

A Profile of Child Trafficking in Nigeria

by Prof. Peter O. Ebigbo, PhD, NNOM

Main source of information is UNICEF Nigeria

General Information on Nigeria:

- Per capita income (1999): \$300
- Estimated total population: 123.9million
- Estimated child population (1999) 64.million
- Fertility Rate: 5.1%
- Mean age of marriage 16.9 years
- Infant mortality rate: 105 per 1000 live birth
- Literacy rate: 49% (Female = 41%, Male = 59%)
- Incidence of absolute poverty (1999) 65.6% (may have increased since 1999)

Child Trafficking in Nigeria:

- **Average age of trafficked children:** 15 years (age varies, especially among girls)
- **Children (primarily girls) engaged in sex trade outside the country:** 60%-80% of girls in the sex trade outside the country are in Italy (over 700 in Italy while Belgium and the Netherlands are experiencing an upsurge in number of Nigerian girls).
- **Common Routs:** West Coast of Nigeria to Mali, Morocco and then by boat to Spain or West Coast of Nigeria to Libya and Saudi Arabia.
- **Means of Transportation:** 90% travel by road across the Sahara desert. Others through airports, seaports and bush paths.
- **Impact on Nigeria:** Loss of lives, increasing prevalence of STDs including HIV/AIDS, increase in violence and crime rate, increased school drop-outs, impaired child development, poor national image and massive deportation of Nigerian girls.
- **Categories of Child Labour:**
 - Girls: domestic help, prostitution.
 - Boys: used as scavengers, car washing, bus conducting, drug peddling, farming.
 - Both can be involved in head leading, community based brass melting and menial jobs.

- **Volume of Trafficking:** On the average, 10 children daily pass through Nigerian borders, especially originating from fostering and extended family systems.
- **Major Causes:** Widespread poverty sparking the push-pull factors to the urban centre. High level of illiteracy, unemployment and poor living standards. Burdens of poverty of and desperation of poor and illiterate parents with large families ignorant of the impact of child trafficking. (Agents give parents money to give their children for trafficking.)
- **Legal framework:** There now exists a Children's Rights Act approved by Parliament and signed by the President into law, which domesticates the UN convention on the Rights of the Child and AU Charter on the rights and welfare of the child. There exists now an Anti Trafficking and Child Labour Act and an institution to enforce it. Nigeria has ratified ILO Convention 138 and 182 on the minimum wage and the worst forms of child labour respectively.

My Work:

As the President of ANPPCAN Nigeria I do a lot to generate information on child trafficking through research and disseminate the results through conferences and media actions. As President of the Apex child protection NGO, called national Council of Child Rights Advocates of Nigeria (NACCRAN), and as ANPPCAN leaders we run monitoring centres from a watchdog angle against child abuse including child trafficking.