

Information Repackaging for the Prevention and Control of Human Trafficking in Nigeria

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Abstract

African population is again suffering serious depletion through human trafficking with women and children as the most vulnerable groups. This social problem tagged modern day slavery is a set back to the socio-economic development of African countries. Nigeria has been identified as a transit and destination of human trafficking. Different anti-human trafficking organisations are trying to combat this organized crime through several strategies. This paper is proposing information repackaging for rural dwellers where majority of the victims are recruited as a potent method of combating this social problem. Transforming printed information into oral form, use of community information centers, community based organisations (CBOs), radio jingles, television programmes, focal group discussions among others are various repackaging techniques this paper has recommended.

Introduction

For many years now, human trafficking has remained one of the modern day organized crime that has seriously challenged criminologists all over the world. Globalization has facilitated its international dimensions making it to attract local, regional and international concerns. The first serious international attention on human trafficking was the 1949 convention for the suppression of trafficking in persons and of the exploitation of the prostitution of others that was adopted by the United Nations general assembly.

Regional conference in Cotonou (1998), Libreville platform of action (2000) and the Ouagadougou action plan of 2006 shade more light on the seriousness of the problem. A United Nations major convention in 2000 (the Palermo Protocol) to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons especially woman and children came up with the definition of trafficking in persons as ‘the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or position, of vulnerability or giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person for the purposes of exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (UNICEF, 2005)

This definition attempted to bring out salient issues about human trafficking in order to provide legal framework for some other national and regional legislations against this modern day slavery. Woman and children are the most vulnerable group in human trafficking. Traffickers are made up of criminal ring who smuggle victims for the

purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude, forced marriage, organs harvesting and rituals. (UNICEF, 2005; UNESCO, 2006)

The pattern of recruitment usually involves traffickers who often have relation with the family or friends luring victims with promises of good education and lucrative job opportunities in big cities or abroad. Ignorantly, parents willingly release their children and young girls with hope of better future for the victims (Nwafor, 1998; Ebigbo, 2000; Hodges 2001; UNICEF, 2003; UNICEF, 2005; UNESCO, 2006). There have been reported cases of kidnapped victims but the recorded numbers are not very significant. A United Nations' (2006) study reveals that of the 400 victims investigated 37% were recruited by family members, 8% were recruited through friends of the family and 48% were recruited through persons unknown to the family.

Sometimes during recruitment, jujù or voodoo practice is employed to bind victims to their recruiters. This practice makes it difficult for the victims to co-operate with law enforcement agents in prosecuting the offenders in event of arrest. Victims are held in debt bondage for a very long time, sometimes a lady is expected to pay back the some of #500,000 for regain freedom, UNICEF (2005) observed that it would take the lady to sleep with an estimated 3000 partners to raise as much as that. Several factors have been identified as the likely cause of woman and children trafficking (Ebigbo, 2000; UNICEF 2005, UNESCO 2006, UNO2006). UNICEF summarised the causes in what it described as the 'push and pull' factors on the supply and demand. The push factors of poverty, ignorance, violence and power contribute heavily in fertilizing human trafficking. On the pull factors (demand) are the issues of the need for cheap labour and high demand for sex by influential members of the society.

Woman and Children Trafficking In Nigeria

West African sub region has been identified as a major supplier of victims of human trafficking (Kangensuputa, 2003; Okojie, 2004; UNICEF 2005 UNESCO, 2006). Nigeria is a notorious country in women and children trafficking. Kangensuputa reports that on the profile of victims of trafficking, Nigeria places third in the world as the most frequently mentioned country of origin; Nigeria is therefore a major supplier and consumer and also a transit route and destination for women and children trafficking. According to UNICEF (2005) report, about 8 million Nigerian children are engaged in exploitative child labour. The report further reveals that an estimated 80% of children trafficked to Italy are Africans and 60% of them are Nigerian. Sources of victims trafficked in Nigeria are mainly from rural areas of Oyo, Osun, Ogun, Akwa Ibom, Cross River Bayelsa, Edo, Ebonyi, Imo, Enugu, Benue, Niger, Kwara, Kano, Kaduna, Borno, Taraba, Yobe, Sokoto, Katsina, Adamawa, Zamfara, Jigawa, Gombe and Bauchi States (Ebigbo, 2000; UNESCO, 2006; UNO, 2006).

Nigeria's vulnerability to women and children trafficking has been blamed on high rate of poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, loose security networks and corruption among security officials. It is surprising that even with all the legal instruments in Nigeria such as Palermo Protocol (ratified in Nigeria in 2001), the Child Right Act of 2003 the Human Rights provision in the 1999 constitution, sections 225-225 of criminal code, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), among others, incidences of women and children trafficking are still very endemic in Nigeria. Similarly, efforts of international organizations (UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO), non governmental organizations

such as Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation ((WOTCLEF), Idia Renaissance have not yielded significant result. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Person and other Related Matters (NAPTIP), established in 2003 has deployed a number of strategies in combating the problem (Agbegbu, 2007). These organizations have been involved with one programme or the other in attempt to reduce or eliminate cases of women and children trafficking in Nigeria. Enlightenment campaigns have been carried out in both print and electronic media in recognition of the roles of information in combating some social problems.

Since investigations have revealed that major sources of victims of human trafficking are from the rural areas of the country, (Nwafor, 1998; Ebigbo, 2000; Hodges, 2001; UNICEF, 2005; UNESCO 2006), it is imperative that the approach should be shifted to the rural areas. Existing, information on women and children trafficking and enlightenment campaigns are only suitable for the literate urban dwellers. This is shown by the language and the medium of such information. Therefore, the existing information including online information resources relevant to the human trafficking would be rendered in a manner that would be suitable for the rural dwellers where illiteracy, poverty and ignorance are prevalent. This surely necessitated the need for information repackaging for the rural dwellers in Nigeria. This is the main trust of this paper.

The Role of Information in Rural Development

Literature is replete with the dynamic roles of information in addressing social problems in rural areas. The library has been identified as the propeller of information dissemination for the over all national development. It is the intermediary between official information and the citizens (Kangas, Kuronen and Pekkarinen, 1995; Quaddri, 2004; Ezema 1998). The library is usually assigned with the roles of information dissemination for rural development in most societies. Unfortunately there is a paucity of public libraries in rural areas of Nigeria (Chijoke, 1999). She therefore stressed the need for community information services (CIS) where the library would play reference roles to the community information workers who would render the vital information services to the rural dwellers. Similarly, Aina (2006) identifies the link between the library and information extension officers in providing adequate and timely information to the rural dwellers. This link remains pivotal in disseminating health, agricultural, economic and human right information in rural communities.

The rural dwellers are dominated by greater percentage of illiterates (Aina, 1987, Qudri, 2004). As a result, the form and medium of information to the inhabitants have to reflect their illiteracy level. Ogunshye (1970) has regretted that the form and medium of information to the rural dwellers are inadequate since they appear in languages and formats alien to them. Oral information dissemination appears more effective than the printed forms in the rural areas (Anyim, 1972; Okumma, 1992; Ngmwa, Ocholla and Ojiambo, 1997; Ughegbu, 2000; Ughegbu and Opeke, 2004). Anyim has agreed that African culture is predominantly oral where the centre of activities is the village square. Similarly, a study conducted by Ngimwa and others (1997) reveals that community leaders form the bedrock of information givers. This result is corroborated by Ughegbu (2000) which reveals that the conventional means of information dissemination like radio and television appears not to serve the rural dwellers adequately since lack of electricity and their poverty level make it difficult for these devices to be powered.

The efforts of governmental and non governmental organizations in combating human trafficking in Nigeria through provision of adequate and timely information may not have yielded good results because the information is available in forms and medium that the rural dwellers cannot access due to their illiteracy level. Much of the information is in print form and others on the Internet. Obviously, the medium and language in which the information are generated and disseminated do not favour the rural inhabitants where greater effort on enlightenment campaign should be targeted. This apparently requires a sustainable strategy for repackaging of the information to meet the needs of the rural dwellers.

Information Repackaging for Rural Dwellers

The term information repackaging was first used by Rosenberg (1987) in a paper on scientific and technical information for illiterate and semi-literate users in the Southern Sudan. Information repackaging is concerned with efforts in transforming the existing information in the form and medium that would suit a targeted group of people. This implies translation of the information in the language of the people; adopting the right medium familiar to the people and providing the right environment that would generate the required interest from the targeted group. The effectiveness of information repackaging in rural development was the focus of works of Sturges and Chimseu (1996), Onwubiko (1999) and Ezema (2001). Rosenberg (1987:10) describes how in the Southern Sudan two types of illiterate audiences were targeted: the whole community and trainers

for the community. The latter included traditional midwives and birth attendants and cattle farmers trained in techniques of preventing disease. In the field of agriculture, information was repackaged as part of campaigns to encourage better crops, storage techniques and the adoption of ox ploughs and carts, as well as popularising the idea of co-operatives. In the area of technology the use of fuel-saving stoves was encouraged, to save users' money and protect the environment, as well as the adoption of pit latrines by the Juba Water and Sanitation Programme. A project on thatching aimed to make the thatch in this commonly used method of roofing last longer. Repackaging was also used to support UNICEF-backed campaigns for immunizing children and oral hydration therapy. The Primary Health Care Programme targeted improving maternal and child health in general and all aspects of sanitation such as clean water, latrines, personal hygiene and food sanitation. According to Iwhiwhu (2008) information repackaging can be done by

- Reformatting and synthesizing raw information;
- Combining expertise or consulting on a subject with access to relevant information sources;
- Providing training or assistance to a user in accessing an information product.

These processes require adequate training in the techniques of processing and synthesizing information in relation to the information needs of the rural dwellers. Similarly, Sturges and Chimsen, (1996) identified three requirements for repackaging information, namely, the materials should be collected and organized efficiently; there should be the capacity to analyze their content and create new information packages from them and the new products should be disseminated freely. There is the need for the identification of good techniques for repackaging. This would require critical thinking for combining information from different sources, considering the accuracy, completeness, and consistency of the information (Iwhiwhu, 2008). In a related development, Stilwell (n.d) identified the following forms of information repackaging for the rural inhabitants: posters, charts, diagrams, tape/slide presentations, film, television, video/audio cassettes, radio and the Internet; translations of relevant documents and items of information into local languages. These forms of information repackaging if carefully adopted will be relevant in the campaign against human trafficking in Nigeria

Information Repackaging for the Prevention of Human Trafficking in Nigeria

Since there is existing information on the prevention human trafficking in Nigeria, the challenge therefore is the ability to adopt information repackaging techniques which would assist in redesigning the information to address the information needs of the rural dwellers. This paper recommends the following strategies in repackaging information for the prevention and control of women and children trafficking.

a. Transforming printed information into oral form:

The level of illiteracy in rural areas of Nigeria does not support reading and writing. Therefore, oral information delivery is the most suitable means of reaching out to the people. Much of the Existing information on human trafficking appear mainly in print formats and often through medium that is not easily accessible to the rural dwellers. Librarians trained in the skills of information storage, retrieval and dissemination would

be effective anchors in sourcing the required information and disseminating them to the rural dwellers. Library and information science professionals who are serving in public and community libraries would be the ideal people since most of them are working in familiar rural communities. What is envisaged here is the evolution of information field workers or what Amadi (1981) referred to as ‘bare foot librarians’. He is a well trained professional with adequate formal instruction in oral tradition coupled with the ability to reach out to the people.

b. Use of focal group discussions

Another good method of repackaging information for the prevention and control of human trafficking is the use of focal group discussion. Information related to the activities of human traffickers and their victims can be repackaged in form stories, songs and drama and presented to a particular target group such as young girls who are usually potential victims of human trafficking. Apart from young girls parents can also be targeted because in most cases, as evident from the literature, parents ignorantly release their children to human traffickers.

c. Translation of Existing Information to Local Languages

Another approach in information repackaging is the translation of existing human trafficking-related information which appears in foreign languages into local languages. The intention here is to ensure that such useful information is disseminated to the target audience with ease. The information professionals and other anti trafficking organizations and agencies should be involved in this translation project.

d. Use of posters/ Handbills

The use posters and handbills is another effective technique of information repackaging for the rural communities. The technique here is transform information on human trafficking which is not accessible to the rural dwellers into posters and handbills to meet the information needs of the rural people. Such posters and handbills should be designed in such a way that it will attract the attention of the people. They should also be posted in strategic locations such as village squares, churches, hospitals and other public places. Most often information professionals may take some time to explain some of the posters and handbills for them to understand the message clearly. Organizations such as NAPTIP and WOTCLEF should sponsor enlightenment campaigns using the repackaged information.

e.. Radio Programmes and Jingles

The radio remains a medium which permeates every location. A major advantage of repackaging information through the radio is the depth of its penetration and affordability of radios by so many families. Besides this, it is very easy and cheap to power the radios. Therefore much of the information on human trafficking in print and online resources would be repackaged in local languages and disseminated through the radios. Programme designers in the radio stations should equally use these repackaged information in radio jingles to create more awareness on the operation of traffickers. The dominance of English language in programme presentations should be de-emphasized in local radio stations in Nigeria to improve on the listening audience in the rural areas. There are very many programmes both in the radio and television that expose the evil activities of human traffickers which should be repackaged and presented in local languages for wider reach. Presenters of programmes should equally consider the time of presentation. Since rural areas are dominated by farmers, the timing should be seriously considered. Evening

period is the most adequate for many families would have come back from their farm works

f. Television/Home Videos

The use of motion pictures creates a near real life situation and therefore, deepens the penetration of the message. The popularity of home videos and other television programmes on the viewing culture of Nigeria is no longer in doubt. The rural electrification projects in Nigeria though still very epileptic have created opportunities for many families to enjoy films in their houses.

In providing adequate information on human trafficking, information professionals should repackage life experiences of victims of human trafficking in form of film shows in local languages to expose the activities of the traffickers to the general public. Such films should be highly subsidized or aired freely in local television stations so that very many homes can view them. Such films should also be distributed to schools where we have potential victims so as to create awareness on the evils of human trafficking.

g. The use of community library and information centers.

There are the existences of community libraries and information centers already in most rural communities. Such information centers include hospitals churches, schools village square, civic centers, markets etc. These information centers are heavily depended on for effective information dissemination in rural areas.

Information on human trafficking should be translated in the local language and disseminated through staff of these centers. For instance the teachers should be involved in enlightenment campaigns against human trafficking through the pupils and students. Since the young ones mostly school age children and young girls, are vulnerable, they should be informed about the dangers of strangers or relations who would lure them into human trafficking. The community libraries should take up the challenge of repackaging existing human trafficking-related information into story, drama, handbills in exposing the dangers of human trafficking. This can be done library meeting hours with children and the young adults.

Similarly, the church is another powerful institution in information dissemination. Priests and other members of the laity should be involved in the public enlightenment campaigns using the repackaged information. The campaign should be aimed at exposing the *modus operandi* of traffickers and what victims suffer in their hands. In the same vane, enlightenment campaigns should be organized in markets and village square where it is very obvious that the ruralites would have time to listen.

h. Community Based Organisations (CBOS)

Community based organizations (CBOS) have been recognized as very useful in reaching out to the rural dwellers (Ezema, 2003; Okunna, 1992; Ughegbu, 2000). They are vital in promoting healthy living and socio- economic development of rural areas. Among these organizations are the age grades social clubs, women groups, town unions, co-operative societies, youth movement etc. Since these organizations are closer to the people, information professionals armed with the repackaged information should reach out to these groups and educate them on the evils of human trafficking using available information with them. The language of the people should be used and rendered orally.

In some communities, there are CBOS that are entrusted with legislation and law enforcement. These CBOS should be targeted and using stories, film shows drama drive home the message of human trafficking in the way they would understand. With this,

they will be adequately equipped to make laws that would reduce incidents of human trafficking in Nigeria. The group that enforces the law would also have been empowered properly to enforce such laws.

i. Women groups

These are also powerful force to reckon with in information dissemination in rural areas. Women form one of the most vulnerable groups in human trafficking. Therefore, it is imperative that focusing the enlightenment campaign on them would generate positive results. Existing information on this social problem such as the method of operation and steps to take in reporting suspected traffickers should be repackaged to suit them. In most part of the country particularly in the South Eastern area, annual return of women to the communities in the rural areas is now an integral part of our social life. Organisations concerned with human trafficking could avail themselves of such opportunities in education of the rural women using talk shows, film-shows, seminars. These programmes would be concerned in their native languages. Huge successes have been recorded on women's health and nutrition using enlightenment campaigns during such annual festivals (Ezema, 1998). There is no doubt that similar success will be made in combating human trafficking.

j. Community Leaders: Rural development activities have been usually propelled through the community leaders. This group of people include political leaders, religious leaders, village heads, school heads and other people in the community that command high degree of respect and follower ship. In a study of Ngimwa and others (1997), community leaders form the bedrock of information in the rural areas. Being the light of the society, they are strategically placed in obtaining the right and timely information. They often serve as intermediary between the sources of information and the people. As enlightened members of the society they are often involved in repackaging the information obtained for the general public. Anti human trafficking organisations and information professional should therefore exploit these leadership roles and their exposure to formal education to get information on the dangers of human trafficking across to the general public. The approach here is to organize meetings with this group and then use the forum to train them on how to use the repackaged information to address the problems of human trafficking in their society.

Conclusion: It is the firm belief of this paper that if these strategies proposed in the paper are explored, human trafficking would be reduced drastically in Nigeria.

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