



Modern Slavery and Climate Change: The Nigerian Perspective

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Esclavitud moderna y cambio climático: el compromiso de las ciudades

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I am very highly honoured today to share our experience on the topic of the workshop, *Modern Slavery and Climate Change*. According to Anti Slavery International, and as is evident throughout the world today, the practice of slavery did not end with the abolition in 19th century but still manifests itself in the various forms. This includes bonded Labour, child slavery, early and forced marriages, forced labour, descent-based slavery and human trafficking.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) statistics indicate that almost 21 million people are victims of forced labour (11.4 million women and girls and 9.5 million men and boys), almost 19 million victims are exploited by private individuals or enterprises and over 2 million by state or rebel groups. Of those exploited by individuals or enterprises, 4.5 million are victims of forced sexual exploitation. Forced labour in the private economy generates billions in US dollars in illegal profits annually. Domestic work, agriculture, construction, manufacturing and entertainment are among sectors most concerned. Migrant workers and indigenous people are particularly vulnerable to forced labour.

Collecting data relating to modern slavery can be quite challenging and based on the fact that various organisations gather data on modern slavery it has given rise to several estimates, therefore it is important that we harmonize the process so as to ensure that we have a general consensus on the number of people trafficked, the patterns and trends. This is why the ILO Data Initiative on Modern Slavery is laudable and we hope that through such dialogue we can be able to generate better prevalence data.

Human trafficking is a crime which debases the very essence of humanity and is targeted at the most vulnerable in the society, particularly women and children of low economic status.

Nigeria is strategically located in West Africa with the largest population estimated at 170 million people. It is the largest growing market in Africa; therefore it could be described as a hub of trafficking in persons among African countries.

Nigeria is rated as a source, transit, and destination country for forced labour and sex trafficking. Nigerian trafficking victims are recruited from rural and, to some extent, urban areas for both internal and external trafficking. Nigerians constitute significant proportions of numbers of victims of trafficking rescued worldwide. The use of deceit, debt bondage, threats and resort to diabolical and spiritual bondage to control victims is quite characteristic, the purpose being to create fear in the minds of the victims and prevent them from cooperating with law enforcement agencies and social workers.

The negative consequences of this crime cannot be overemphasized, and Nigeria strongly recognizes that human trafficking constitutes an obstacle to the attainment of fundamental principles of human rights as enshrined in its Constitution and undermines its human security and social development potentials.

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) was created by an Act of Parliament as a specific multi-disciplinary agency to deal with the scourge of human trafficking with an extensive mandate, which uniquely encapsulates the four Ps approach of Prevention, Protection and Assistance, Prosecution and Partnerships. This is consistent with the global approach adopted by the United Nations to comprehensively and effectively tackle the scourge.

In implementing its mandate, NAPTIP adopts a deliberate approach of mobilizing the “whole of government” and the “whole of society”. The “**whole of government**” approach identifies TIP as an obstacle to the attainment of Governments' developmental strategies and accordingly requires the mobilization of government apparatus at the Federal, State and Local Government levels. To this end, the Agency has adopted a strategic initiative to advocate for integration of counter trafficking into development planning at national, state and local government levels. The “**whole of society**” approach emphasizes the imperative of partnerships and collaboration with core stakeholders, including non-governmental actors and the public at large.

One of the major challenges the Agency has to tackle is public perception about the real effects of trafficking. Trafficking is still generally viewed as a means to improve socio-economic circumstances and we therefore take measures to embark on sustainable public enlightenment initiatives, using various medium of communication.

A key objective of our anti trafficking response is to ensure greater understanding and appreciation by critical partners to ensure sustainability of programs aimed at addressing the issue. We have established a National Stakeholders Consultative Forum comprising government, Civil Society Organizations, donors and other development partners working on human trafficking issues in Nigeria, to foster collaboration and coordination. We also provide training and capacity building programmes to CSOs to enhance their knowledge and skills in this area.

We periodically conduct data disaggregated research that helps provide useful insight into socio-cultural practices, customs, prejudices and other factors which reinforce vulnerability to human trafficking in Nigeria. This is relevant to help us design appropriate intervention strategies as we clearly recognize that legislation alone is not sufficient to tackle this menace. We routinely conduct advocacy to political and opinion leaders at national, state, local government and community levels, to facilitate cultural change and secure political support for our mandate.

Our anti-trafficking legislation and policy adheres to the principle of non-criminalization of victims and provides for their protection and assistance, irrespective of immigration status. The Agency has established transit shelters where it provides appropriate services to victims, maximizing their opportunities for comprehensive recovery through counseling, rehabilitation, empowerment and reintegration. The Agency has also established a "Victims of Trafficking Trust Fund" as a means of providing humanitarian and financial aid to rescued victims.

The Agency has worked assiduously to deliberately establish partnerships for enforcing international cooperation and mutual legal assistance with source, transit and destination countries to share information, intelligence and best practices to help improve capacity to tackle this global scourge.

Recognising that migration management has a role to play in addressing modern slavery, the Government of Nigeria recently adopted a migration policy as well as a labour migration policy. The Migration Policy, in addition to looking at organised Labour Migration, covers areas such as Migration and Development, Migration and cross-cutting issues such as Health, Gender, Environment, Climate Change, Conflict, Trade etc., National Security and Irregular Migration, Forced Displacement, Human Rights of Migrants, Internal Migration, Migration and International cooperation as well as Migration Data. In 2015 Nigeria has also re-enacted its Immigration Act, as well as enacted a Violence Against Persons law.

I would also like to briefly comment on the topic of climate change, which may have a link to fuelling modern slavery. The problem of climate change (a normal historical fact) greatly accelerating in modern times is likely to result in climate-related displacement (climate refugees for example), possibly resulting in conflicts over scarcer resources and resulting in further poverty for large sections of the global population.

The resulting vulnerability (especially tied to migration) will likely result in greater numbers of victims of human trafficking; Climate change interacting with a tendency to urbanization worldwide means greater vulnerability of members of lower social classes, especially in peri-urban areas, leading to intensified vulnerability and urban decline in many areas. This could have an effect both in the global north and south. Closely interacting with the above is the problem of sustainable livelihoods within the context of a much less resilient ecosystem, as well as the danger of natural disasters resulting from climate change-related natural disasters and increased vulnerability of affected populations to exploitation owing to greater initial vulnerability as well as weak coping capacity.

The impact of climatic changes in a country such as Nigeria can be vast, resulting in destabilisation of some stable ecosystems such as the Sahel Savannah with resultant impact on neighbouring territories. Preliminary studies have been conducted on the vulnerability of various sectors of the Nigerian economy, namely human settlements and health, water resources, wetlands and freshwater ecosystems, energy, industry, and commerce, and the outcome showed virtually all the sectors analysed manifested some evidence of vulnerability to climate change. None were unaffected, nor will remain unaffected in the future by changes to climatic conditions. Rather, a more recent assessment which was on a regional and global scale corroborated the previous assessment and captured more disturbing scenarios using more embracing and sophisticated approaches.

According to Building Nigeria's Response to Climate Change (BNRCC), Climate Change or Global Warming is a reality with deleterious effects: seasonal cycles are disrupted, as are ecosystems; and agriculture, water needs and supply, and food production are all adversely affected. It also leads to seasonal level rise with its attendant consequences, fiercer weather, increased frequency and intensity of storms, floods, hurricanes,

droughts, fires, poverty, malnutrition and a series of health and socio-economic consequences resulting in a cumulative effect on natural resources and the balance of nature.

In this regard, through the Federal Ministry of Environment, National Emergency Management Agency, National Commission for Refugees several projects are being implemented by the Great Green Wall initiative and the BRNCC.

The combined effects on these emerging global emergencies is horrifying and should propel governments to further commit to global efforts to tackle these issues. Nigeria remains strongly committed to meeting its international and domestic obligations in this regard and will continue to support global initiatives to tackle human trafficking and climate change.

Recommendations for improving the global record with regard to both climate change and its complex interaction with the phenomenon of modern slavery requires strengthening measures within these three sets of secondary forces:

- Equitable international economic relations (north-south as well as within nations of the global south);
- Promoting effective international and domestic criminal justice systems broadly and specifically to combat modern slavery, including the crime of human trafficking, as a component of crimes targeting special vulnerability in persons (including Interpol, WAPCCO, etc.);
- Strengthening the already existing internationally accepted intellectual morality including the emphasis on human rights, the rule of law etc.; including through the primacy of the major religions in consensus about the heinous and unholy nature of slavery and human trafficking.

Finally, it is important to note that measures to help minimise vulnerabilities that create opportunities for modern slavery to thrive and the issue of climate change have been given attention in the United Nations' proposed Sustainable Development Goals. We hope that with our input here today and the good practices that will be gathered from other countries' participants can come up with resolutions to help strengthen the proposed goals and its subsequent implantation.