breadwinner of the family. According to Nwolisa, there is expectation from parents and family members for girls and women to take care of their household. Therefore, owing to this pressure and the frustrating conditions mainly caused by poverty, women and girls grab opportunities presented to them which include sexual exploitation abroad. Cole and Booth assert that parents who would have refused giving their daughters to sex traffickers in the past, now welcome the fact that their daughters have become a source of income by willingly giving them to sex traffickers.[74]

iv. *Religion*

Other than difficulties in curbing sex trafficking in Edo State, such as governmental corruption, unemployment and economic indicators such as poverty, religions, such as Islam and Christianity have also contributed to the problem.

a. *Islam and Christianity*

Prior to the advent of Islam and Christianity, prostitution was considered an abomination in African traditional religion and Edo culture.[75] Buttressing this assertion, Kara opines that although prostitution and sex trafficking have been widely regarded as 'Edo', the "Edos are one of the most conservative groups in Nigeria".[76] To support this opinion, Kara states that in Edo State:

Prostitution is strictly forbidden and if a married woman is even touched by a man who is not her husband, she is duty-bound to report this affront to her husband, and he obliged to ensure that she undergoes special purification rights to cleanse her.[77]

In agreement, Aghatise maintains that:

Traditionally, prostitution is not socially acceptable among the Edo, where what has been regarded as promiscuous behavior has been traditionally sufficient to ostracize any young girl from her family and from society. The social stigma has been such that a prostituted woman could never aspire to marry within her social group and would remain an outcast if she did not leave town.[78]

This conservatiness of the Edos extended and still extends beyond prostitution and into adultery. Amongst the Edos and within the African traditional religion, it is believed that if a woman strays out of her matrimonial home, the consequence of such act which includes illness, disease and in extreme cases death, may be visited upon the woman, her child or even her husband.

It was the result of the potential humiliation of adultery imposed by African traditional religion that curtailed the promiscuity of married women in the past. The following account suggests that due to the Edo's strong inclination toward traditions, immoral behavior such as prostitution was, and is, not condoned by the

[72]Dare Arowolo, 'The effects of western civilisation and culture on Africa' 1 *Asian Journal of Social Sciences* (2010)
[73]Ibid

[74]Jeffrey Cole, Sally Booth, *'Dirty work: Immigrants in domestic service, agriculture, and prostitution in Sicily'* (Lexington Books, 2007),p.123
[75] See: Omosade Awolalu, 'What is African Traditional Religion?' 10 Studies in Comaprative Religion (1976)
[76]Siddharth Kara, *'Sex trafficking: Inside the business of modern slavery'* (Columbia University Press, 2009),p.90
[77] Ibid, p.90
[78] Esohe Aghatise, *Research and case studies on the international trafficking of Nigerian women and girls for prostitution in Italy* [La prostituzione Nigeriana in Italia]. Unpublished report. Turin, Italy: Associazione IROKO, p.1134

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ethnic group. This situation may seem curious when the statistics show that a high percentage of trafficked women are Edos. This can be explained by the fact that Edo culture and traditional African religion have been eroded to some extent by the introduction of religions such as Islam and Christianity.

The current situation, under these two religions, is that there are no moral checks and balances to check immoral behavior, such as adultery or prostitution. For example, if a married woman commits adultery, there is no enforceable punishment for such an act in Edo State. Under Islam, the crime of adultery, which would have resulted in stoning, is not enforceable in Edo State. While immoral acts such as adultery are also frowned upon in the Christian religion, there is no enforcement except for confession to a spiritual leader. Therefore, many people are not afraid to indulge in immoral behaviour such as prostitution. This contrasts with the situation under African traditional religion which held that sex before or outside marriage was considered taboo in Edo State.

Furthermore, although mosques and churches play an important role in curbing sex trafficking in Nigeria, and particularly in Edo State, by describing the harm of prostitution and sex trafficking to the public, these institutions, especially the churches, have compromised their mission in Nigeria. For example, Omere poses a series of questions regarding some of the activities of the church in Nigeria:

How can you imagine churches investing in local and overseas property markets? How can you imagine church leaders buying private jets when the prime minister of Britain flies commercial airways? Who is godlier? Their silly excuses are that it aids the gospel. How did the missionaries of old get the gospel acrosseven with limited sea vessels, nonexistent internet or technologies?[79]

The series of questions posed by Omere are representative of what most Nigerian churches indulge in - the amassing of wealth for the personal gain of certain individuals. Clearly, the advent of Islam and Christianity has not helped reduce sex trafficking in Edo State.

b. *African Traditional Religion*

In most cases, the practice of African traditional religion has much to do with the difficulty in curbing sex trafficking, particularly in Edo State. Although the advent of Islam and Christianity has eroded certain aspects of the African traditional religion, and there is a very strong inclination by the majority of Edos towards Islam and Christianity, there is still a strong hold and belief in certain aspects of its traditional practices. One of the practices still employed by the Edos is Juju.[80] As Bell rightly states: "Juju, sometimes known as voodoo or magic, is a significant part of the West African culture which is particularly prevalent in the Edo State of Nigeria".[81] Juju, also known as black magic is greatly feared by most Nigerians, and some Edos, because of its believed consequences. Due to the fear of Juju, Juju practitioners employ it as a medium to instill fear into their victims. Several studies, conducted mostly in Benin City, have reported how Juju has played a major role in aiding traffickers to make their victims loyal to them. Adams explains how sex traffickers use Juju ritual as a means of control over their victims:

An example of such a ritual is giving a box containing the trafficked person's body parts such as fingernails or pubic hair, along with underwear and photographs to a traditional Nigerian (Juju) priest and forcing the victim to repeat statements such as "if I don't pay I will go crazy or I will be killed.[82]

According to Adams, this ritual is a pact which instils fear in a victim's mind that, if broken, the victim would come under a curse which could have an effect on her and her family, and in this way is used as a means of bondage by traffickers.[83]

Corroborating Adams' statement, Kara asserts that before a trafficked victim begins her journey: the woman must first undergo specific juju rites, in which the woman's pubic hair, nails, and menstrual blood are collected and placed before a traditional shrine. During the ritual, the woman is made to swear an oath to repay her debt, never to report to the police, and never to discuss the nature of her trip with anyone.[84]

In addition, Kara states that it is this spiritual bondage that make it almost impossible for trafficked victims of Edo State to escape, unlike East European prostitutes for instance.[85] This spiritual bondage or the practice of Juju plays a major role in the difficulty of curbing sex trafficking in Edo State. For instance, when victims of sex trafficking are rescued, they are very apprehensive about revealing details of their traffickers because of the oath they have taken. For example, when NAPTIP was prosecuting Sarah Okoyain in 2004, who was eventually given a ridiculous 12 month sentence for sex trafficking, none of the victims showed up in court to

[79] Henry Omorere, *'Lost legacies and broken promises of our fathers'* (Xlibrispublishing, 2011),p.185

[80] A charm or fetish used by some West African people. Juju comes from the African traditional religion known as Vodoo

[81] Sarah Bell, 'Trafficked girls controlled by juju trafficked rituals' http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-14044205 [accessed 5th February,2013]

[82]Cherish Adams, 'Re-trafficked victims: How a Human Rights Approach can stop the cycle of re-victimization of sex trafficking victims', *Georgia Washington International Law Review* 43 (2011),p.220

[83] Ibid,p.220

[84]Siddharth Kara, *'Sex trafficking: Inside the business of modern slavery'* (Columbia University Press, 2009),p.90

[85]Ibid, p.90

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testify against her because of the oath they had taken.[86] Similarly, Kara asserts how trafficked victims enter trances or suffer fits in order to avoid revealing details of their traffickers. They do not wish to testify in court due to the fear of Juju and the imminent danger to their family.[87] Clearly, the cultural belief system plays a major role in the difficulty of curbing sex trafficking in Edo State. The practice and belief in Juju not only gives sex traffickers an advantage over their victims, it is also the most important ingredient that allows their immoral business to thrive. This is because, without the performance of Juju or oath-taking by victims of sex trafficking, the identities of traffickers would easily be given to the police or agencies responsible for combating human trafficking. Therefore, the cooperation by sex trafficked victims would have led to the arrest of their traffickers, and subsequently reduce the trafficking of human beings in Edo State.

v. *Normalisation of Prostitution*

In Edo State, particularly in Benin City, prostitution abroad has been normalized by portraying prostitution as glamorous and a way to make hard currency which represents a lot of money. According to Adams, the 'prosperity stories' of many Edo women who migrated to Italy in the 1980s and 1990s have resulted in a high rate of sex trafficking in the region.[88] Encouraged by these success stories, young girls are willing to be trafficked because trafficked women who come home with riches from the sex trafficking trade are represented as being empowered and liberated.

While sex trafficking involves coercion and deception, many Edo girls willingly submit themselves to be trafficked because they see prostitution as a short period of their lives which can lift them and their families out of poverty. Although a minority of Edo girls are deceived into being trafficked, the majority are aware of the nature of their jobs abroad. This argument is mainly buttressed with traditional oath-taking (Juju practice) of sex trafficked victims before departure. The oath-taking normally involves the victim promising never to escape until she repay her debts. Additionally, victims swear they will never report their sex traffickers to the police. Therefore, this oath-taking normally reveals the nature of the work to the trafficked victim. However, motivated by prosperity stories of trafficked victims and alleviation from poverty, sex trafficked victims fail to comprehend the risk behind the nature of their work abroad. Currently, prostitution is a well-known medium to earn a living by women in most parts of Nigeria. In most parts of Nigeria, including Edo State, it is seen as a temporary stage in life which one must endure. Irrespective of the normalization of prostitution, there are many Edo girls who resist being trafficked for sexual exploitation. Most of Edos condemn the idea from a religious perspective.

V. Conclusion

Conclusively, this study has presented the various reasons for the difficulties to curb sex trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria. Political, economic, religious, cultural and social factors have been identified as major obstacles to curbing sex trafficking in Edo State. However, this modern day slavery, in the same way as immigration, cannot be entirely eradicated in Edo State, but with a joint effort by the Government, NGOs, traditional rulers and members of the public, the sex trafficking trade in Edo State can be reduced.

Although most studies have concentrated on poverty as the major cause of sex trafficking, this article identifies corruption as the causal root for the difficulty in curbing sex trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria. However, other causes such the devaluation of women, illiteracy, certain practices of the African traditional religion and the normalization of prostitution, elucidate the magnitude of the sex trafficking problem in Edo State. Thus, the solution to curbing sex trafficking in Edo State is beyond the mere enactment of laws by the Nigerian Government and the Edo State Government. It requires the joint effort of the Federal and State governments, religious institutions in collaboration with NGOs, traditional rulers and members of the public.

VI. Recommendations

The Government

1. As corruption causes poverty and unemployment in Nigeria, the Federal and State government needs to place more effort on combating corruption. In order to combat corruption, emphasis need to be placed on integrity, transparency and accountability of all public and private institutions.
2. The Federal Government of Nigeria and the Edo State government should enact harsher laws that would deter sex traffickers and their cohorts from engaging in trafficking. Presently, the laws in place are not harsh enough to deter sex traffickers in Nigeria and Edo State in particular. Both the Federal and Edo State laws should do away with fines for traffickers. People found guilty of human trafficking should be given a sentence of life imprisonment because human trafficking violates one of the most fundamental human rights - the right to life. Additionally, individuals who aid sex traffickers should be given a 10 year sentence. Those working in the public service, i.e police officers, immigration

[86] Musikilu Mojeed, 'How immigration officials and voodoo aid human trafficking business in Nigeria' http://www.edoworld.net/How_immigration_officials_and_voodoo_aid_human_trafficking_business.html [accessed 5th February 2013]

[87] Siddharth Kara, *'Sex trafficking: Inside the business of modern slavery'* (Columbia University Press, 2009),p.91

[88] Cherish Adams, 'Re-trafficked victims: How a Human Rights Approach can stop the cycle of re-victimization of sex trafficking victims', *Georgia Washington International Law Review* 43 (2011),p.219

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officials and border security officers who are caught helping sex traffickers should be dismissed and never be allowed to work in the public service after their imprisonment.

3. The Edo State Government should implement its laws on human trafficking effectively. At present, the statutory laws are not enforced. An example of this lack of enforcement can be seen with the brothels in Edo State which operate as guest houses. Those who are caught indulging with prostitutes should either pay a penalty coupled with community service, or be imprisoned for a considerable period of time.
4. The Federal Government of Nigeria needs to create a separate organization from NAPTIP. While NAPTIP can focus on prosecution of sex traffickers, a different agency, one which understands the ordeal of trafficked victims should be created to rehabilitate victims. However, to monitor the activities of NAPTIP, an independent organization should be created to monitor the activities of NAPTIP. This becomes a case of guards guarding the guards.
5. The governments at the Federal and State level should undertake to create viable work opportunities, both skilled and unskilled, so that people do not resort to trafficking out of economic necessity.
6. The Federal and Edo State government should address the issue of poverty aggressively, by evenly distributing resources from the highest level to the grassroots.
7. The Federal government and Edo State government should ensure that victims of sex trafficking are treated as victims and not criminals. Proper rehabilitative facilities should be provided in order for the victims to restore their emotional, psychological and mental well-being which has been affected by their ordeal. Vocational training should be provided so that they are employable after rehabilitation. As part of their rehabilitation, a stipulated amount of money should be given to each victim in order to prevent them being trafficked again.
8. Finally, education should be made free at all levels by the Federal Government of Nigeria to give individuals from poor families a chance to gain education to the highest level. In addition, states and in particular Edo State, should create free vocational schools to give individuals not interested in higher education a chance to develop their skills and, inturn, become employable. Government grants should also be given to students from poor families in order to ensure they finish their courses and are certified.

Religious institutions in collaboration with NGOs

1. Religious institutions should work closely with NGOs in the rehabilitation of victims and awareness creation. As Nigerians are very religious, religion is one of the greatest weapons that can be used to dissuade people from indulging in sex trafficking. The dangers of human trafficking, particularly for sexual exploitation, should be delivered in every service. Former trafficked victims, who are willing to tell their stories to the congregation, should be used as a model to deter potential victims of trafficking.
2. The efforts of NGOs, such as the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), IdiaRennaisance, in eradicating human trafficking in Nigeria and Edo State in particular, are commendable. However, more should be done in creating awareness of the dangers of sex trafficking. For example, in Edo State, individuals from each community can be trained to deliver seminars on the dangers of sex trafficking. In most communities in Edo State, the eldest man and woman are highly respected members of their communities. These type of individuals are key to reducing sex trafficking in Edo State. They should be educated about the ill effects of sex trafficking in order for them to pass on the message to members of their communities.
3. NGOs should introduce poster messages in every community that depict the ills of sex trafficking. The media should also be used to portray sex trafficking as an abnormal behaviour, in the same way as fraud and murder.
4. Religious institutions can also play a role in the lives of repatriated trafficked victims who have undergone rehabilitation and who have no families. Religious institutions should extend their hands in support, such as by providing donations to further assist trafficked victims alongside grants from government. These victims should be taken in as members of the religious institution, monitored and offered assistance to prevent the possibility of re-trafficking.

Traditional rulers

1. Traditional rulers in Edo State such as the Otaru of Auchi, Oba of Agbede, Ogieneni of Uzairue, Aidonogie of South Ibie and particularly the Oba of Benin have a key role to play in the curbing of sex trafficking in Edo State. For example, customs and traditions which discriminate against women, i.e. inheritance, should be amended to allow women to gain a share of properties.
2. In relation to the use of Juju practice as a debt bondage towards trafficked victims, traditional leaders such as the Oba of Benin can restrict this by consulting with the traditional priests to reach an agreement that acts which would involve perfoming Juju for traffickers to bond their victims should not

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be performed. However, if in any case this agreement is broken by any traditional priest, they should be reported to the authorities who would then prosecute them.

Members of the public

1. Members of the public can curb sex trafficking by identifying traffickers and their collaborators, and reporting them to the police and other agencies responsible for curbing trafficking.
2. Potential victims identified by members of the public should be reported to the authorities, so that the potential victims can be monitored.

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