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**MATRIC NO: 19/sci01/070**

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**HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

The term human trafficking means, the illegal act of trapping or recruiting, harboring or transporting and trading of human beings mostly females, for illegal purposes through the use of force, fraud and coercion. Human trafficking steals the freedom of a person by grooming girls and forcing them into sexual exploitation; tricking men into accepting risky job offers and trapped in forced labor and recruiting women to work in private homes only to be trapped, exploited and abused behind closed doors with absolutely no way out.

Trafficking doesn’t necessarily mean the person is being transported across borders. In fact, transporting and moving the victim doesn’t quite define trafficking. It can take place within a single country, or even within a single community. There are 20 million to 40 million estimated cases of people in modern slavery today and trying to access the full scope of human trafficking is difficult because such cases often goes undetected and a reason behind it is corruption. Corruption prevents traffickers from being held accountable and also prevent victims from seeking justice. In fact, when corruption is found within political institutions, the law in place is not implemented to their full capacity. This attitude carried out by most corrupt politicians is why the United Nations refer to it as “the hidden figure of crime”.

Human trafficking could happen to anybody but some people are more vulnerable than the others and often times, the traffickers identify and leverage their victim’s vulnerabilities in order to create dependency. Human trafficking is a high profit low risk business which allows people to operate with impunity. Nigeria remains a source, transit and destination country when it comes to human trafficking and is currently ranking 32/167 of the countries with the highest number of slaves and according to NAPTIP (Nigerian Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons), it is the third most common crime immediately after drug trafficking and economic fraud.

The cases of Human trafficking in Nigeria, began in the 1980s because of the demand for low skilled labor in agriculture and services. Nigeria has a history of having financial issues causing significant unemployment and poverty. However, it is undisputed that particularly due to Nigeria’s population, Nigeria is routinely listed as one of the countries with the highest number of trafficking victims overseas (particularly in Europe), with victims identified in 34 countries in 4 regions in 2018. The Nigerian government (as of 2011 to 2017) has not prioritize the fight against human trafficking nor provided minimum funding to agencies and non-governmental to fight against human trafficking. Apart from NAPTIP, there are anti human trafficking organizations in Nigeria who are at the fore front of fighting against human trafficking. Some include: Devatop center for Africa development, Women trafficking and child Labor in Nigeria, Network of Civil Society Organizations against child trafficking and labor (NACTAL).

The overwhelming majority of trafficking victims and migrants make the treacherous journey from Edo state (particularly Benin) and Delta States to Kano, from where they are snuggled into Niger or Algeria before traversing up to 500 miles into the Sahara Desert into Libya. CNN contends that Edo state is the most trafficked through destinations in Africa. According IOM (International Organization for Migration), an outstanding 94% of all Nigerian women, trafficked, to Europe for prostitution hail from Edo State, with Italy being the number one destination country. In 2016, the United States department of state trafficking in persons report indicates that Nigeria tier ranking has dropped from tier 2 to tier 2 watch list. This ranking means that Nigeria did not meet the US law’s standards set forth in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 and although they are making strides to come into compliance with these standards, Nigeria failed to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons in 2015.

I believe that, one of the most brutal form of human trafficking is the commercial exploitation of children. Underage girls are raped and tortured to such an extent were their reproductive organs are damaged. The incidents of sexual exploitation amongst boys are seldom heard because of the blind eye we give to such knowledge making it a failure on our part to not acknowledge its existence which is further fueled by gender-biased assumptions that there can never be male victims. Another brutal form involves some trafficked victims who are lured to donate their organs, or sell their organs at a very cheap rate; thereafter the traffickers resell the organs to desperate buyers at a huge sum of money. That being said, there are millions of Nigerian young women, men, girls and boys who are at risk of human trafficking due to the following contributing factors: illiteracy, greed, ignorance, lack of opportunity, inequality, gender induced culture bias, poverty, persistent unemployment, large family size, rituals, family crisis, demand for cheap labor, etc. young people who are trafficked are often used for sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, begging, organ harvesting, suicide bombing and child soldier, forced marriage, baby factory and rituals.

Addressing the problem of human trafficking in Nigeria and elsewhere around the world will take a communal effort. Because we know and see it, and we must do something about it. Silence is not an option. Another key part of prevention is education and campaign awareness. Every community needs to learn about trafficking, they need to be empowered to speak out. One voice will not be capable of eliminating human trafficking; I believe our combined voices will make the difference.