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# Policy Brief on Community Action to Combat and Prevent Human Trafficking in Nigeria

## Edo and Delta States in Focus



**WomenAid Collective (WACOL) Nigeria, 2023**

# Policy Brief on Community Action to Combat and Prevent Human Trafficking in Nigeria

Edo and Delta States in Focus

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**Edo and Delta States in Focus**

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## **Social Media**

Facebook Account: WacolTamarSarc

Facebook Page: Women Aid Collective-WACOL

Twitter: WACOLTamarSARC

Instagram: wacoltamarsarc



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## ORGANISATIONAL PROFILE

WACOL was established in 1997 as an independent, non-political, non-governmental and non-profit organisation; it was registered in 2000 as a company limited by guarantee i.e., as a charitable organisation (RC: 388132) with the Corporate Affairs of Commission (CAC) of Nigeria.

**VISION:** A democratic society free from violence and abuse, where human rights of all, in particular women and young people, are recognised in law and practice.

**MISSION:** To assist in the education, social, economic and political development of women and young people through a wide range of services: training, research, advocacy, shelter, free legal and financial aid, intra-familial/community conflict resolution, and information and library services.

**CORE VALUES (COPE):** Commitment, Openness, Probity, Empathy and Equity

**PRIMARY TARGETS:** Women and young people.

**GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE:** Works throughout Nigeria, the West African sub-region and beyond. WACOL has, since 2001, had an observer status with the African Union, African commission on Human Rights, and NGO Special Consultative Status with the United Nations (ECOSOC, 2010).

### AREAS OF FOCUS:

- Gender, human rights/women's rights;
- Ending Violence and harmful practices against Women and Girls,
- Human Trafficking and Migration;
- Democracy/good governance and Sustainable Development;
- Peace advocacy/conflict resolution; and
- Library/information services; empowerment and skills building.

**PROGRAMMES** are wide, varying and include: Research; Advocacy for policy change, law reform and programmatic action that would benefit often discriminated against groups (women, children and persons with disability); Capacity building for critical stakeholders, including law enforcement agencies, judicial officers, parliamentarians, traditional/religious leaders, civil society and community-based organisations towards effective implementation of national, regional and international human rights standards. Others are, Advancing gender equality and accountability; Promoting women's rights and access to justice under Sharia and Customary law; Legal education and awareness, training of paralegals; Provision of free legal aid and assistance to women and children whose human rights have been abused.





On Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), WACOL has undertaken a number of actions in the last twenty years, including research, advocacy, legal aid and assistance to victims/survivors of human trafficking, shelter (safe spaces for women and girls, especially victims of VAWG/SGBV/SRHR/HP and survivors of human trafficking). WACOL has created awareness of the ugly phenomenon of SGBV, including human trafficking, to break in particular the culture of silence and impunity surrounding SGBV. It established and is running the **Tamar Sexual Assault and Referral Centre (Tamar SARC)** – a one-stop-shop focused on providing rapid response and integrated services (Medical, Legal, Counselling, Shelter, Financial and Psycho-social support) for victims and survivors of sexual violence in Nigeria.

**Free Legal Aid:** WACOL is considered the number one legal aid service provider for women and girls in Nigeria, providing assistance to about 2,000 persons on an annual basis with over 4,000 drop-ins yearly. It registers an average of 20 cases daily at its legal clinic. This is evidence-based and well documented. From 1998 to date, approximately 62,000 women and girls have accessed free legal aid and assistance services through WACOL.

National Hotlines: 09060002128; 09091333000; 09092777000. Website: [www.wacolnigeria.org](http://www.wacolnigeria.org)

**GIRL's Will:** It was set up to promote girls' right to protection, participation and for amplifying their voices and rights everywhere in Nigeria.

**WEEP Not Funds** (Women Economic Empowerment Project): It is a personal initiative of the founder of WACOL, Prof. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo (OON) – focused on mitigating economic hardship suffered by widows and women living in extreme poverty, by supporting them with income-generating activities under a cooperative to ameliorate their survival challenges and for sustainable livelihood.

**Fifty-Fifty (50/50) Women Advocacy Group:** The group is designed to strengthen women's capacity, and equip them with knowledge and skills to become transformational leaders, organise themselves, champion their own causes and collectively fight for/and prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG) at all levels of the society.

**Migrant Information Centre (MIC):** WACOL has established and runs the Migrant Information Centres in Edo state and is poised to upscale in other parts of the country as part of its efforts to combat and prevent trafficking in persons and unsafe and irregular migration that increases people's vulnerability to human trafficking. The MIC is pivotal to providing information and building linkages with other partners; providing skills acquisition services and access to jobs that will empower trafficked persons and migrant returnees so they can shun unsafe migration and embrace local livelihood sustainability alternatives. Hotline: 08112637777

**West African Women's Rights Coalition (WAWORC):** WACOL is a founding member of WAWORC and currently serves as its secretariat. WAWORC works to advance women's human rights and gender equality in the West African sub-region and beyond through engagement with regional and international human rights institutions as well as collaborating with civil society and feminists' organisations' at the municipal level to ensure effective treaty



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implementation and monitoring, including shadow reporting that advances gender accountability. WACOL founding director, Prof. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo (OON), is a Professor of Law and Dean Emeritus University of Nigeria. She is a former Mandate holder, Special Rapporteur on Trafficking, United Nations (2008-2014). Prof Ezeilo is also a Member, Board of Trustees, Victims of Trafficking Fund (2013-2016) representing Africa; and until recently was on the UN Secretary General's Civil Society Advisory Board on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2019-2021).

Prof. Ezeilo is the 2019 winner of the National Human Rights Award. She was also honoured on March 5, 2022 with the civil society award of excellence by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/UN Women in collaboration with the Embassies of the United States of America, Germany, France, EU Delegation and the British High Commission at the International Women's Day Awards Gala 2022 held at the United States Consul General's Residence in Lagos. She was conferred with a Nigerian Government national honour of Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON) in 2006 by the then President Olusegun Obasanjo (GCFR) in recognition of her outstanding contributions in the area of nation-building, legal scholarship, advocacy, civil society movement and community service.

She is a recipient of the prestigious British Chevening scholarship (1995) and a grantee of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Funds for Leadership Development (1998). She has also received several national and international awards, including being recognised by Newsweek/Daily Beast New York, USA in 2013 as one of the 125 women of impact in the world for her work to end human trafficking. She serves as the Chairperson of the National Network of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC Network) and also the Deputy Chairperson of the African Women's Leadership Network (AWLN).



*The DG, NAPTIP, Dr. Fatima Waziri Azi and Prof. Joy Ngozi Ezeilo (OON) during an advocacy visit on January 24, 2022 to NAPTIP, Headquarters, Abuja.*



## 1.0 THE CONTEXT

Irregular migration, smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons and contemporary forms of slavery are of growing concern to the international community. Nigeria ranks very high, both globally and in the African region, because of the scale of trafficking and unsafe/irregular migration involving its citizens; and has been identified as a Source, Transit and Destination (STD) country with regards to Human Trafficking (U.S. State Department, Trafficking in Persons Report, 2021). Irregular migration remains unquantifiable due to its clandestine nature; however, annual estimated figure for trafficked Nigerians outside the shores of the country has been put at a million.

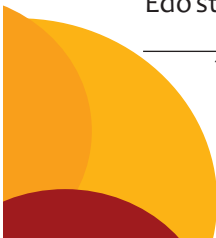
Edo state, Nigeria is the most endemic state for transnational or cross-border human trafficking of women and girls to Europe and other parts of the world. Due to geographical proximity of some communities of Delta state to Edo state, there are similarities in culture, value systems and the multi-layered socio-economic challenges and exacerbating factors for all evolving facets of human trafficking and unsafe/irregular migration.

*Prevention has been the weakest link in the efforts by state and non-state actors working to stop human trafficking and irregular migration flow. There has been low involvement of communities most affected by this phenomenon, especially Edo state, Nigeria acclaimed supplier of at least 80 per cent of all trafficked persons from Nigeria.*

*Human trafficking and irregular migration “is a matter of great concern to the Governor of Edo State, His Excellency Mr. Godwin Obaseki, that our young women and youths are being subjected to modern slavery and sexual exploitation, which is a practice that is completely at variance with the rich culture and values of the Edo people. Edo is bleeding from the loss of its several thousands of young men and women as a result of human trafficking and irregular migration. Happily, Edo State is also aggressively tackling these problems through the Edo Taskforce Against Human Trafficking, and through various development initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of these societal ills.”*  
**(Hon. Attorney General of Edo State).**

According to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) zonal office in Benin City, Edo state, “seven out of every ten persons trafficked out of Nigeria for prostitution is from Edo state.” This is further amplified by research findings which stated that

<sup>1</sup>Nigeria: Human Trafficking Factsheet. <https://pathfindersji.org/nigeria-human-trafficking-factsheet/>







“statistics continue to show that most of the women trafficked out of Nigeria for Prostitution are from Edo state (Okogie, July 2018).

In an attempt to curb the activities of these human traffickers, Edo State Government, in June 2018, domesticated the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement Administration Act 2015; and created the Edo State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT). In spite of Federal Government legislation and the Edo state version titled 'The Edo State Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition), Enforcement and Administration Law' of July, 2018, to prohibit human trafficking, the malaise continues to get worse.

Many theories have been propounded about the drivers/sustaining factors and those who are more at risk in human trafficking in Edo State. Several unreported/unauthenticated researchers found that some are culturally linked to the adventurous nature of the indigenes of the state; and the social status of women, who, traditionally, are less regarded, hence the continuing exploitation and abuse that results in sexual and gender-based violence against them. Unarguably, it must be recognised that addressing economic factors, especially poverty and underdevelopment, will tackle some of the root causes and reduce the vulnerabilities of women, children and men to human trafficking and irregular migration

The challenges of fighting trafficking in human beings in Nigeria are daunting and require concerted action by all. On the strength of this, WomenAid Collective (WACOL), with funding support from the Swiss Government, facilitated an action using community-driven, community-owned and sustainable approaches to prevent trafficking in persons and reduce unsafe/irregular migration. These approaches included putting an early warning system in place; saturating the community with appropriate information at the right time; parental persuasion to stop selling properties to sponsor their children; reducing peer group pressure, and strengthening direct community action to stem the tide of trafficking in persons.

**2.0 STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES** The implementing agency – WomenAid Collective – applied innovative, inclusive, participatory and community-led approaches (which included survivors/returnees) in order to achieve huge success and sustainable impact with community prevention of trafficking in persons and unsafe/irregular migration. These easily adaptable and replicable approaches, irrespective of localities and drivers, include:



### i. Baseline Survey

This strategy enabled a deep insight into relevant information about intervention communities – inhabitants, status of migrants, returnees/victims and influencing factors of interests worth considering during community engagement, but more for periodic progress tracking and measuring impact. To establish the baseline, questionnaires were developed and administered to selected respondents. Question guides were developed for key informant interviews conducted with selected key community members, and a final triangulation done through participatory observation to learn further about important features of the community. These include, the peoples' socio-economic life, cultural practices, norms, values and how these play out from gender issues/perspectives; and likely linkages to human trafficking and unsafe migration. The findings indicated causes and underlying socio-cultural issues driving human trafficking in rural Nigerian communities to include: loss of morals and ethical values, large family size, poverty, forced/early marriage, oath taking, discriminatory gender norms and values, female disinheritance, widowhood practices etc. Major stakeholders/key players included: community leaders (Traditional rulers/Chiefs); Religious leaders; Teachers; Students; Parents; community security (vigilante Groups); the

Police; CSOs/CBOs<sup>2</sup> /Community Development Agents; Women leaders, Market Women Groups; Youth leaders; Opinion Influencers, Religious leaders/groups and Town Criers.

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CSOs – Civil Society Organisations, CBOs – Community Based Organisations



**Box 1: Trafficking in Persons and Unsafe/Irregular migration - Gender Dimension.**

Gender-Based Violence, which happens due to discriminatory gender social norms, roles and values attached by society to individuals due to the biological fact of sex, is a strong driver of trafficking in persons and unsafe/irregular migrations on the part of women and girls. Trafficking in persons has a strong gender dimension as it is sustained by Gender-Based Violence on one hand; on the other hand, the act itself is Gender-Based Violence. Gender discrimination and perception of individuals, especially women and girls, influence and determine access, ownership and control of means of production and roles assigned to women and men. Painfully, women are discriminated against, have limited access, ownership and control of means of production and then are laden with huge reproductive roles – to care, cater, support and sacrifice their lives for the survival and turnaround of the fortunes of their family (birth and marriage). The vulnerable and powerless position of women and girls, accentuated by pressure from family, peers and society to fulfill their reproductive roles, increases their vulnerability to the coercion, deception and abuse often adopted by traffickers to establish and maintain control over their victims. This affirms poverty and inequality related to Trafficking in Person often has a strong gender dimension; thus, the failure to guarantee women's basic economic and social rights contributes to their vulnerability to sexual and economic exploitation.

**ii. High-level stakeholders' consultation (Advocacy) visits**

Consultative sessions were held with very high-level persons, professional bodies, associations, key government agencies such as the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP); the Edo State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT); leadership of Local Government Areas and finally, leadership of Traditional Governance Institutions. As a result of the series of consultations and readiness of communities, ongoing efforts and existing structures that could be harnessed in the journey for community-led action to prevent trafficking in persons and unsafe/irregular migration came to fore. For instance, several communities instituted and are supporting a 10-man volunteers' groups; while some are supporting a “Libya Returnees Association;” and finally community level religious groups initiatives are partnering with the community to reduce the proclivity for unsafe/irregular migration and trafficking in persons.

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<sup>3</sup> Joy Ezeilo. A/HRC/26/37/Add.2. *Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development* (2014)

<sup>4</sup>A/64/290 (2009), para. 34. Also on this, see the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, E/CN.4/2000/68, para. 56. (see citation 46: A/HRC/26/37/Add.2. above)



- i. State multi-stakeholders' conference The use of this strategy provided opportunity for multi-stakeholders' input to/and validation of the baseline findings. Also, it made for broad stakeholders strategising towards Community Action to prevent Human Trafficking and Unsafe/irregular migration. In addition, home-grown and preventive measure were directly elicited from survivors and returnees of human trafficking and unsafe/irregular migration. It provided a platform for a renewed commitment and strengthening alliances and network of stakeholders working to end trafficking in persons and unsafe migration for a more coordinated and synergy of actions towards achieving more sustainable impact.

**Box 2: Conference stakeholders' views on Human trafficking**

- o Problem of human trafficking and illegal migration is a family one ... the major push and pull factor is unemployment and poverty ... lack of job opportunities to engage youths including graduates, is fueling the ugly phenomenon of trafficking in persons and illegal migration” (**Obilo Chima Jude, representative of Comptroller General of Immigration, Edo state**)
  - o “Nigerians should cooperate with the police in early identification of traffickers by reporting every illegal action or suspected movement of persons for the purposes of trafficking”. (**DSP Idemda Magdalana, women and children desk officer Edo state**)
  - o “... NAPTIP is collaborating with other stakeholders to fight this human trafficking and illegal migration. Nigerian Police should promptly transfer case file on trafficking to NAPTIP once requested” – **Mr. Nduka Nwanwenne, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) Zonal Commander, Edo state**
  - o “...the most common act of human trafficking is human exploitation, especially of girls; WACOL, Edo State Government and NAPTIP doing a good work so far, but NAPTIP need to do more in terms of investigation to counter the trafficking criminals” -. **Chief Judge of Edo State, via Hon. Justice U. I Erameh (the representative)**
- Box 2: Conference stakeholders' views on Human trafficking**





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### i. Information; Education and Communication (IEC) materials to fight human trafficking Developed, produced and disseminated.

Appropriate messages were developed and inscribed on posters, stickers, T-shirts, Bags and Scarves for purposes of:

- bringing/sustaining already created awareness;
- purposefully keeping handy reference material with the right messages to curb TiP and Unsafe/irregular migration;
- saturate multi-sensory organs of the community members with information on the need for everyone to contribute to/and win the fight against trafficking in persons and unsafe/irregular migration;
- also reinforce the sensitisation inputs of trafficking returnees/survivors and that of the leadership of the traditional governance structures, championing the messages to dissuade intending enrollees.

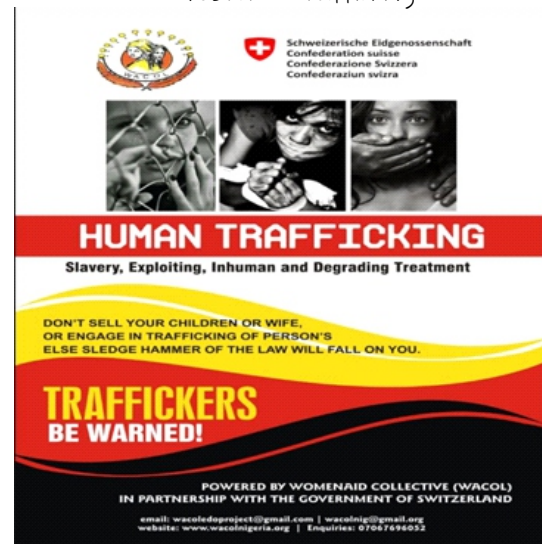
The messages on the materials were crafted from information gathered during baseline study, multi-stakeholders' conference and consultative sessions, especially with survivors and returnees. Prior to publication it was pretested among the stakeholders to certify appropriateness of each message, some were reviewed prior to publication.



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### Box 3: Samples of IEC materials used for Engagement

#### Poster – Trafficking



#### Sticker for Early Warning Signs



#### Flier with Call for Action message !!!





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### T-Shirts with Call for Action message



Other version of T-Shirt



Scarf with Call for Action message



Bag for sake-keeping of training materials



### v. Media Advocacy

Media advocacy tools were extensively employed in order to engage, empower, re-orientate, draw attention and ingrain advocacy messages into the subconscious of the targets and stakeholders, especially for purposes of sustained **CALL FOR ACTION FOR ALL** to partner and win the fight against human trafficking and unsafe migration,

#### a. Short drama advertisement and Jingles:

Various, but adaptable media contents with same underlying messages espousing need to join hands in fight against trafficking in persons and unsafe migration through recognising early warning signs and ways to take actions, were developed, adapted for/and produced both in English language and pidgin for short drama-advertisement. It was aired at prime time on the mainstream audio-visual media outlet – Nigeria Television Authority, Benin City station – that covers both intervention states. Jingle version was produced and aired on the state-owned radio outlets due to the wider local listenership.

#### Interactive Media Programmes on Radio and

**Television:** WACOL facilitated phased pre-recorded discussion programmes. They were aimed at engaging and encouraging the wider support of residents of Edo and Delta States, the



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government, traditional and religious institutions, including trafficked survivors/returnees outside the primary intervention locations to join in taking action individually and collectively to stop human trafficking and unsafe migration. Discussion programmes were facilitated and discussants were drawn from an admix of experts, stakeholders and trafficking survivors/returnees. The programme, centred on reiterating the dangers, early warning signs and ways to prevent trafficking in persons and unsafe/irregular migration, was simultaneously broadcast on different mainstream media outlets in intervention states. The outlets were Edo Broadcasting Service (EBS); VIBES FM 97.3 (Radio); federal government owned station, the National Television Authority (NTA); and the Radio and Television arms of a popular private independent media outlet. All were geared towards creating awareness and enlightening those at risk of being trafficked or embarking on unsafe/irregular migration.

The choice of media outlets was deliberate and aimed at broadening partnership; reaffirming state commitment and roles in curbing trafficking in persons and unsafe migration; and more especially, establishing inroad to sustain project achievements.

NB: Both jingle and short-drama advertisement had sign-off with a Hotline number to reach out for further inquiry.

*Box 4: Excerpts of Citizens' reaction and use of Hotline number post-media interactive programme*

**Subsequent to media discussion programme, a significant number of callers requested for empowerment, palliatives and job placement support. A lot more berated donor partners and WACOL and asked them to stop discouraging people from traveling out of a country that does not care about youth development or welfare**

“I was deported from Germany with my two kids, and I need help”- **Ms. O. Osagie**

“ I need help to start my own business” – **A. Osairemen** (a returnee from Libya with tailoring skill)

“...do not discourage them, they need a better life for themselves and family”- **Destiny.**

**O.Martins**, a returnee from Italy eight years ago, suggested the project should focus more on supporting survivors/returnees to find their feet, instead of discouraging them from traveling again.

**V.Bucknor** called to commend the initiative, but enjoined focus should shift to provision of skill acquisition centre to help youths and the vulnerable.





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**vi. Engagement with religious leaders**

In Nigeria reverence to/and belief in spirituality, custodians of religious precepts/religious leaders and their great influence in shaping values, world-views and lives of the people is not in doubt. Outcome of several interactive sessions indicted some religious leaders of using spiritual powers and shoddy visions to misguide and exploit desperate and vulnerable people/ prospective migrants to embark on the trips owing to their ignorance.

Dialogue sessions were facilitated with the category of identified strong influencers/ stakeholders to understand their perspectives, sensitise them on the early warning signs, ways to intervene and also harness their strengths for the ultimate goal – which is preventing human trafficking and unsafe /irregular migration.



**vi. Law Enforcement Agents Sensitisation and partnership**

Conferences were held to create awareness and sensitise relevant law enforcement/security agencies with a view to partnering with/and enlightening them on the anti-trafficking laws; roles of law enforcement agencies in the prevention, prosecution and punishment of human traffickers; the consequences of human trafficking; the roles of the community security (vigilance) group; identification, protection and assistance to victims/survivors of human trafficking.



The law enforcement/security partners were able to pledge their support and alliance in the fight against human trafficking and illegal migration. They also pledged to join in the awareness creation and sensitisation of the citizens; and help improve relations between law enforcement agencies and communities, especially the vigilance



groups, due to the critical role they play in gathering local intelligence that can help in

early warning to prevent trafficking.

### 3.0 DONOR PARTNERSHIP AND SUPPORT REAFFIRMATION INTERFACE

There was a visit from a team of Swiss delegation comprised of Mr. Grégoire Crettaz, Regional Coordinator, Directorate of International Cooperation of the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration (SEM); Mr. Jean-Baptiste Délèze, Programme Officer Foreign Migration Policy Section of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA); and **Jolanda Pfister Herren, Embassy of Switzerland in Abuja to Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Libya and ECOWAS; representatives of IOM and GIZ**

The visit served a dual purpose – for donor participatory monitoring and working parley between project donor, implementing partners and stakeholders (right holders/beneficiaries). Jolanda Pfister Herren, who led the delegation, reaffirmed

efforts of the Government of Nigeria in fighting trafficking in persons, so far.

Professor Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, former UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in

*“...we are in Edo to monitor the projects, measure progress and ensure accountability for the Swiss tax payers money being invested to sponsor this programme ...” (Jolanda Pfister Herren)*

their home Governments' commitment to partner with Nigeria to end human trafficking, already ongoing through the support to National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), an agency of Nigeria working to curb human trafficking, and other agencies in this regard. Herren commended the



delegation.

The key fallout of this donor-beneficiaries parley centred on returnee reintegration through vocational skills training and



support funds for starting up new businesses. The parley also highlighted the need for brokering linkages between them

and existing skills acquisition training organisations available and proximate to target communities.

#### 4.0 COMMUNITY LEVEL ENGAGEMENT APPROACHES

A series of community level engagements and activities were implemented in partnership with traditional governance structure to strengthen communities (traditional rulers, peoples, systems and governance structures) in order to drive the processes involved in preventing trafficking in persons and unsafe migration. The target groups were Traditional Rulers; leaderships of youths groups, Women groups and men/fathers' groups, teachers and peer groups viz:

##### a) Working with Traditional Rulers

*/Institutions:* By virtue of Laws, policies or conventions establishing Traditional Rulers, they have inherent authority to lead, coordinate, direct and influence outcome of events in the community and lives of community members. In view of the foregoing, a pillar of the project Theory of Change for impact rested on the roles of traditional rulers in intervention communities.

Community entry strategy included advocacy/sensitisation and interactive parley with the traditional rulers both physically, virtually and follow-up through phone calls. There were talks with the traditional rulers and their cabinets which afforded them the opportunity to understand the project, ask pertinent questions, gain insight into their roles and how to better protect their subjects from becoming victims of Trafficking in Persons. The traditional rulers made

commitments to become ambassadors of the cause and fight against TiP and Unsafe/irregular migrations. They fulfilled and supported community-based measures for project sustainability, like providing a space to serve as the Migration Information Centre.



##### b) Engagement with community groups leadership structures: Leadership and representatives of other community





governance structures – market/traders' groups, youths, women and fathers' groups – were also sensitised to understand the project. WACOL got their buy-in/commitment to have better understanding of how they can harness the opportunities provided by their existing groups and leadership roles to prevent continuance of the social malaise already destroying their communities.

c) **Religious platform Outreaches:** selected religious worship centres within intervention communities in both states were leveraged to sensitise on early warnings and other measures central to preventing Trafficking in Persons (TiP) and reporting cases. This approach enabled an inter-personal talk with potential and vulnerable members of the society like ordinary men, women, females and male youth worshippers. Content of messages for the outreaches were made direct, very short, succinct and punchy to remain memorable considering the brief time slot within the service

d) **Community awareness creation outreaches:** Highly participatory town hall meetings were facilitated for intervention communities in partnership with nominees of each community governance structure and trafficked survivors/returnees to generally provide the people with information about and focus of the project–

fighting human trafficking and stopping unsafe migration through community involvement on one hand. On the other hand, the outreaches served to sensitise the people on the early warning signs, ways to detect and their expected roles to preventing Trafficking in Persons and Unsafe/irregular migrations. The outreaches gave opportunity to distribute information, education and communication materials, targeting behavioural changes and providing appropriate information to enhance community knowledge and practice that will result in reduction of trafficking in human beings and irregular migration.



e). **Capacity Building:** Capacity building trainings were organised as part of efforts in awareness raising, deepening knowledge and promoting behavioural change at the grassroots. Here, three categories of actors/peer groups: youths, women and men, were targeted; such that each group had selected persons from



the persons who embarks on unsafe/irregular migration. In table 1 below some indicators to detect a trafficked person are highlighted:

Table 1: Early Warning Signs

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>♣ Visible signs of physical injuries and abuse.</li><li>♣ Not allowing people to go into public alone, or speak for themselves.</li><li>♣ Appearing malnourished.</li><li>♣ Avoiding eye contact, social interaction, and authority figures/law enforcement.</li><li>♣ Seeming to adhere to scripted or rehearsed responses in social interaction.</li><li>♣ Lacking official identification documents.</li><li>♣ Appearing destitute/lacking personal possessions.</li><li>♣ Working excessively long hours.</li><li>♣ Forced work under inhuman conditions (exploitative: compliant to 'the 3-Ds' - dirty, difficult, dangerous).</li><li>♣ Living at place of employment.</li><li>♣ Travel Documents (international Passports, visas etc seized).</li><li>♣ Poor physical or dental health.</li><li>♣ Under debt bondage.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>♣ Small children serving in a family restaurant.</li><li>♣ Security measures that appear to keep people inside an establishment – barbed wire inside of a fence, bars covering the insides of windows.</li><li>♣ Checking into hotels/motels with older males, and referring to those males as boyfriend or “daddy,” which is often street slang for pimp.</li><li>♣ Work against his or her will.</li><li>♣ Unfamiliar with local language/culture.</li><li>♣ Not free to leave work environment (freedom of movement either partially or totally denied).</li><li>♣ A different job was proposed before migration, a different kind of job is actually being done.</li><li>♣ Traffickers/intermediaries are profiting from the exploitation.</li><li>♣ Untreated sexually transmitted diseases.</li></ul>
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#### b. Community-Driven Actions

Joint outcome of all strategic approaches employed during project implementation at community level to drive actions to prevent Trafficking in Persons and irregular/unsafe migration had tremendous impact. The project goal resonates with seemingly growing burning desires of intervention communities (as individuals, leaderships and in collective) at containing Trafficking in Persons and Unsafe/irregular migration. In addition to greater traction with survivors of

trafficking, community- and self-driven actions included:

i. *Migrants Information Centers (MIC) sites:*  
The traditional rulers of intervention communities allocated secured building to serve as operational office of a community- led MIC. This act is an indicator of community commitment, resolve to drive and sustain the demand-side actions to end trafficking in persons and irregular/unsafe migration at community level.

MIC provides a physical hub for information





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access, survivor/returnees meaningful engagements and a tool for advancing social behaviour/change. The implementing agency (WACOL) and funding partner (FCDA, Swiss Government), supported with initial furnishing of the office, facilitated MIC strategy plan development, its adoption and take-off. However, communities run the centers.

i. *Trafficking Survivors Forum*: during community engagement a victims-centred approach, which enabled trafficking survivors to be incorporated into all key activities was adopted. Subsequently, forum for Trafficking Survivors emerged in the intervention communities. The forum serves multiple purposes like:

- (a) unifying platform for survivors and peer support;
- (b) platform for experience sharing with community members on request; for public sensitisation, running deterrence campaigns and values re-orientation to prevent others from becoming victims of trafficking or embarking on irregular/unsafe migration. Already a few trafficking survivors are processing their re-enrollment into tertiary institution.



i. WhatsApp Platform: an e-based platform for sharing, gathering and accessing quicker information especially, about early warning to prevent trafficking among community members, was established with membership from trafficking survivors and community members.

ii. Stakeholders Referral Register: A register containing verified contact information of lead and alternate focal persons of different government agencies stakeholders was created and domiciled with community leaders and cabinet members. They committed to producing several copies for display in strategic areas of their communities.

iii. Others community actions: several communities instituted and are supporting a 10-man volunteers' group engaging in structured sensitisation of community members at social gatherings and events. Some community level religious groups began initiatives sensitising community members too, to prevent and reduce proclivity for unsafe migration and subsequently curb trafficking in persons.



## ACHIEVEMENTS

1. Instituted network of traditional and religious leaders in Edo and Delta States, south-south region of Nigeria with knowledge and capacity to identify early warning signs, link to relevant service providers/actors within government to prevent further escalation of trafficking in persons and unsafe migration within their area of jurisdiction, beyond donor support.
2. Birthed a new thought and stream of media programme content with the “early warning signs” and actions to prevent human trafficking and unsafe migration. By virtue of the success of the media advocacy, On-Air-Personalities (OAPs) began talking about some of the issues in the chit-chat media programmes.
3. Brokerage of alliances and partnerships among government agencies and authorities to begin to synergise actions to curb trafficking in persons and unsafe migration from the region in Nigeria.
4. Regenerated community values and

existing structures, which influenced community reappraise of their value systems, concept of economic incapacitation, interests and sense of communalism, which has brought a fresh drive to join in the fight to prevent trafficking in persons and unsafe migration of their children/wards in the guise of finding for greener pastures.

5. **Creation of virtual-desk/WhatsApp platform**, which serves as clearing house to facilitate ease of/and access to support group interactions and peer-to-peer therapy for victims/survivors and prospective victims alike to sustain engagement at a cheaper cost well after donor support.
6. **Establishment and equipping functional Migrant Information Centre (MICs)** - intervention communities voluntarily donated office spaces, used as one-stop hub for information about trafficking in persons and dangers of unsafe migration to seeking prospective victims and manned by volunteers and survivor/returnees for their social reintegration.



Survivors' Forum: it is a forum initiated and anchored by trafficked survivors/returnees to share experiences for deterrence of intending unsafe migrants and potential victims of trafficking. This forum, features live testimonies personally shared around Trafficking in persons and unsafe/irregular migration.

## CHALLENGES

- i. How to sustain already developed interest of community members to drive the fight and approaches to curb human trafficking and unsafe migration, in the light of no readily available alternatives in the community to gain quality life in their views.
- ii. Ways to address an emerged concern that some corrupt government officials contribute to sustenance of human trafficking and irregular migration due to aiding and abetting traffickers and movement of illegal migrants.
- iii. Approaches to ensure an intending unsafe migrant Nigerian under influence of religious merchants' manipulations become more critical of religious predictions/prophesies about his/her future abroad.
- iv. How to ensure commitment of government and its respective agents to combat trafficking does not wane or get marred by corruption, ineffective preventive

measures, neglect for survivors/returnees, inadequate measures to address the root causes of human trafficking and insecurity.

- v. Managing community members' expectations for financial grant from Donors to support small business set-ups, as incentive to abandon their vision to migrate abroad via unsafe routes; and become advocates against unsafe migration and human trafficking.

The fight against trafficking in Nigeria is daunting, yet there is very scarce resource to support planned initiatives, for law enforcement, especially for returnees'/survivors' reintegration into

*"...government officials are also traffickers and that is what is preventing the fight so far from getting to the stage it ought to be" (Happiness, a trafficked survivor/returnee, Uromi Community Edo State- Nigeria), During Swiss Delegation project monitoring visit to Edo State*

the society.



- i. There is heavy reliance on donor-funding and external aid from European countries (that are predominantly destination countries), and in the absence of such aid, not much is done to effectively implement measures to tackle Trafficking in Persons and deter Unsafe/Irregular migration.
  - ii. Low or pretended existing political will to combat trafficking. Many international and regional instruments have been adopted, national and state level legislations enacted/passed, in addition to policies but little is generally being done at the level of implementation.
1. General
    - i. Incorporation of anti-trafficking training, identification and prompt referrals for law enforcement agents, especially for community policing and vigilantes.
    - ii. Trafficking and irregular migration hinges on unemployment and income generation. Private sector, corporate institutions and businesses need to expand their Corporate Social Responsibility policies to include support of community-driven actions to preventive unsafe/irregular migration and trafficking in persons. They could do so by reactivating moribund skills acquisition facilities; expand the category of skills acquired there and institute interest free revolving loans scheme to support centre graduates' business take-off. Government should explore and strengthen partnership with non-state actors, organised private sectors, corporate institutions to hold them to account with an aim to preventing escalation in exploitation and abuse of persons, a recurring dynamic sustaining their business supply and value chains.

Trafficking in persons is entwined with Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) which disproportionately affects women and girls; typified by exploitation,



- i. forced/early and teenage marriages, debt bondage, servitude to support the families etc. Thus, attempts at all levels to end human trafficking must have measures to end GBV at the centre because GBV increases women's/girls vulnerability to trafficking, unsafe/irregular migration, exploitation and abuse.

## **1. Specific stakeholder**

### **A. Government**

- i. Explore systematic strategies to provide victims with access to justice, labour markets, healthcare and socio-economic support for easier integration to society to check vulnerability for re-trafficking.
- ii. States yet to adopt anti-trafficking law or a comprehensive legal framework prohibiting and punishing traffickers in person despite rising cases. especially internal trafficking in Nigeria, should explore and adopt it.
- iii. Increase mechanisms for systematic cooperation among relevant agencies for synergy and support to ensure reduction in victims' recruitment, unsafe migration, trafficking in persons (TiP), punishment for traffickers, referrals and reintegration of survivors/returnees.
- iv. Institutionalise partnership with/and roles of civil society, religious, communities and private sector, through policy, to support government in preventing human trafficking and unsafe migration.
- v. Government should declare youth development a social emergency, invest more in the social sector, develop a database of unemployed youths – categorised appropriately for easy of identification and reference. Government should also establish functional job centres linked to public and private sectors to access job openings alerts and share with names on the unemployment database.
- vi. Rural development has been grossly neglected, with rural areas lacking relevant social services (roads, energy/electricity, water, hospital, functional schools with qualified teachers, cottage industry, etc). Availability of basic social amenities would encourage self-employment, and reduce unsafe migration and trafficking in persons. Government should embark on huge rural renewal and infrastructural development.



- i. Federal Government of Nigeria should explore bilateral safe migration options for Nigerians with countries in Europe and North America where seasonal semi- and unskilled labour may be needed.
- ii. Embark on school curriculum review and also mandate relevant government education ministries and agencies to incorporate information on human trafficking and unsafe /irregular migration at all levels of education. This will ensure early warning signs and citizens' roles to drive preventive measures of trafficking in persons become part of our civic responsibility.
- iii. The huge number of trafficking returnees continue to be displaced, stigmatised as they battle for survival. Government should recognise their respective associations, and provide revolving loans beyond the stipends handed to them as they exit government returnees camp/safe space.
- iv. Upscaling prevention efforts and critical information about early warning signs, using effective channels, including the traditional approach with full involvement of victims/survivors of human trafficking and unsafe migration returnees so it can have wider impact, reaching other communities across the country and backed by survivors' experience sharing.

**A. Civil society/Donor**

- i. For future interventions consider to incorporate some livelihood sustainability component beyond technical empowerment efforts as ready alternatives to encourage people not to embark on unsafe migration and become victims of human trafficking.
- ii. Advocate for government policy to replicate MIC across the country to enable citizens, wherever located, access verified information about trafficking and early warning signs, information concerning jobs and travel quest to avoid them falling prey to traffickers and smugglers.
- iii. Civil society should explore measures to institute a functional mechanism to easily link up with relevant government stakeholders to ensure effective and efficient referral pathways and that appropriate actions are taken.
- iv. Engage policy makers for policy reviews to provide for a victims' human rights-centred approach to combating trafficking in persons and irregular/unsafe migration. Such that the victims are not further victimised by incarceration when apprehended as they are trafficked.





## **A. Community/Traditional governance structures**

The community leadership needs to:

- i. incorporate returnees'/victims' experiences sharing in general community events to discourage families from bonding their children for the journey.
- ii. begin to organise monthly community norms and values
- iii. hold reorientation talks in the community to rebuild values and de-emphasise get-rich- quick syndrome among the subjects.
- iv. engage with philanthropic persons from the community to support migrants information centres (MIC), Survivors' Forum and other established structures taking actions to empower, dissuade and prevent the people from embarking on unsafe migration and trafficking in persons.

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