

Community Perceptions of and Participation in Policy Formulation and Implementation on Human Trafficking in Nigeria

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In recent times, human trafficking in Nigeria has acquired shocking and frightening dimensions despite governmental efforts at curbing the menace. It is interesting to note that most victims of trafficking are women, boys and girls, and majority of these are from rural areas that are deprived, and therefore victims look for a better life and means of increasing their standard of living. Whereas most research tends to concentrate on the push and pull factors facilitating human trafficking, this paper focuses on the critical areas of policy formulation and implementation, the role of the sending communities in either of these processes, and their perceptions about the effectiveness of national, international, governmental, NGO and local initiatives.

To this end, an exploratory survey research was carried out in some of the sending communities in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, a region now infamous for active complicity in 80% of the trafficking of women and girls in the country. 100 copies of a questionnaire surveying perceptions and involvement of communities were distributed and 76 of these were retrieved. This was supplemented with in-depth interviews conducted with key informants, specifically some of the victims and officials of several government and non-government agencies responsible for either victim rehabilitation or implementation of anti-trafficking policies. The human security framework was pertinent for interpreting the findings of the research.

The research found that community participation is minimal or non-existent in the processes of policy formulation and implementation with regard to trafficking in Nigeria. Furthermore, the community members thought that government and NGO initiatives had the potential to significantly reduce trafficking, but they doubted the effectiveness of the current policy making and implementation *process* to reduce trafficking. Other informants identify the reasons for trafficking as impinging on the effectiveness of policy in Nigeria.

It may be concluded that there is an endemically prurient social context to trafficking that needs to be addressed in the Nigerian case in order for legal and political solutions to be effective. Therefore, communities must be actively engaged at all stages of anti-trafficking policy making and implementation.