

NEIGHBOURHOOD CARE-WELL FOUNDATION

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ENHANCING GENDER EQUALITY, REDUCING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE/ VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN/GIRLS AND TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS- Neighbourhood Care-Well Foundation (NCF) Nigeria

Victoria Emah-Emah (Executive Director)

Gender equality and the empowerment of women/girls lie at the heart of Sustainable Development Goal five (5). It is vital to the realising the rights and potentials of all persons as citizens of the world.

The Government of Nigeria has not fully met the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but has made significant efforts in the last one year. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; hence Nigeria was upgraded to Tier 2. These efforts included convicting more traffickers and sanctioning the majority of perpetrators with significant prison terms; prosecuting officials suspected of be complicit in trafficking crimes; improving intra-governmental coordination on anti-trafficking operations; launching nine new state task forces; and for the first time, the Ministry of Defence acknowledged service members sexually exploited internally displaced persons (IDPs).

There has been increased collaboration with foreign governments on international trafficking investigations. However, the government has not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Borno State used of children at an IDP camp checkpoint; there is continued reports of sex trafficking in government-run IDP camps; and officials prosecuted are fewer than suspected traffickers. Furthermore, corruption is a significant concern in the judiciary and immigration services.

Based on the issues I have mentioned above, it is evident that women/girls are more vulnerable to being trafficked for several obvious reasons and their safety is jeopardized while the whole essence of equality equity and justice is bridged.

1. Let me propose that the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and Nigeria Police Force (NPF) should enhance coordination on law enforcement efforts – including investigating illicit centers exploiting women/girls in forced surrogacy – and prosecute suspects while respecting the rights of the accused
2. Victims and survivors faced obstacles accessing assistance and support as lockdowns, social distancing protocols, and a lack of resources caused service providers to close shelters and reduce services. Providers struggled not only to maintain services for

identified individuals, but also to create safe spaces in accordance with capacity and social distancing protocols to allow service provision for future identified individuals.

What can we do differently to fight the issues of trafficking in persons and protecting women/girls across multi national borders globally.

3. The value of collaboration between anti-trafficking actors: There should be ways of synergising efforts to ensure robust action that will galvanise into massive impacts are carried out in all countries..
4. The need to incorporate anti-trafficking efforts into existing responses in other contexts, such as in humanitarian settings using right based approaches in order to protect the rights of every survivor
5. The importance of proactive response and crisis mitigation planning to anti-trafficking activities. Actors to be deliberate about the protection of women/girls and ensuring that every survivor is provided with comprehensive compassionate services to ensure proper integration and safety.
6. The application of equity-based approaches as women/girls are vulnerable due to the fact that they are used as sex slaves and for labour. The need to ensure that their rights and freedom is guaranteed.

In conclusion, it is important that all countries do what they have promised to do in addressing the issues of trafficking in persons and to ensure that specific structures are set up to support the response.