

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

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## 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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**Index terms**— human trafficking, sex trafficking, modern day slavery, nigeria, benin city, edo state.

## 1 Introduction

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.

**Keywords :** human trafficking, sex trafficking, modern day slavery, nigeria, benin city, edo state. do 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 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".

## 2 Global

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".<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Baker states that the UNTP only focuses on the criminalization of trafficking.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, states parties to it are under no legal obligation to provide trafficked victims with support, protection or to avoid involuntary repatriation.<sup>11</sup> 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 They only need to provide support to trafficked victims at their own discretion, an act which may contradict laws of international protection."<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 165 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".<sup>14</sup> III.

## 3 Nigeria and Human Trafficking

Nigeria signed the UNTP on December 13<sup>th</sup> 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".<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> Olateru-Olagbegi and Ikpeme describe the Nigerian legislation dealing with human trafficking prior to 2003 as "scattered",<sup>17</sup> provided the 'first ever internationally agreed definition of trafficking' which has now gained worldwide acceptance.<sup>6</sup> (D D D D ) C 2013

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).<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup> The adoption of the Nigerian Trafficking Act by the Nigerian National Assembly has been described as seminal.<sup>20</sup> 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'.<sup>21</sup> They make excellent remarks regarding the adoption of the Nigerian Trafficking Act. The Act<sup>22</sup> According to the 2012 Trafficking in Persons Report on Nigeria, provides detailed and well-spelled out penalties for 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.<sup>23</sup> the country remains 'a source, transit, and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking'.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> The Trafficking in Persons Report rates countries according to the origin and destination of victims of severe forms of trafficking 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".<sup>27</sup> 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."<sup>28</sup> 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).<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> She asserts that this is because trafficked victims are afraid to seek NAPTIP's help because of fear of testifying.<sup>32</sup> a) Edo State Adams states that this fear stems from NAPTIP's criminalcentred approach rather than a human rights-based approach.

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)) 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 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 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.

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. 43 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. 44 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. 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.

## 4 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. 45 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. 46 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. 47 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. 48 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. 49 In certain circumstances, drivers who refuse to cooperate are subjected to torture and, in some cases, killed. For example, on the 9 th of February 2012, a policeman allegedly shot and killed a commercial bus driver over his alleged refusal to pay a 20 Naira bribe. 50 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)". 51 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. 52 The recent claims by NAPTIP, that the Kogi State police released suspected human traffickers 56 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.

## 5 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. 53 Similarly, Iyen recognizes that trafficked women are either

unemployed or earn no money. ??8 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. ??9 Agreeing with this, Ellis and Akpalla identify poverty as one the factors that drives Nigerian migrants to seek the services of human traffickers. ??0 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.

The wish to be trafficked is linked with a desire to improve one's situation, as the following testimony shows: 61 ii. Unemployment 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.

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 socioeconomic problem in Nigeria. ??2 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. ??6 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'. ??7 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 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 d) Social Factors 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.

## 6 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 21 st 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

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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. <sup>??9</sup> 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". <sup>??0</sup> ii. Illiteracy 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 opportunities 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.

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". <sup>??1</sup> 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.

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### 8 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". <sup>??2</sup> 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". <sup>??3</sup> 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 Prior to the advent of Islam and Christianity, prostitution was considered an abomination in African traditional religion and Edo culture. <sup>??5</sup> 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". <sup>??6</sup> 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. <sup>??7</sup> 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. <sup>??8</sup> 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 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 across even with limited sea vessels, nonexistent internet or technologies? 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.

### 9 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. 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". 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. According to Adams, this ritual is a pact which instills 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. 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. 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. 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 testify against her because of the oath they had taken. 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. 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.

## 10 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. 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. 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



Figure 1: C

Figure 2:

Figure 3: 33

(2001),p.183  
41 Ibid, p.183

[Note: 34 Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi, 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 More recently,]

Figure 4:

<<http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=318>>  
(accessed 22 January 2013)  
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 'The role of corruption in trafficking in persons', (2011),p.3  
49 Ibid, p.3

[Note: 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, 1 st February,2013]ii.]

Figure 5:

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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 4 th February, 2012] 54 Olusola Fabiyi, 'Global Journal of Human Social Science

Figure 6: C



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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.

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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.

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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

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[Note: C2013]

Figure 8:

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<sup>1</sup>Edo State is an inland state in central southern Nigeria. Its capital is Benin City<sup>3</sup> Article 4 states that "no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms"

<sup>2</sup>© 2013 Global Journals Inc. (US)

<sup>3</sup>Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria: Causes and Solutions

<sup>4</sup>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

<sup>5</sup>Danish Immigration Service, Cooperation with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other related matters (NAPTIP), April 2009, p.7

<sup>6</sup>Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria: Causes and Solutions IV.

<sup>7</sup>Toyin Falola, Mathew Heaton, 'A history of Nigeria' (Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.11

<sup>8</sup>Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria: Causes and Solutions

<sup>9</sup>UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Toolkit to Combat Trafficking in Persons, October 2008, 2nd edition, p.424

<sup>10</sup>See Alike 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

<sup>11</sup>See: Omosade Awolalu, "What is African Traditional Religion?" 10 Studies in Comparative Religion(1976)

<sup>12</sup>Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria: Causes and Solutions

<sup>13</sup>Henry Omorere, "Lost legacies and broken promises of our fathers" (Xlibrispublishing, 2011),p.185

<sup>14</sup>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](http://www.edoworld.net/How_immigration_officials_and_voodoo_aid_human_trafficking_business.html) [accessed 5th

<sup>15</sup>Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria: Causes and Solutions

<sup>16</sup>Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria: Causes and Solutions

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