

# **Good Practices/ Experience in the Implementation of the UNICRI Project\_ "*Combating And Preventing Of Trafficking Of Minors And Young Women From Nigeria To Italy*"**

**A Paper Presented by Mr. Josiah Emerole, NAPTIP Focal Point at the International Conference on 'The Role of International Cooperation In Tackling Sexual Violence Against Children', held in Rome, Italy on November 29, 2012**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The fight against trafficking in persons has in recent years gained much prominence in International, Regional and National discourse, and these have resulted in the adoption of various instruments and programmes aimed at addressing the problem.

For us in Nigeria, we have long discovered that any instrument or programme that would lead to a successful reduction and eventual eradication of Trafficking in Persons must have all the elements of the 4Ps – PREVENTION, PROTECTION, PROSECUTION and PARTNERSHIP. It is however, interesting to note that we at the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP) have added a fifth P, which is PUNISHMENT.

It is in realization of this that we remain very grateful to the Italian Government for the sponsorship of the UNICRI project "*Combating And Preventing Of Trafficking Of Minors And Young Women From Nigeria To Italy*", the two year programme which commenced in 2008 and ended in 2010.

To a typical man on the streets of Nigeria, Italy has become synonymous with trafficking in persons especially for the purposes of exploitative forced sex work. He believes that any young girl travelling to Italy is going for prostitution while a grown up lady who returns from Italy is either a trafficker or a prostitute in Italy. They have a reason for this belief because of the number of young girls that have been repatriated in the past from Italy on the basis of human trafficking and illegal migration. However, the more enlightened ones and government of Nigeria think differently as it remains on record that the Italian Government is the biggest supporter of Nigeria's effort at eradicating all forms of human trafficking in Nigeria.

Be that as it may, the project '*Combating And Preventing of Trafficking Of Minors And Young Women From Nigeria To Italy*' remains one of such support and it brought a lot of change in the way and manner in which the fight against human trafficking was being fought.

## **THE PROJECT**

This project was designed to implement the best practices resulting from the "Programme of Action against trafficking in minors and young women from Nigeria into Italy for the purpose of

sexual exploitation”, an innovative 18-month pilot project funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and executed by UNICRI, in collaboration with UNODC Nigeria from September 2002 to April 2004. It was implemented directly by UNICRI and UNODC while NAPTIP played supervisory role to ensure that the purposes envisaged by the project were achieved.

### **BENEFICIARIES/ TARGET GROUP.**

1. The main beneficiaries were Nigerian minors and young women especially from Edo State who are victims or vulnerable to trafficking especially for the purpose of sexual exploitation.
2. The secondary beneficiaries were 6 local NGOs in Edo State under the auspices of Edo State Coalition against Trafficking in Persons (ENCATIP) which provided assistance and support to the main target group. This coalition was created by UNICRI and UNODC during the First phase and they are: African Women Empowerment Guild (AWEG); Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW); Girls Power Initiative (GPI) Edo State; Idia Renaissance; International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group (IRRRAG-Nigeria) Edo State; and Women Action Initiative (WAI).
3. Another set of secondary beneficiaries were Italian NGOs that give assistance to Nigerian victims in Italy.
4. The direct benefit of the project to NAPTIP was the enhancement of the National Monitoring Centre (NMC) especially the adaptation of the SIDDA 2000. It is important to note that the NMC was donated to the Nigerian Government by the Italian Government through UNICRI at the end of the first phase of the project.

### **IMPLEMENTATION.**

The actual implementation commenced on July 2008 with a two weeks training of members of ENCATIP and NAPTIP Benin zonal office in Abuja. By December 2008 an Agreement was signed by ENCATIP and UNICRI/UNODC for the women empowerment aspect of the project and by end of March 2010, a total of 165 victims and vulnerable persons had benefited from this component of the project. Out of this number, 111 got micro credits worth \$44,535.34. The micro credit funds were disbursed in two tranches as they were received by the six ENCATIP member organisations to beneficiaries to operate different types of businesses including tailoring, hairdressing, computer service, sale of food stuff, telephone recharge card sales, provision stores, etc.

Similarly, a total of 21 beneficiaries received education grants to continue their education in tertiary institutions, complete secondary education and prepare for examinations. A total sum of \$12,354 was spent on this activity as against \$12,000 earmarked. 33 beneficiaries also went through skills acquisitions in fashion design, hairdressing, video recording, interior decoration, catering and computer training. The sum of \$15,009 has been spent on this aspect.

On refunds of the micro credits, as at end of March 2010 the beneficiaries of the first tranche of the micro credit had refunded N2,472,045 out of the N4, 190,000 that was disbursed. The

beneficiaries of the second tranche had refunded N516,377 out of the N5, 261, 633 that was disbursed thus bringing the total sum refunded from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> tranche of the micro credit to N2, 998,422 out of the N 9,451,633 that has been disbursed.

It is also important to note that since the end of the project in 2010, the micro credit has been expanded and become a revolving loan and the number of beneficiaries has reached 197.

On the State wide awareness creation component, this ended by the end of May 2010.

On the Institutional assistance to NAPTIP, the National Monitoring Centre (NMC) was upgraded with the SIDDA 2000. Presently we have over 1800 cases with over 2000 entries of suspected traffickers and victims, NMC officers are fully trained on the use of the system and Zonal officers also trained on the old features of the system.

## **GOOD PRACTICES**

**PARTNERSHIP.** Partnership between nations, organisations as well as civil society organization was a good practice in the implementation of the project. Because of the good relationship existing between Nigeria and Italy the Italian Government found it worthy to assist in the fight through UNICRI. For the first time NGO's working on trafficking issues came together to implement a project without problems. This also helped in the deployment of resources and energy. There was no need for them to work at cross purposes. This project also led to the in kind donation of the SIDDA 2000 to NAPTIP and brought NAPTIP and the Anti Mafia Bureau closer in the fight against human trafficking. This got to a climax in December 2010 when the Head of the Anti Mafia visited Nigeria and signed an MOU with NAPTIP on how the two organisations would work together to stop trafficking in persons. There is no doubt that our anti-trafficking policies and projects can be effective if built on cooperation and partnership.

**HAVING A SAY.** The beneficiaries (Victims and Vulnerable) were made to have a say in whatever activities they were to engage in and in the amount of micro credits they needed to carry out their trade. This was after a three day life skills training that were given to them after the selection process. No trade was imposed on any of the beneficiaries.

**MIXING AWARENESS WITH EMPOWERMENT.** For the first time, Awareness on the issue of trafficking in persons was going on with the empowerment of the people. The people saw that it was not all about talking; there was assistance to people following. This was a response to the issue of poverty being a major contributor to the volume of human trafficking in Nigeria.

**KEEPING AN EYE.** It was a good practice that even though the Coalition of NGO's had signed an MOU with UNICRI on the Empowerment component of the project, Nigerian Government through NAPTIP monitored the implementation. This went a long way to ensure that nobody treated the project with levity.

**ALL INCLUSIVE ASSISTANCE.** The project had assistance for both victims as well as vulnerable ones. With it the beneficiaries who would have been tempted to become victims were kept busy and no longer interested in following anyone anywhere while others also went back to school.

**SECRECY OF BENEFICIARIES.** Because of the fear of stigmatization, the identity of the victims who were benefiting was not given out. Even those who live around them or close to their business premises were not allowed to know the history of the beneficiaries.

**GRANTS INSTEAD OF LOANS.** Even though many of the beneficiaries are paying back the loans which are now revolving, it was discovered that majority of those defaulting in payment are the Victims and some actually disappeared after sometime because of the debt while the vulnerable ones are faithful in the repayment. The lesson here is that it will be better to assist victims by way of Grants while vulnerable people are given loans. NGO's can then be empowered to equip them and monitor them for at least one year.

**CONCLUSION:** Like Oliver twist that would always ask for more, we will be delighted if another phase of this project could be done and to involve more people and NGO's.

On the Institutional assistance, the following will help the Agency in its work

1. Upgrading the SIDDA software to the latest futures and software solution adopted for National Antimafia Bureau system and EUROJUST
2. Upgrading the SIDDA software to let the 7 zonal office connection at the central database with the standard requirements of security connection including also the use of digital certificate (public and private key). Develop new software, in case of too slow speed connection.
3. Upgrading of the SIDDA technical capacity to read and capture biometric attribute of fingerprint system component that will be linked to several kinds of search.
4. Picture for the Entity Person to show in victim/trafficker data forms.
5. Technical support and maintenance service for NAPTIP technical officers to have support to address ordinary and extraordinary technical issues during the system execution.
6. Remotely using remote connectivity tools (Teamviewer);
7. To have a dedicated service of help desk;
8. On site, with a number of onsite visits to assess the situation and to tune system behaviour, and analyze new needs.
9. A technical training to the NAPTIP'S technical staff and the application assistance to the users involved in the zonal office.
10. Document Management system .

