**National Rapporteurs on Trafficking in Persons and Equivalent Mechanisms in Addressing Trafficking in Persons (NREMs): Institutional Framework – Nigeria’s Perspective**

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Organised by the Office of the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children in Thailand, 21 – 22 May, 2014

Second Consultative Meeting on Strengthening Partnership with National Rapporteurs on Trafficking in Persons and Equivalent Mechanisms

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**PROTOCOLS**

It is an honour for me to address this august audience of people dedicated to eliminating the scourge of Trafficking in Persons around the world.

2. Nigeria does not have a National Rapporteur, but does have a specific Institution established by statute, to coordinate all efforts to eliminate Trafficking in Persons.

Upon ratifying the Palermo Protocol, Nigeria set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Trafficking and Child Labour comprising representatives of Federal Government Ministries and Agencies whose functions have a bearing in the effort to combat Trafficking in Persons, including:

The Nigeria Police

The Nigeria Immigration Service

The Federal Ministry of Justice

The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs

The Ministry of Justice

The National Planning Commission

The Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation

The Nigerian Customs Service, amongst others

3. Subsequently, the Office of the Special Assistant to the President on Human Trafficking and Child Labour was set up to coordinate the work of the Committee. The Committee met regularly to appraise the phenomenon of Human Trafficking, and to shape Nigeria’s response to the then emerging global phenomenon.

4. The Committee made some remarkable achievements, including the evacuation of Nigerian victims of trafficking from Italy and Czech Republic, and the rescue of 230 Beninese children from child labour, in Ogun State Nigeria.

5. The major problems with this arrangement were the absence of strong coordination, competing demands by the parent Ministries and Agencies on the members, rivalry amongst members, and absence of enabling legislation.

6. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP) was created by an Act of the National Assembly in 2003.

7. The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act saddles the Agency with the following mandate:

* The coordination and strengthening of all laws on trafficking in persons and related offences;
* The adoption of measures to increase the effectiveness of eradication of trafficking in persons;
* The enhancement of law enforcement agents’ effectiveness to suppress trafficking in persons;
* Working in collaboration with other agencies or bodies that may ensure elimination and prevention of the root causes of the problem of traffic in any person;
* Taking charge, supervising, controlling and coordinating the rehabilitation of trafficked persons;
* Investigation and prosecution of traffickers;
* Research into the root causes of Trafficking in Persons, and periodic assessment of the trends, magnitude and patterns of Human Trafficking;
* . Reinforcing and supplementing measures in such bilateral and multilateral treaties and conventions on Trafficking in Persons, as may be adopted by Nigeria;
* Improving international cooperation in the suppression of Trafficking in Persons by road, sea and air.

**8. Structure of the Agency**

* A Board
* Executive Secretary/Chief Executive
* 8 Departments headed by Directors
* Investigation & Monitoring
* Counseling & Rehabilitation
* Public Enlightenment
* Legal & Prosecution
* Research and Programme Development
* Administration
* Finance and Account
* Training and Manpower Development
* 3 Units – Press and Public Relations, Intelligence and International Cooperation & Audit
* 8 Zonal Commands- Lagos, Benin, Enugu, Uyo, Sokoto, Kano, Maiduguri & Makurdi. All the Commands and the Headquarters have Shelters attached to them for the rehabilitation of victims.

9. NAPTIP’s enabling Act specifically mandates it to closely collaborate with various Governmental and Non-Governmental Agencies; hence the Agency is deliberately small but smart.

10. As you are all aware, Nigeria through NAPTIP has recorded some modest achievements in creating effective legal, institutional and policy frameworks in its bid to check the activities of traffickers who have made the country a source, transit and destination for their nefarious acts.

**GOOD PRACTICES**

At inception, NAPTIP faced the onerous tasks of first introducing itself to the Nigerian public, and then to explain why human trafficking was a crime, in view of the fact that most of the practices constituting the crime stemmed from traditional and accepted social norms such as fostering, travelling abroad for greener pastures, and the free choice of some women to earn a living from prostitution.

**Public Enlightenment**

In the first eight years of the Agency, it adopted a strategy of massive public enlightenment, and engagement with vulnerable groups in order to provide them with information on the antics of traffickers.

This was combined with strong advocacy to opinion and political leaders at community, local government, state and federal levels, to ensure cultural change and secure political support.

**Law enforcement**

In the area of law enforcement, the Agency embarked on confidence-building measures with existing Law Enforcement Agencies like the Nigeria Police, Nigeria Immigration Service and the Directorate of State Services, in order to enrol their support and cooperation in enabling the Agency realise its mandate.

In addition, NAPTIP undertook the training of officers of these Organisations on the rudiments of human trafficking, and facilitated the effectiveness of their Anti-Human Trafficking Units.

**National Plan of Action (2009 – 2012)**

In 2009, the Agency, along with its partners, developed a National Plan of Action structured on the four thematic areas of Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnership. The Plan, which was subsequently approved by the Federal Executive Council, set out to achieve the following:

* Mass (public) participation and ownership of the Plan of Action;
* A multi-dimensional and multi sectoral approach to its implementation;
* Inter-agency collaboration and participation with emphasis on public, private, partnership;
* An integrated gender sensitive component in all key implementation approaches especially in view of the growing feminization of the TIP/FL phenomenon;
* Capacity building awareness raising and direct assistant as key components of the multi-dimensional approach;
* Strengthening international and regional cooperation;
* The effective management of the TIP/FL and related data and information through the indigenization and domestication of the evaluation and monitoring (Quality Control) mechanisms and personnel of programme implementation, especially as they relate to national security and development;
* The marketing of good practices for replication and adoption nationwide, and in endemic states and communities.

Most of the objectives of the National Plan of Action were achieved in the life-span of the Plan, but coordination and collaboration among law enforcement agencies and service providers remained a major challenge.

**NAPTIP Strategic Plan (2012 – 2017)**

At the expiration of the National Plan of Action, the Agency developed a comprehensive strategic plan in line with the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The Plan aims to tackle human trafficking in 5 broad areas:

* Strengthening law enforcement and prosecutorial response to issues of TIP, including effective assets tracing and forfeiture;
* Reinforcing public enlightenment, using various mediums, including movies, drama and documentaries to create greater awareness on the real impact of trafficking;
* Expanding platforms for victim protection and assistance and addressing factors which increase vulnerability;
* Strengthening partnerships at national, regional and international levels; and
* Improving organizational development to enhance effective and efficient work culture in order to fulfil our national mandate.

11. The Agency has worked assiduously to establish partnerships for enforcing mutual legal agreements against trafficking in persons, with countries in West and Central Africa, and signed bilateral cooperation agreements with various countries, including the United Kingdom, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Norway, Switzerland, Finland, Benin and Sweden.

Other efforts made by NAPTIP in the last two years include:

* Broadening of the Agency’s public enlightenment drive by developing and airing a television drama series on major networks in Nigeria, on the issue of Human Trafficking;
* Establishment of the “Victims of Trafficking Trust Fund” wherein monies realized from the sale of confiscated and forfeited assets of a convicted trafficker are paid for the benefit of survivors;
* Development of Standard Operational Manuals for key stakeholders;
* Development of an effective National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for better service delivery to victims;
* Evolution of a positive corporate culture for the Agency
* Continuous review of operational guidelines in line with experiences elicited from actual operations;
* Evidence-based research to aid in planning and programming;
* Advocacy and Public Enlightenment Initiatives (community mobilization, awareness raising and intervention projects;
* Re-enactment of the Agency’s enabling Act to enhance law enforcement and to remove ambiguities in judicial proceedings

**Lessons learnt**

In the fight against the scourge of human trafficking, collaborative efforts, intelligence sharing, stakeholder-involvement and development of stakeholders’ capacity, are imperative to success.

In order to achieve these, NAPTIP has the following tactics:

* Projection of Human Trafficking as the burden of the whole of Government and whole of society; therefore projecting it as detrimental to the National aspirations of economic development, security and good governance;
* Emphasis of partnership with CSOs, including NGOs, FBOs and CBOs, in the country in order to form a broad-based approach in stemming Human trafficking at the grassroots and source communities;
* Close engagement and collaboration with Donor Organizations and Embassies;
* Cooperation with and assistance to sister security and Law Enforcement Agencies in West Africa and other parts of the world;

**CHALLENGES**

Combating TIP is still fraught with challenges despite the resources and efforts being deployed to tackle it.

This is mainly because TIP is the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world, and holds a huge attraction for criminals out to make big profits for little investments.

Specifically, the NAPTIP faces challenges in the following areas:-

* Gaps in the Agency’s enabling Act, which have hampered its ability to effectively combat TIP. This is being rectified, as the National Assembly has almost completed the process of passing a Bill re-enacting the Trafficking in Persons Act;
* Constraints in Funding;
* Lack of capacity to constantly tool and retool its officers
* Limited capacity in Intelligence operations;
* Limited geographical spread of NAPTIP Offices across the country;
* Security situation in the country (threat of militancy and terrorism, etc), and fear of reprisal attacks from human traffickers.

**CONCLUSION**

The modest achievements of NAPTIP over the last 10 years reinforce the importance of a strong coordination mechanism in the form of specific institutional and legal frameworks in the efforts to stem Trafficking in Persons. An Institutional National Rapporteur focuses national efforts, enhances accountability and responsibility, creates a core of professionals with capacity to effectively fight Trafficking in Persons, and to adapt to the evolving antics of traffickers. A specific Agency and legislation also enhances international cooperation on Trafficking in Persons, as it provides a unified and timely national response.