

Female Indebtedness and Enslavement: A Study of Relationships and Trends in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Indebtedness is described as a situation when one is owing an individual either money or any gratitude for services or help rendered. Enslavement on the other hand, connotes an organized and systematic procedure of exploiting an individual without his/her consent, either in terms of his person, time, energy or possession. This paper takes a look at indebtedness and enslavement in relation to sex slavery in Nigeria. It specifically address indebtedness in relation to modern day enslavement, and notes that over 70% of girls tricked into sex trade are victims of “smuggle and upkeep/maintenance indebtedness” to their masters. A survey of two cosmopolitan cities of Lagos and Abuja was carried out to find out the trend of indebtedness and enslavement among Nigerian girls in the two cities. This (i) examined the elements of indebtedness and slavery, (ii) assessed the trends and patterns of indebtedness and enslavement and (iii) evaluated the relationship between types of indebtedness and enslavement. Study findings revealed that respondents were variously indebted to their “masters” or “madams”, a situation that exposed them to different categories and patterns of enslavement. The ages, levels of education, religious affiliation, ethnicity and origin of respondents were found to have profound effects on their elements of indebtedness which invariably determined the patterns of their enslavement. Paper discusses the role of law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organizations in curbing the menace of general illiteracy, domestic and international migration, human trafficking and others. Recommendations for gender mainstreaming, re-positioning for capacity building and empowerment through functional education and realistic gender polices are made.

Keywords: Indebtedness, enslavement, female

INTRODUCTION

Indebtedness can be defined as a situation where one is owing an individual or a group of individuals either money, or gratitude for services or help rendered, while enslavement implies holding captive an individual by a superior power, to strip from him all rights and privileges, and the freedom to take his personal decisions. It is a systematic procedure of exploiting an individual with or without his/her consent, either in terms of his person, time, energy or possession. There is a close relationship between indebtedness and enslavement in the sense that debtors are held captive and kept in constant servitude of unfree labour until all their debts are paid off. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia refers to this as debt bondage, debt slavery or peonage which is

...a form of disguised slavery where the subject is not legally owned, but is instead bound by a contract to perform labour to work off a debt under terms that make it impossible to completely retire the debt and thereby escape from the contract.¹

¹ Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia “History of slavery”,

In this situation, services are rendered in place of paying off of loans with currency or goods. This paper notes the strong relationship between indebtedness and enslavement, as debtors are forced to pay off their debts through the rendering of services as are determined by the creditor. It connotes bondage which totally strips the victim of all rights to freedom and to complaint.

History has disclosed the large extent to which slavery and bonded labour were practiced in olden days Africa. For instance, up to 600,000 black Mauritians, or 20% of the population were enslaved and used as bonded labour by the white skinned Mauritians, until in August 2007, when slavery was finally criminalized.ⁱⁱ Thus despite the official banning of slave ownership by law in 1981 in Mauritania, disguised slavery (hereditary slavery and bonded labour) still persisted until recently. The above is equally true of Chad where the Arab herdsmen own slaves and practice bonded labour. The enslaved are denied all rights and are stripped of their identities.

As part of a new identity imposed on them the herdsmen ...change their names, forbid them to speak in their native dialect, ban them from conversing with people from their own ethnic group and make them adopt Islam as their religion.ⁱⁱⁱ

The above scenario obtains in modern day slavery in Nigeria where children, youths mostly between the ages of eight to eighteen years, are held in bondage for a pittance that was expended on them in the name of travel and upkeep costs.

Indebtedness and enslavement in Nigeria

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is located in West Africa along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. It is bordered in the south by the Gulf of Guinea (an arm of the Atlantic Ocean), in the west by the Republic of Benin, in the north west and north by the Niger Republic, in the North East by the Chad Republic and in the East by the Republic of Cameroun. Abuja is Nigeria's Capital Territory, while Lagos, Nigeria's formal capital city is the most populated city in Nigeria. Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa, and based on its oil wealth, it is often tagged the "Giant of Africa". Ogunlowo remarked that the financial resources at government disposal (at all tiers) have kept growing, likewise the fledging external reserves, which have quadrupled and consolidated at a comfortable level above \$40 million; yet Nigeria remains among the first 26 poorest countries of the world, with more than 75 percent of the population living below the poverty line⁽⁴⁾.^{iv} Poverty is defined as a ravaging economic and social phenomenon that manifests in the inability of individuals to acquire the basic necessities of life like food, clothing, shelter, inability to meet social obligations and others.

Nigerians find themselves deeply involved in human trafficking (both externally and internally), prostitution, sex slavery and forced labour in the midst of their "plenty". The nation is a source, transit and destination country for trafficked persons for commercial sex, voluntary migration for prostitution and forced labour as a result of the level of illiteracy, poverty unemployment and disillusionment experienced by her citizens. 75 percentage of Nigeria's live below the poverty line, a situation that has caused many to look around for any means of livelihood. The evolution of Private Employment Agencies (PEAs) has suddenly become a lucrative private business in Nigeria. These agencies volunteer to seek employment

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historyofslavery>, downloaded 8/24/2008

ⁱⁱ Wikipedia, "Slavery in Modern Africa"

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slaveryinmodernafrica>, downloaded 3/5/2009

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} A. Ogunlowo, "Editorial Comment," *Broad Street Journal*, (Lagos: Tell Communications Limited), Vol. 39, 2006, 5.

for youths and others both within and outside Nigeria, thus propagating human trafficking, migration or both under the guise of job placement. This, of course, is not without a price to be paid by the victims. Victims are held bondage for repayment of debts incurred in their travel to “greener pastures”.

It is important to note that human trafficking in Nigeria has attained a new dimension which is contrary to the inherent assumption in the United Nations Trafficking protocol that traffickers belong to organized criminal networks. That in Nigeria and most other African nations today, is most often perpetuated by family members, relations, friends and acquaintances especially those living abroad or who have connections overseas.

The agencies operate as small scale unlicensed informal organizations, with the mission of providing job placement services mostly in the informal sectors like cleaning services, domestic work, nannies, hairdressers, private security services, sports, modeling or shop keepers. At times, promises of educating the victims are made which are never met. Their activities cannot be monitored or regulated by the government, and their recruitment procedures are fraudulent bordering on trafficking. The cities are presented as “greener pastures” and these attract unsuspecting victims to source for money to pay for their migration, if only they could be delivered from the clutches of poverty, hardship and suffering in their rural villages. Kathleen Fitzgibbon says:

Often a family’s motive in sending a child away is the search for better educational opportunities for the children, not employment. Many villages lack vocational opportunities for youths, and educational opportunities are insufficient or inaccessible. Other social factors such as the breakdown of traditional family structures, the death of one or both parents, and greed may contribute to a family’s decision to place a child... the “success” stories, displays of wealth, or remittances back to villages by relatives working in urban areas or overseas that provide powerful incentives for parents to consider sending their children out of the home or village for work.^v

Amounts requested from victims for overseas placement could be in the region of five hundred thousand naira and above, (about 3,900 US \$). Deposits are made with a promise to pay up their debts when they start business in their new environments.

In fairness to traffickers, most Nigerian girls who migrate abroad are aware of the nature of work they might be doing in the absence of any other descent job, (i.e. commercial sex work). This is as a result of the massive enlightenment and sensitization programmes held by numerous non-governmental and governmental organizations against human trafficking. But unfortunately, they are unaware of the slavery conditions under which they would operate while working to repay their debts. They are unaware that “their identity documents may be confiscated to control their movements, they may be forced to work longer hours on the streets every day, forced to serve a minimum number of clients per day, or subjected to physical abuse, threats and debt bondage (Pearson, 2003 in Nwogu 2009:157).^{vi}

RESEARCH PROBLEM

At the home front, internal migration and domestic human trafficking have gained ascendancy in Nigeria owing to the fact that the Nigerian government has no regulations

^v K. Fitzgibbon, “Modern-day slavery? The scope of trafficking in persons in Africa”, *African Security Review*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2003

^{vi} E. Pearson, “Study on trafficking in women in East Africa and Nigeria:” in V. I. Nwogu, “Nigeria,” *Collateral damage*, [http://www.gaatw.org/collateral %20damage-final/singlefile.pdf](http://www.gaatw.org/collateral%20damage-final/singlefile.pdf) , downloaded 3/5/2009

concerning internal migration. Section 41 of the Nigerian constitution guarantees that “every citizen of Nigeria is entitled to move freely throughout Nigeria and to reside in any part thereof, and no citizen of Nigeria shall be expelled from Nigeria or refused entry thereby or exit there from”. This thus guarantees free movement of citizens from one state to the other without the public suspecting any fraudulent acts by the perpetrators of human trafficking. Migration from one state to another and especially from the rural villages to the cosmopolitan cities like Lagos, Abuja, Bonny etc are rampant, thus creating room for trafficking, enslavement and debt bondage.

Children from Southern Nigeria are trafficked to cities in the North, West and neighbouring countries for exploitation as domestic servants, street hawkers, beggars, forced labourers and sex workers especially from Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Delta and Edo States. In most instances, parents are made to believe that their children are going to the cities for a better source of livelihood or to have better access to formal education. However, there are cases where aunties and uncles trick the children into slavery. A Federal Government report on human trafficking and modern –day slavery states the following about a 16 year old girl who was looking for her mother, and was tricked into sex slavery and debt bondage by her aunty.

She said at the age of 16, her aunty came from Lagos and said she has found her mother in Lagos, that she should follow her to meet her mother. When she got to Lagos, she discovered that the woman did not know her mother’s whereabouts. The woman now told her that she should join the other sex workers and begin to do what they are doing in order to pay her back the money she used to transport her to Lagos.^{vii}

Similarly, a case is reported of some teenage girls who had been brought into Lagos, Nigeria’s former capital city, from the South South, for trafficking to neighbouring Benin Republic for child labour. Victims reveal that they had been sexually abused. They alleged that their masters used them for commercial sex business in brothels where they make returns of one thousand naira (N1,000.00) to them per day.^{viii}

Urban centres like Lagos, Abuja, Bonny, Warri, Kaduna and Port Harcourt seem to be the preferred towns for emigration due to their cosmopolitan nature, and the general belief that there are opportunities to succeed there. This study is therefore focused on indebtedness and enslavement in Lagos and Abuja (Nigeria’s former capital city and her present capital territory respectively). It looks at enslavement in terms of the age, educational background, religion, ethnicity and origin of the respondents in relation to the elements of indebtedness.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is focused on female indebtedness and enslavement in Nigeria. It aims at:

- (i) Examining the elements of indebtedness and slavery in two Nigerian metropolises.
- (ii) Assessing the trends and patterns of indebtedness and enslavement, and
- (iii) Evaluating the relationship between types of indebtedness and enslavements.

METHODOLOGY

Lagos and Abuja were selected for this study. This was based on their cosmopolitan nature, and their numerous diverse social, economic, cultural, educational and environmental backgrounds. The study population comprised young girls between the age bracket of fourteen to thirty years (14 – 30), working or living in hotels and brothels, serving in bars,

^{vii} Federal Republic of Nigeria, Reports, “Human Trafficking and Modern day slavery, country by country report”, <http://www.gvnet.com/humantrafficking/nigeria.htm>

^{viii} Ibid.

restaurants and saloons in the two cities. Areas of concentration were zone 4 in Abuja, Alausa in Ikeja, Lagos, Eyin Osa, Victoria Island, Rail way line, Badiya and Akoka around University of Lagos, Federal College of Education and Yaba Technical Areas all in Lagos.

The study sample comprised 1114 respondents randomly selected from these facilities. At each of the two cities, wide contacts were made with the researcher's female undergraduate students residing in the cities and who had been employed as research assistants. From these contacts, a list of popular facilities (hotels, restaurants, saloons, lodges, brothels and bars) was drawn up for each city. A one day research seminar was organized in Yola for all the research assistants, during which intensive training in field logistics and strategies, sampling, interviewing methods and focus group discussions were carried out. Data required for this study included the following:

- (a) Data on the elements of indebtedness of the girls to their madams/masters (if any).
- (b) Data on the patterns of enslavement
- (c) Socio-economic backgrounds of respondents.
- (d) Educational backgrounds of respondents

Ten percent (10%) of the listed facilities were selected using simple random sampling method. The research assistants visited the selected facilities, and had meetings with the facilities' owners and managers, and the occupants concerning the main aims and objectives of the study. They were financially motivated and given assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.

During the second visit, the research assistants had to select the respondents from among the females who voluntarily indicated interest in participating in the study. To qualify for inclusion in the survey, such respondents would have lived in the city for up to one year, must be between 14 and 30 years of age, and must have indicated their informed consent to the research assistant.

Instruments used to elicit information from the respondents were structured questionnaires, interview schedules, unstructured questionnaires (particularly with key informants) and focus group discussions. The respondents were interviewed face to face in strict confidence. The questionnaire was used to collect information on their personal, social behavioural, socio-economic backgrounds and sexual history.

The focus group discussion consisted of in-depth interviews to elicit information on perception and behaviour. These were made up of five to six participants who were guided in a free-flowing exchange of opinions and information by the research assistants. Focus groups were particularly useful in gathering information about the subject of interest of this study namely, the elements of indebtedness and patterns of enslavement, some of which were taboo, others embarrassing or just difficult to discuss openly or otherwise.

They created anonymous, relaxed atmosphere of social equality in which the participants felt free to describe their actual belief action and behaviour. Because of the probing nature of the focus group, it provided more general information needed to fill the gaps in the questionnaire output.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the analysis of data obtained on the elements of indebtedness and patterns of enslavement using percentages, while table 2 present a correlation matrix on the elements of indebtedness and patterns of enslavement.

Table 1. Elements of indebtedness and enslavement

	Sample (N)	Elements of indebtedness					Patterns of enslavement					
		Loans	Travel cost	Upkeep expenses	Financial help/educ.	Others (%)	Bonded labour	Sex for gratification	Sex slavery	Pledging oneself/living in	Others (%)	
Age												
14-24 years	228	22.0	27.0	23.0	24.0	4.0	31.0	30.5	20.8	14.0	3.7	100%
25+	88	35.7	22.0	25.3	13.5	3.5	25.3	28.2	17.2	20.2	10.1	100%
Education												
None	93	31.0	31.4	21.1	12.8	3.7	25.2	25.1	24.4	24.7	0.6	100%
Primary	675	24.5	32.0	25.7	14.9	2.9	22.4	22.2	22.4	25.8	7.2	100%
Secondary	346	22.7	30.0	28.5	16.8	2.0	23.3	20.3	20.7	25.7	10.0	100%
Religion												
Muslim	196	11.4	31.3	34.1	19.0	4.2	30.4	30.2	20.5	16.0	2.9	100%
Christian	503	27.0	25.0	26.2	21.0	0.6	30.0	30.0	20.1	17.1	2.8	100%
Others	415	26.0	29.9	26.0	18.0	0.1	30.5	30.0	19.2	17.2	3.1	100%
Ethnicity												
Ibo	480	30.1	20.2	24.1	25.2	0.4	25.0	24.8	22.8	22.4	5.0	100%
Ibibio	136	20.1	17.2	32.1	30.0	0.6	24.2	25.1	22.5	20.6	7.6	100%
Bini	401	22.8	26.6	30.4	19.2	1.0	24.0	24.3	25.6	24.0	2.1	100%
Yoruba	52	19.9	26.2	32.5	20.4	1.0	26.0	25.0	26.1	22.6	0.3	100%
Hausa/Fulani	21	20.8	25.0	24.3	7.6	22.3	27.1	20.8	24.7	24.0	3.4	100%
Others	14	16.5	16.6	29.2	15.7	22.0	20.9	20.7	26.4	25.2	6.8	100%
Origin												
Rural	992	32.4	24.2	13.2	20.2	10.0	28.1	24.2	24.9	20.5	2.3	100%
Urban	122	19.6	18.3	24.5	29.3	8.3	25.0	17.7	28.4	18.2	0.7	100%
TOTAL	1114											100%

FINDINGS

The findings of this study are as follows:

- (a) Age: It was observed that the higher the age of respondents, the stronger the elements of indebtedness, thus leading to a relatively higher incidence of bonded labour, sex for gratification and sex slavery. The elements of enslavement are stronger for the younger age group, who are more indebted in the areas of loans to family members, travel costs and upkeep expenses.
- (b) Education: The proportion of indebtedness through loans and travel costs to destinations is higher for the poorly educated females than the educated one, while the proportion under the burden of showing gratitude for services rendered to families either during parental death and funerals, education of ward etc, is higher among the respondents who have achieved secondary education. There is a clear pattern of enslavement reduction with increased level of education.
- (c) Religion: There are fewer Muslim respondents with loans and educational elements of indebtedness than the Christians and other group. There is no statistically significant difference among the respondents with respect to the elements of enslavement.
- (d) Ethnicity: The Ibos and Binis tend to be more heavily involved in loans indebtedness than other groups, whilst the Yoruba and Ibibio respondents have the lowest loans indebtedness. The Ibibio, Bini and the Yorubas tend to be more involved in the upkeep expenses and training/education elements of indebtedness. The elements of enslavement are evenly distributed among the ethnicities in the study. However, bonded labour tends to be higher among the Hausa – Fulani respondents.
- (e) Origin: Rural migrants included in the study are more indebted in relation to loans and transport costs to their destination than their urban counterparts. However, the urban respondents are more indebted in the area of services rendered and education/training costs. Consistently, the rural respondents tend to have higher enslavement burden than the urban respondents.

Table 2. Zero order correlation matrix (t-values in brackets)

<i>Elements of indebtedness</i>	<i>Patterns of enslavement</i>				
	<i>Bounded labour</i>	<i>Sex for gratification</i>	<i>Sex slavery/prostitution</i>	<i>Pledging one's self/living</i>	<i>Others</i>
Loans	.82 (7.63)	0.78 (8.03)	0.84 (6.88)	0.87 (7.33)	0.75 (8.43)
Travel Cost	0.73 (11.03)	0.66 (5.81)	0.65 (5.01)	0.88 (6.82)	0.61 (7.77)
Up-keep/ maintenance expenses	0.86 (7.78)	0.77 (8.73)	0.85 (8.84)	0.68 (6.44)	0.61 (8.55)
Training/education help	0.75 (7.74)	0.62 (6.88)	0.66 (5.22)	0.82 (7.01)	0.51 (6.45)
Others	0.44 (1.44)	0.54 (6.11)	0.67 (3.44)	0.67 (4.44)	0.71 (4.05)

CORRELATES

At the beginning of this study, the assumption was made that there are delineable correlates between indebtedness and enslavement. The study finds out the following as are indicated in table 2:

- (i) Loans indebtedness is strongly related to all the elements of enslavement. In all the cases, more than 56% of enslavements are determined by loans indebtedness, as victims are made to work to pay off such loans.
- (ii) Repayment of travel cost to destination is very strongly associated with bonded labour and pledging of one's self to live in with a master/madam, than other variables.
- (iii) Also, repayment for up-keep expenses has a strong correlation with sex slavery and bonded labour, where more than 73% change in the former is determined by a change in the latter.
- (iv) Training and education received (computer literacy, saloons, training as seamstresses and designers, caterers etc) as indebtedness is strongly related to slavery in the form of bonded labour and self pledging to serve than other variables.

DISCUSSION

Indebtedness varies in forms and patterns. The study observes that most financial indebtedness comes in the form of loans obtained for medical treatments of self or family member(s), ceremonies, most especially funeral ceremonies in southern Nigeria and smuggle debt. One could also incur debt on education or any form of vocational training acquired with the help of the master (e.g. hairdressing, computer literacy, designer/seamstress, catering etc). Those involved in this usually come from very low income class who need help for survival. The cycle of very low wages received or involvement in poor income generating activities leads to perpetual poverty that calls for more borrowing, hence putting their wards in perpetual enslavement and bonded labour.

A case is reported of Akwa Ibom and Cross River States where on 14th March 2004, the police intercepted a bus-load of children along the Calabar –Itu road of Akwa Ibom State, on their way to Cameroun. The children ranging from ages 14 – 16 years (eight girls and seven boys), were told by the adult arranging their journey, that some were going to work while others would go to schools.^{ix} From the findings of this study, one could easily deduce the nature of the work they could be involved in, and the type of education they could be given.

Enslavement too, varies in forms and patterns depending on the level of freedom between the victim and the employer/retainer/master/madam. This study observed that there are circumstances where girls were enslaved for sex for the repayment of exaggerated smuggle and maintenance debts, while others volunteered/pledged themselves to live in with masters in gratitude for education/training given, or in an attempt to escape from the clutches of rural village poverty. Cases of enslavement for sex for gratification of masters were observed among innocent young village girls who were sold into disguised slavery as domestic servants, and who had no means of escape. In either of the cases, what could be called indebtedness and enslavement depends on the deal between the smuggler and the master, and the level of understanding and relationship between the victims and the master.

Akwa Ibom State has been reported to be leading now in human trafficking, child labour and debt bondage, thus placing Edo and Delta States in the second position in this business in

^{ix} Op. cit.

Nigeria. The Executive Secretary, National Agency for the prohibition of traffic in persons and other related matters (NAPTIP), Barrister Carol Ndaguba, identified the type of trafficking in Akwa Ibom State to include internal trafficking for sexual exploitation, child trafficking for labour exploitation and child abuse. In May, 2005, a containerized truck carrying 40 children between the ages of five and sixteen (5 -16) years was intercepted by the police, on its way from Edati en-route Lagos for enslavement and forced labour⁽¹⁰⁾. Similarly, in 2005, a woman was intercepted at a police checkpoint with a cold truck (usually used for transporting frozen foods) containing over sixty five (65) children from Niger State on their way to Lagos. The children were in the age bracket of eight to sixteen (8 -16) years. Nwogu reports that upon interrogation, she claimed that she was on her way to Lagos to place the children in domestic service for a small fee. This according to her, was a seasonal migratory practice endorsed by the children and their families, and she was well known and respected in her community for rendering them this service. The victims themselves were unhappy that their journey and hopes of earning a living were interrupted. Also, the community and families of the victims condemned NAPTIP for interfering in their livelihood by arresting a woman whom they regarded as a heroine^x

The above go to corroborate the findings of this study which specifies that respondents from the poorer rural villages are more prone to different levels of indebtedness, hence patterns of enslavement. Notable in the voluntary seasonal migratory episode is the unsuspected debt bondage associated with madam's kind service to her community. Many of the victims least suspect that they could be forced into the sex trade or forced sexual gratification of masters, while all dividends go to madam.

In an attempt to assist the poor and needy through migration, smugglers or private employment agencies (PEAs) resort to the use of magical powers, juju and incantations etc to hold in bondage their victims or their families. Shrines and juju priests are visited where victims are made to take oaths never to disobey their madams/masters, to pay off all debts owed the masters and never to expose to the public their masters/madams, or what trade they are into in the cities, more especially if it is the sex trade. Blood oaths are taken in the shrines, some drop their pubic hairs, finger nails, underwears, hairs from the head or a cloth that the victim was fund of wearing as a contact point with her and the juju priest. These are some of the tricks of the slavers to keep the "slaves" in debt bondage^{.xi}

The Law And Enslavement In Nigeria

The Nigerian government has made efforts to fight human trafficking and forced labour, but these have constantly proved abortive owing to the pace at which words are matched with actions, and the inability of her citizens to feel the impact of government's social services. Nigeria is a signatory to several international conventions that are addressing trafficking in persons. Of special significance is the United Nations (UN) protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children; and the UN convention against transnational organized crime, which Nigeria has signed, ratified and given domestic effect through the enactment of her own local legislations.

She has also ratified a number of International Labour Organizations (ILO) conventions that are instrumental to combating forced labour and other labour abuses.

There are regional, national and state government and also non-governmental initiatives to combat human trafficking and forced labour, but these have failed to yield their expected

^x Passim.

^{xi} Passim.

results, because of the scourge by poverty and societal illiteracy. In July, 2005, the ILO's action programme against human trafficking and forced labour in West Africa (PATWA), facilitated a workshop for government officials of the ministry of labour and productivity, owners of recruitment agencies and representatives of the Nigerian labour congress to streamline and promote law-abiding PEAs while controlling fraudulent ones^{xii(13)}. These initiatives have constantly failed to yield expected results, mostly because the Nigerian Government is fast at making policies but slow at implementing them. The high level of corruption at the various tiers of government has often rendered well intended policies redundant and impracticable. This could be said to be the plight of the said legislations and policy statements concerning human trafficking and sex slavery.

CONCLUSION AND THE WAY FORWARD

This study has revealed that there is a strong relationship between indebtedness and enslavement, the extent of which is determined by the elements of indebtedness involved. Age, educational status, origin (rural or urban) have been found to have profound influence on indebtedness, which in turn determines the patterns of enslavement. Closely associated with these are the elements of illiteracy, poverty and desperation which have driven many into loans taking, migration and subsequent enslavement.

Illiteracy is hereby seen to be closely linked to poverty, underdevelopment, ignorance and retarded growth. If Nigeria's vision 20-2020 must succeed, then the eradication of illiteracy should be its major target as a poverty reduction measure, likewise the stemming of corruption. These would develop in citizens, confidence in the government, and a sense of social security.

This paper observes that of the 104 million Nigerians, 50 million are illiterates, out of which 30 million are women. This is a great disservice to the nation, as it is a major source of her poverty and high dependency burden.

Distribution Of Illiterate Women By Age Groups

Age groups	No. of illiterate women
15 – 29 years	13.6 million
30 – 59 years	14.8 million
60 years and above	1.6 million
<i>Total</i>	<i>30 million</i>

Source: NHDR, 1996^{xiii}

Access to education is a means of female empowerment and capacity building. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (FMWASD), in an attempt to encourage women empowerment and capacity building, has come up with the National Gender Policy (NGP), which amplifies among other things.

- a. Education of the female child and capacity building for technical expertise.
- b. Legislative reforms to guarantee gender justice and respect for human rights.

^{xii} R. Uyanga, "Slavery, sex and power: An overview of structures and trends in 21st century Nigeria", paper presented at an international conference on sex power and Slavery, held at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, April 2007

^{xiii} UNESCO, "Nigerian Human Development Report", *The state of education in Nigeria*, (Abuja: excellence systems limited, 2000) P.55

- c. Economic reforms for enhanced productivity among women and children.
- d. Gender mainstreaming and re-positioning to guarantee effective pursuance and implementation of policies and legislations concerning women, especially those of poverty, violence, trafficking, sex slavery and bonded labour^{xiv(15)}.

This paper maintains that enslavement is a function of indebtedness, whose root causes are illiteracy, poverty and ignorance. It therefore recommends that for the Nigerian Government to overcome the above problems, vulnerable groups should be socially, economically and physically empowered especially at the grass root level, and basic education for literacy and numeracy should be provided. The place of women desk officers who would serve as “Think Tank” on women issues, should be further strengthened in the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, so that laws pertaining to women trafficking, sex slavery and bonded labour could always receive the seriousness and dedication they deserve. Above all, the Nigerian government should go all out to stamp out corruption from the system, as these breed feelings of inequality, injustice and deprivation among citizens, hence the zeal to make it by fair or foul means. “A nation which is not engendered is endangered” Nigeria should look inwards and try to match words with actions.

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