

# **IMADR & WOMEN'S CONSORTIUM OF NIGERIA (WOCON)**

## **Report on 2012**

### **MOBILISING GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN AND AWARENESS CREATION IN RURAL COMMUNITIES AGAINST THE TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN NIGERIA**

**(1<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2011-30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2012)**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As a result of the serious implications of human trafficking in Nigeria especially its adverse effects and impacts on the women and children whose socio-economic conditions make them vulnerable there is need for intensification of activities for the prevention and elimination of all forms of human trafficking. Various research studies and investigations reveal that the trend in the trafficking of women and children has increased as the traffickers penetrate more into the rural communities in Nigeria to source for their victims.

The rural communities in Nigeria is largely populated by women and about 70% of the Nigerian women population live in the rural communities and in extreme poverty. The women and children constitute the marginalized and most discriminated against in the Nigerian society especially because of their poverty and ignorance.

The strategy of enlightening the community dwellers on issues of human trafficking is used by to provide informed knowledge and reduce if not totally eliminate the vulnerability of community dwellers who are predominantly ignorant of the various baits used by the traffickers to source the victims.

Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) an NGO with United Nations special consultative status committed to promotion of the rights of women and children and has since 1997 focused on the elimination of the trafficking women and children in Nigerian and elsewhere. Realising that no organisation can single handedly tackle the scourge of human trafficking, WOCON works in partnership with local and international groups. It is in furtherance of WOCON's aims and objectives particularly its focus on the issue of human trafficking that WOCON a member organisation of the International Movement Against all forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) has solicited the support of IMADR for its campaign against human trafficking.

IMADR supported WOCON for its 2011-2012 human trafficking campaign through part sponsorship with a total sum of \$5000 (Five thousand us Dollars.) for a variety of activities in its campaign.

In order to maximize the use of the funding WOCON utilised the bulk of the funds on the production of the information brochure for the sensitization and awareness creation campaigns among various stakeholders in the rural communities.

The information brochure was distributed during activities for the campaigns for the prevention of human trafficking and child labour as well as during campaigns against various forms of gender based violence of which human trafficking is one.

The selected target communities for the project were in Ogun State of Nigeria and the activities were conducted between the period, October 2011 –September 2012.

The choice of Ogun State was not an accident but a deliberate act due to the vantage position of the State which is the border State with the Republic of Benin and is commonly referred to as the

“Gateway” to Nigeria. The State has been found to be a source, transit and destination area for the trafficking of women and children. It is a source area because of its low economic level and lack of infrastructures for economic development and majority of the citizens live in the poor rural communities where many of the trafficked victims are sourced. Both internal and external human trafficking is carried on in the State. Women and children are the major targets for recruitment by traffickers to work as domestic servants, street hawking, hazardous labour, sexual exploitation, illegal mining of stones and sands. Ogun State as a Border State with neighbouring country is used as transit for trafficked victims who are sourced from countries such as Republic of Benin, Togo and Ghana, through the State to Europe and the Middle East especially.

As a destination women and children from neighbouring countries and from are trafficked to Ogun State for exploitative labour the most common ones being domestic service and children in illegal stone quarries and artisan mining.

WOCON in its campaign against human trafficking during the period conducted activities which include Market and Motor Park outreaches where there was sensitization of people of diverse social strata can be found either buying or selling wares in the markets.

Consultative forums in form of interactive discussions were held among representatives of strategic stakeholders in the community to educate them and elicit their commitments to fight against human trafficking.

Opportunities to further educate the populace especially grassroots people were seized whenever WOCON had activities or facilitates activities on behalf of the Ogun State Ministry of women Affairs and social development for sensitization of community leaders, women, students and traditional and Religious leaders on gender based violence with special focus on trafficking. The information brochure on human trafficking was freely distributed to among the populace to educate and sensitise them for a better understanding of the elements constituting human trafficking and the prevention of trafficking of women and children. The produced brochure was also used for the education of various stakeholders on the proposed Bill on gender violence initiated by the Ogun State Ministry of women Affairs and the orientation programmes to enlighten the populace facilitated by WOCON.

The details of the narrative report follows herewith.

### **Objectives**

The project aims at raising awareness, sensitizing and educating the rural community dwellers in the identified endemic source, transit and destination communities of Ogun State in Nigeria where women and children are vulnerable to being trafficked for the prevention of human trafficking and exploitative migration.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

- Multifaceted approach was used to execute the sensitization and awareness creation campaign in the targeted rural communities. There were interactive sessions and participatory forums with strategic stakeholders in the rural settings. The African open air consultation and musical campaigns in public places such as the market places and motor parks were employed for maximal effect and wider reach of the populace. Education of stakeholders by experienced resource persons in other to build their capacities to educate others for multiplier effect is a methodology that was also used for the success of this project.

- Educative brochure was produced and disseminated to enlighten the rural dwellers various strategic stakeholders on the identification of trafficking transactions, information on safe migration and contacts for support groups for the prevention of human trafficking.

**Project Locations:** Iberekodo, Kuto and Lafenwa Markets and Communities, Motor Parks and NEUGATE Hotel, Off Moshood Abiola Way, Ijeun Titun, Abeokuta.

**Project Activities and Date:**

Date	Activity	Location
15 <sup>th</sup> March, 2012	Market outreach/rally	Iberekodo Market, Abeokuta
16 <sup>th</sup> March, 2012	Market outreach/rally/ Sensitisation motor drivers	Kuto Market/ Motor Park
21st June, 2012	Consultative Forum with Community Leaders	Iberekodo community
22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2012	Consultative Forum with traditional and Religious leaders	Kuto community
1 <sup>ST</sup> August 2012	Orientation of State House of Assembly on gender based violence Bill organised by the Ogun State Ministry of women Affairs & Social Development facilitated by WOCON	Richton Hotel Abeokuta Ogun State
Thurs 20 <sup>th</sup> September 2012	Sensitization of student groups on gender based violence.	NEUGATE Hotel, Off Moshood Abiola Way, Ijeun Titun, Abeokuta.
Friday 21 <sup>st</sup> September 2012	Orientation and sensitization of Women on Proposed gender based violence Bill facilitated by WOCON	Neugate Hotel Moshood Abiola Way, Abeokuta Ogun State

**SENSITISATION PROGRAMME ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES HELD AT IBEREKODO AND KUTO MARKETS, ABEOKUTA ON WEDNESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2012, 21<sup>ST</sup> JUNE 2012 WITH THE SUPPORT OF INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM (IMADR)**

**Preparatory Activities:**

Educative and enlightening information brochure on the components of human trafficking, the warning signs for potential victims, information on the laws, protection Agencies and organisations against human trafficking. 2000 copies of the brochure were designed and produced by WOCON with an acknowledgement of the support from IMADR.

**Market Outreach/ Motor Park rally:** The market and Motor Park outreaches and rallies In Iberekodo and Kuto Markets were carried on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> March and Friday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2012. The sensitization campaigns commenced with market rally led by a musical band and a parade

round the market motorpark and the environs by representatives of the Market men and women and WOCON staff led by the Ogun State Project coordinator Mr. Sina Adefolahan. For Iberekodo, The parade went through Iberekodo community in Abeokuta North, from Ita –Ajala at 9.30 am passing through the Total Filling Station and motor park and Oke- Ona United School to Isale-Oja (main market) at Iberekodo in Abeokuta. The market rally at Kuto market/ motor Park also started at about 9 o'clock led by a musical Band, with WOCON Staff led by Sina Adefolahan the Ogun State coordinator for WOCON,

The musical parade/ rally was used to draw attention of the marketers and the entire populace around the communities. The information brochure capturing the evils of the Human Trafficking was distributed to the marketers as the rally progresses from one point to another. There were also regular stops at various points where megaphones were used to speak to the marketers on why they should stop releasing their children to traffickers and to stop receiving children and subjecting them to domestic slavery. They were also warned to be vigilant and resist the baits of the traffickers. The people in the Markets and motor parks were allowed to ask questions which WOCON staff and the resource persons were able to respond to some of the questions asked

At the end of the rally refreshments were provided by WOCON to those who participated in the rally.

#### **CONSULTATIVE MEETINGS:**

With the end of the sensitization done across the major parts of the markets and the adjoining communities of Iberekodo and Kuto markets, there were consultative meetings held on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2012 respectively. The meetings were held with strategic stakeholders and opinion leaders in the rural communities made up of:

- Market women and men.
- Members of the Community Development Associations
- Members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW)
- Association of Commercial Motor Cycle Riders Association (ACCOMORAN)
- Religious leaders
- Youth leaders
- Students

#### **Goodwill Messages:**

The head of the community Chief Ogungbe and Alh.(Chief) Mufutau Kehinde from Iberekodo and Kuto respectively expressed their satisfaction that though their areas were notorious as the distribution points of human trafficking victims brought from neighbouring countries such as Benin Republic and Togo as well as within the rural committees of Saki, Iseyin and other remote areas of Oyo State. The various speakers within the community were grateful for the enlightenment programme and looked forward to their effective efforts to curb the trend of the trafficking of women and children/

Alhaja Salimot Ottun, Deputy Director Child Development (MWA) at the two forums reminded the members of the markets and the communities that human trafficking is an offence against the Laws of the Federation which attract penalties ranging from five years to fifteen years imprisonment upon conviction by a competent court of Law as well as forfeiture of properties of the trafficker. She enjoined members of the community not to allow their communities to be used as a haven by traffickers for the crime against humanity. She stressed that human trafficking was a form of gender based violence which targets principally women and children.

Mr. Segun Adesegun Chair, Coalition of NGOs in Ogun State briefed the gathering that human trafficking is against the spirit of the Child Rights Law of Ogun State and the Child Rights Act of the Federal Republic of Nigeria respectively. He enjoined members of the community to avail themselves of the opportunity of the Universal Basic Education to let their children have basic education and to be able to move ahead with education. It is in this way he said that we will be able to stop the re-cycling of poverty among the indigent parents.

**Welcome Address:**

In her welcome address, the Executive Director of Women Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) Mrs Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi represented by Mr. Olukunle Adeogun from the Lagos Office thanked the members of the communities especially the market women and men for finding time to attend the consultative meeting. This he said shows their commitment to the course of eradicating human trafficking in our communities and promoting positive values.

He said the objective of the sensitization is for the market men and women to be more pro-active in reporting cases of human trafficking that are prevalent in our communities. She emphasized that Ogun as the first state to pass the Child Rights Law in Nigeria but its implementation has been ineffective. She stressed the need to speed up the review of the new passage of the CRC law.

He explained human trafficking to mean “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion.....”. Human trafficking victims he said are exposed to various forms of abuse ranging from:

Physical abuse, Spiritual abuse, Abuse of trust, Sexual abuse, Bullying, emotional, verbal intimidation and isolation

He stressed further that human trafficking is caused amongst other things by poverty, perversion of cultural traditions, manipulation of religious rituals, harmful cultural and social realities, lack of information as well as peer pressure.

**Setting up of Committees:** Members of each of the Communities in Iberekodo and Kuto proceeded to set up a five member committee respectively made up of the under-listed people. The Committees were to monitor cases of human trafficking within the two communities and with a mandate to report any incidence to the necessary government agencies and groups such as WOCON.

**IBEREKODO MARKET**

**KUTO MARKET**

**Community commitments:** Representatives of the communities through the Monitoring Committees in each of the Communities pledged publicly to be committed to fight the crime of human trafficking. They also pledged to report cases of human trafficking in their communities to relevant agencies and that it will be reduced to its barest minimum within their communities.

**Vote of Thanks:** Mr. Sina Adefolahan on behalf of the WOCON appreciated and thanked the market women and men, community leaders as well as other vital opinion leaders for the support. The participants at the consultative forums were provided with refreshments before the meetings came to a close.

**SENSITISATION AT MOTOR PARKS**

This was carried out at Kuto Market on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> October, 2012. The drivers were educated on the meaning of trafficking, signs to look for when a victim is being transported for the purposes of

trafficking, their roles in eradicating the scourge, various forms of trafficking and referral mechanism that is available where they come in contact with the victims.

## **SENSITISATION OF WOMEN, TRADITIONL/RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND STUDENT GROUPS**

The project period fortunately coincided with an initiative by the Ogun State Ministry of Women Affairs and social development to advocate for the passage of a Bill on gender based violence. WOCON was appointed by the Ministry to conduct the orientation training and education of various strategic stakeholders such as the State House of Assembly, women, traditional and religious leaders and Students. These activities were facilitated by WOCON from July –September 2012 and they provided an avenue to educate the stakeholders generally on gender based violence and on human trafficking in Ogun State. A total of over 200 women and 250 Students drawn from all the local Governments in the State participated and were sensitised using the Information Brochure thereby popularizing the brochure and its content. is Violence.

This no doubt created opportunity for the Consortium to further popularize the brochure produce on human trafficking by WOCON with support of IMADR to the target participants. The contents in the brochure were also used as resource materials at the Training which was facilitated by Mrs. Bisi Olateru-Olagbegi and Mr. Olakunle Adeogun both from WOCON's Lagos office.

### **Outcome**

The major tool for the sensitization project of WOCON's campaign for human trafficking was the information brochure which was used during WOCON initiated programmes and other programmes organised by the Ogun State Ministry of women Affairs and social development. Many community dwellers and various stakeholders such as representatives of women, traditional, religious and community leaders, students and NGOs were sensitised and better informed generally on gender based violence and human trafficking especially. The IMADR contribution was very helpful in the WOCON's campaign for human trafficking generally particularly with the support for the production of the 2000 information brochure and the part funding for the market/ Motor Park outreaches and rallies in communities in Ogun State.

The project also succeeded in eliciting the commitments from the various stakeholders in the communities towards the prevention of the trafficking of women and children in their respective communities and the setup of monitoring committees.

The opportunity to enlighten Ogun State as a whole on the proposed Bill on gender violence which included the trafficking of women and children was better served by the trainings and dissemination of the educative information brochure.

The brochure was also a tool for future enlightenment in State and among the different stakeholders as well as being a reference brochure for other NGOs and activists focusing on anti-human trafficking campaigns.

### **Conclusion**

The support of IMADR to WOCON's campaign against human trafficking though minimal had a far reaching effect especially as a result of the production of the information brochure which became an advocacy and educative tool. The use of the brochure gave the campaign a multiplier effect as the participants were able to use it to educate others within their communities, organisations and friends.

More importantly the enlightenment will go a long way to prevent human trafficking in the target communities as ignorance will be reduced if not completely eliminated on the issue of human trafficking in the communities targeted and which benefited from the project. WOCON expresses its appreciation to IMADR for the support.