

## **Global Financial Crisis and Human Trafficking: An Examination of Socio-Economic Implications**

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**Abstract:** Globalization has brought about the interdependence of the economic systems of many nation, Nigeria inclusive. The collapse of the global financial markets resulting in decline in employment, soaring food prices among others has triggered similar problems in Nigeria. This study examined how the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) has affected the poverty level in Nigeria in view of the fact that economic factors are usually blamed for the trafficking in women and children. Secondary sources were used to generate data used to examine what implications the GFC portends for Nigeria in the area of human trafficking. The study revealed that GFC has heightened poverty in Nigeria. The implications of which are violation of the rights of children and further poverty as a result of reduced women's contributions in the agricultural sector among others. It was recommended that poverty reduction measures should be emphasized and strengthened while also addressing the issue of infrastructural decay in order to arrest decline of small and medium enterprises.

**Key words:** Financial crisis, human trafficking, socio-economic implications, poverty, Nigeria

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The global financial crisis which had been brewing for a while actually began to manifest its effects in the mid 2007 and into 2008. Around the world, stock markets crashed, large financial institutions either collapsed or were bought out while governments in even the wealthiest nations have had to come up with rescue packages to bail out their financial systems. A global financial meltdown as was witnessed in recent times is bound to negatively affect the livelihood of almost everyone in an increasingly inter-connected world (Anup, 2009). The Australian Aid Programme, reporting on the global recession, stated that the global economy was rocked by soaring food and fuel prices, the collapse of global financial markets and severe contraction in the world economic demand (Australia AID Programme, 2010).

It further stated that widespread job losses in urban, export-oriented sectors have increased unemployment and pushed more workers into low-income occupations and working poverty.

Worldwide, the number of people living in extreme poverty in 2009 is expected to be 55-90 million higher than anticipated prior to the global recession the prevalence of hunger in developing countries decreased from 20% in 1990-16% in 2007 but increased to 17% in 2008. A decrease in international food prices in the second half of 2008 did not translate into more affordable food for most people around the world.

Economic crisis can create inter-generational poverty traps as children leave school to find employment to supplement family incomes or are withdrawn to supplement family incomes or are withdrawn by parents who can no longer afford education costs... women are disproportionately affected. Previous economic crises have displayed evidence of increases in violence against women. Moreover, women tend to have lower access to safety nets and have unequal access and control over economic resources thus exacerbating the effects of the economic downturn on women

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also stated in its forecast that women's unemployment will accelerate at a faster rate than men's throughout 2010 as the crisis continues (UNDP, 2001).

While highlighting the groups who would be vulnerable to the impact of the global financial recession, the Australia AID Programme (2010) stated that the most vulnerable groups include: those above the poverty line; children of poorer household and marginalized groups.

Among all these vulnerable groups, women and children are most prominent. Being poor, it is difficult for them to build proper houses within a short time. Living in poor conditions affects their health and it is difficult for an unhealthy person to find-and-keep-a job (Swanepoel and De Beer, 2006).

While the situation continues, globalization is another phenomenon that has taken the centre stage in development discourse. We live in a world that is increasingly interdependent. Rich and poor nations depend on one another while the urban centres and the rural areas also depend on one another. This inter-dependence does not only manifest in the supply of financial capital and raw material supplies but it has transcended to the supply of human capital in various forms. This human capital has been noted to be supplied for both positive as well as negative purposes. They have also been noted to be transferred across borders both in a legal manner as well as in an illegal way. The illegal way is what has been described as Human Trafficking (HT).

HT has been defined as a criminal activity in which people are recruited, harboured, transported, bought or kidnapped to serve an exploitative purpose such as sexual slavery, forced labour or child soldiery (en.wiktionary.org/wiki/human trafficking, 2010).

According to Devi, the overwhelming majority of those trafficked are women and children with between 1 and 2 million, respectively being trafficked worldwide each year. Human trafficking is now considered the largest revenue earner for organized crime, coming behind only drugs and arms deals, generating billions of dollars annually (Maicibi, 2005).

**Statement of the problem:** Trafficking of children is a major violation of children's rights and a contributory factor to exploitative child labour. The Fact Sheet produced by UNICEF (2002) reported that 80% of children trafficked to Italy are from Africa and 60% of these are Nigerians. Teriba noted that of the 500,000 Africans trafficked annually to Europe, Nigerians account for 67%. The destinations of trans-border trafficking are often Europe, America, Asia and Saudi Arabia while the destinations of internal trafficking are often large cities.

The Federal Government of Nigeria in an attempt to tackle this problem of HT established the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP). It was established pursuant to the trafficking in persons Prohibition Law Enforcement and Administration Act of 2003. Some NGOs such as Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) and Idia Renaissance were also set up for the same purpose. In spite of this however, HT has continued in Nigeria.

It could be seen that trafficking in persons whether internally or trans-border is aimed at making financial gains and as such recruited persons are usually from poor homes in rural areas and sometimes in urban centres (UNAFRI, 2007). This situation, especially the trafficking of women and children, prompted the following questions that guided the present study:

- For what purpose(s) are women and children trafficked in Nigeria?
- What are the reasons for the trafficking of women and children?
- Is there any relationship between poverty and human trafficking?
- Has the global financial crisis any consequences on the poverty situation in Nigeria?
- What socio-economic consequence does human trafficking, especially trafficking in women and children, portend for Nigeria in view of the global financial crisis?

In view of the above stated research questions, the following hypotheses were proposed to guide the study:

#### **Null hypothesis**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between the global financial crisis and women and children trafficking in Nigeria.

#### **Alternate hypothesis**

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is significant relationship between the global financial crisis and women and child trafficking in Nigeria.

**Aims and objectives:** This study is aimed at identifying the extent to which the global economic crisis may exacerbate human trafficking in Nigeria and the resultant effects. The specific objectives were:

- To examine what is responsible for women and child trafficking in Nigeria
- To identify the relationship between poverty and human trafficking
- To determine how the poverty situation in Nigeria has been affected by global economic crisis

**Scope:** This study focused generally on human trafficking or trafficking in persons but specifically on trafficking in women and children in Nigeria as well as how the global economic crisis can impact on it from the year 2007 to date.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Secondary data were used. The data were obtained from textbooks, journals, official reports, newspaper materials and the internet.

#### **Literature review and conceptual framework**

**Genesis of the global financial crisis:** The global financial crisis (global recession or global meltdown) according to Young (2008) was identified as a global

phenomenon which started from the United States of America from where it spread to other parts of the world. The root causes of the crisis according to him include among other things: America financing of Gulf wars, excessive spending by politicians, artificially low interest rates and the greed of bank executives and high inflationary practice by the commercial banks.

**Effects of the global economic crisis:** Globally the effects of the crisis have been enumerated as: soaring food prices, collapse of global financial markets, contraction in world economic demand, decline in economic growth from 5.2% in 2007-1.1% in 2009, credit freeze, job loss, financial insolvency, decline in foreign direct investment and unemployment (Australia AID Programme, 2010).

While the effects vary from country to country, Adamu (2010) enumerated the economic impact in Nigeria to include: weaker export revenues, further pressures on current accounts and balance of payment, lower investment and growth, reforms in the banking sector and job losses. The social effects include lower growth, the job losses translating into higher poverty which brings about increase in crimes and diverse criminal activities, part of which is trafficking of women and children.

**The concept of trafficking:** Trafficking is defined as all acts and attempted acts involved in the recruitment, transportation within or across borders, sale, transfer, receipts or harbouring of a person involving the use of deception, coercion or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding the person whether for or not in involuntary servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive) in false or bonded or in slavery like conditions (UNICEF, 2005).

The United Nations Convention defined trafficking in persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of the threat of use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Exploitation shall include at a minimum, the practices similar to slavery, servitude or removal of organs. It stated further that the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered trafficking in person even if it does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this study, child shall mean any person under 18 years of age.

Although, men are also victimized, the overwhelming majority of those trafficked are women and children. Child

trafficking has become highly lucrative and increasingly worthwhile as women and children are considered commodities which can be sold several times over.

**Causes of human trafficking:** In a study on causes and patterns of trafficking in human commodities in Nigeria, carried out by United Nations African Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFRI, 2007) an extensive body of literature was reviewed on the causes or reasons why people are trafficked.

**Forms, nature and causes of human trafficking:** Two broad forms and levels of human trafficking are generally recognized in literature. These are internal and international trafficking. Internal trafficking entails the movement of persons from one place to another within the same country. According to Nwogu (2005) internal trafficking usually involves movement from urban areas of a country and the victims of this form of trafficking are mostly children. The major purpose is to engage the trafficked persons in such work as domestic work, child-minding or baby-sitting; farm labour, sweat shop labour; street hawking, begging and mining. Pearson (2003) and Ladan (2006) share this view. Nwogu (2005) also adds organ removal as one of the more cruel purposes of internal trafficking.

International (or trans-national or trans-border or external) trafficking entails the trafficking of persons across national borders from Nigeria to other countries for example, the major victims of this form of trafficking are women and the most notorious purpose for it is prostitution (Pearson, 2003; Nwogu, 2005; Ladan, 2006; Landifo, 2006). As postulated by Nwogu (2005) however, the reasons earlier listed in relation to internal child trafficking could be, to a limited extent, the purpose of international trafficking in women.

UNICEF (2006) while agreeing with the depiction of the character of international trafficking above also notes that while women and girls are primary victims, boys are also trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour and organ harvesting. It also notes that South America and Venezuela, most especially have recently become a point of destination for trafficked persons.

In the case of Nigeria, the phenomenon of human trafficking itself began in the middle and late 1980s as a fall-out of the downturn in the economy and the harsh economic policies of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced in 1986. It has been argued that the high incidence of human trafficking from Africa is encouraged by the high level of poverty, debasement of indigenous cultural values and practices, lack of awareness of the risks involved, high level of illiteracy among victims and their parents and the high demand for trafficked persons in Europe.

It has been classified the major causes of trafficking in Nigeria into four broad types: economic, political, social-cultural and environmental. The economic causes are the high rate of unemployment increasing incidence of poverty, demand for cheap labour and unequal distribution of wealth. The political causes are weak capacity of government institutions, lack of resource support and commitment to poverty alleviation and weak legislative policy support. Among the socio-cultural causes are absentee parents, large family size, weakening extended family involvement and low literacy levels or high rates of school dropout. The environmental causes are inadequate access to basic social services, rapid urbanization and deteriorating urban service infrastructure. This view is also upheld in relation to child (especially girl child) trafficking in East Africa where Pearson (2003) found that a combination of poverty, unemployment, gender inequality inadequate legislation and poor law enforcement enables trafficking in girls to thrive.

This is also the finding of Nwogu (2005) who categorises the causes of human trafficking into two broad types, namely internal and external factors. The internal factors are unemployment, poverty and civil and political unrest, discrimination against women, high illiteracy, adventure, family instability, falling value system and weak and inadequate laws and policies against human trafficking. The major external factor is according to Nwogu, the demand for cheap or compliant labour, especially in the informal sectors in the destination countries.

This review may continue unabated and the identified causes, regardless of how they are phrased would still revolve around those already mentioned above. For instance, Landifo (2006) suggested that in addition to poverty and unemployment, a lack of hope for a prosperous future in Nigeria are major forces driving women towards prostitution in Europe. The study shows that the prostitutes in Norway who have voluntarily consented to being trafficked are actually not acting out of any criminal or greedy motive but out of the altruistic motivation of being able to support their families in Nigeria.

In all the reviewed works, one major factor that manifested as a causative factor of trafficking is poverty, both in the internal type of human trafficking as well as the trans-border type. It is therefore important to locate a theory that helps to situate the issue within a scientific discourse.

**Theoretical framework:** This study has addressed the issues of the global financial crisis which has further engendered poverty around the world due to the inter-dependence of the economies of different nations.

The economy of Nigeria is experiencing the shock waves of the financial crisis which occurred in the United States. Especially because the financial deposits in the banking sector in Nigeria were linked were to the failing banking sector in the United States. This also affected jobs in Nigeria. Just as job losses occurred in the United States, it also occurred in Nigeria.

There is yet no universally accepted definition of poverty. However, poverty has been defined as an economic condition in which people lack sufficient income to obtain certain minimal levels of health services, food, housing, clothing and education, generally recognized as necessary to ensuring an adequate standard of living. Since, poverty has no geographical boundary, it is found in both rural and urban areas of Nigeria (Osinubi, 2003). The income dimension of poverty has defined poverty as a situation of low income or low consumption. The poor are often illiterate in poor health and have a short life span (World Bank, 1995). Elsewhere, poverty has been defined as the inability to attain a minimum standard of living (World Bank, 1990). Hence a combination of two theories has been employed in this study to explain the issue of poverty and the issue of human trafficking.

The theory of Social Exclusion as explained by Madanipour *et al.* (1998) has been adopted to shed light on the poverty situation in Nigeria as it affects women and children. Social Exclusion is defined as a multi-dimensional process in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision making and political processes, access to employment and material resources and integration into cultural processes (Madanipour *et al.*, 1998).

Poverty, according to Odejide (1997) has a female face because the experience of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) shows that women earn only 10% of the world's income and own <10% of the world's property. The Microcredit Summit Declaration and Plan of Action also reported that of the 1.3 billion absolute poor today (i.e., people living on less than US\$1 a day) >900 million are women! (Microcredit Summit, 1997). Odejide (1997) went further to state that it has been observed that the poverty of women generally results in higher birth rates and the physical and social underdevelopment of their children. The world is therefore, denied the vast social political and economic contributions of the women. This is a form of social exclusion.

There are many theories that could be used to address the issue of human trafficking these include functionalism and interactionalism among others. However, the Conflict theory has been adopted for the study this is because there is a fundamental reason or reasons why people are involuntarily or voluntarily trafficked and this usually has to do with economic factors. And because the

traffickers and the trafficked do not usually agree, especially with regards to the sharing of the eventual income or benefit that accrues from the relationship, a situation of inequality is created due to the forces of production which in this case is the labour of the trafficked persons whether children or women.

Conflict theory holds that there are fundamental differences of interest between social groups and that these differences result in conflict which becomes a persistent feature of society until the entire structure of society is overhauled. Conflict theory was seen as an alternative to the theory of functionalism. The theory of conflict was made popular by the German-Born philosopher, economist and sociologist, Karl Marx (1818-83) under the theory of Marxism. The assumptions of the Marxist theory are that in order to survive, human beings have to produce food and other material objects necessary for survival. In doing this, they enter into social groups with different people. Production also involves a technical component known as the forces of production; these include the technology, raw materials and scientific knowledge employed in the process of production. The forces of production and social relationships of production form the economic basis or what is known as the infrastructure of society.

The other aspect of society such as the legal, educational, political institutions and the belief and value systems are regarded as the super-structure. The superstructure is believed to be determined by the infrastructure (the economic factors). The theory believes that a major change in the infrastructure will produce a corresponding change in the superstructure. It also assumes that all historical societies contain basic contradictions which connotes that they cannot survive forever in their existing form. These contradictions involve the exploitation of one social group by another, for example the lords exploited their serfs in feudal society while employers exploit their employees in capitalist society. This exploitation creates a fundamental conflict of interests and unequal relationships between the social groups.

This theory is applied in this study in view of the fact that the Nigerian economy is a capitalist economy in which there is inequality. The resources of the nation are controlled by a small segment of the society while the majority wallows in poverty. The situation has led to families and individuals exploring alternative means for their economic survival. In the same vein, those who are better off have equally devised new ways in which to exploit the labour, overtly or covertly, of the poor through the process of trafficking. The trafficked are usually kept in a position of subjugation and their incomes from

whatever labour they put in are well below the value of the wealth produced by them. This in turn can be interpreted to mean a situation of exploitation and oppression which creates inequality in society. Thus the trafficked are exploited by the traffickers.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Magnitude of trafficking:** Nigeria's estimated population was 123.9 million in 1999, 141 million in 2005 and 149,229 in 2009 (wikipedia:2010). The female population is estimated to be about half of the total population while that of the children constitute >50% of the total population.

This shows that about half of Nigeria's population is in danger of being trafficked either internally or externally. The trafficking of children whose population was estimated to be 64 million in 1999 (UNICEF, 2002) is a major violation of children's rights and is also a contributory factor to exploitative child labour. The average age of trafficked children (especially girls) was 15 years (UNICEF, 2002), UNAFRI (2007) puts the age at between 14 and 31 years. While NAPTIP and UNICEF (2004) opined that the repatriated victims were between 18-24 years of age and that >60% of the victims were females. Prostitution also accounted for the main reason for trafficking. About >40% of trafficked children were involved in prostitution.

**Purpose of trafficking/reasons for trafficking:** According to UNICEF (2002) about 60-80% of the girls in sex trade in Italy are Nigerian girls. UNAFRI (2007) explained that a typical victim of trafficking comes from parents who are still alive and mainly engaged in farming.

The route for most of the transnational victims from the southern states of Nigeria is Lagos and then on to other ECOWAS countries and North Africa before ending up in Europe in cities. Those from the Northern States of Nigeria move or are usually moved from the rural areas to the cities for victims of transitional trafficking, their route is usually via Niger Republic, Morocco, Libya before ending up either in Europe or Saudi Arabia. (UNAFRI, 2007).

The exploitation of the trafficked victims have been captured thus: on arrival at their destination, most of the female victims were engaged in commercial sex work in both brothels or on streets under the supervision of their sponsor, the Madam who would then go on to collect their takings (UNAFRI, 2007).

In another study conducted by NAPTIP in collaboration with UNICEF in 2004. It was reported that majority of the victims were below 18 years while the

repatriated victims of trafficking were between 18-24 years of age. About >60% of the repatriated victims were females. Prostitution accounted for the main reason for trafficking in which 40% of the trafficked children were involved in prostitution.

All the above have shown that women and children are the worst victims of human trafficking in Nigeria. And the reasons for their being trafficked are mainly for the purpose of exploitation for economic reasons. The gains from the labour are mainly appropriated by their traffickers or their agents, who want to live and maintain a higher level of comfort while at the same time oppressing their victims. Literature on trafficking (NAPTIP and UNICEF, 2004; UNAFRI, 2007; Australia AID Programme, 2010; Hemming and Piper, 2010) has revealed that in some cases trafficked women and parents or guardians of trafficked children willingly surrendered themselves or their children/wards to the traffickers either because they were deceived with promises of better jobs, academic opportunities or marriage to rich men or in some cases they out rightly, voluntarily agreed to be trafficked. However, the root causes are issues to do with the socio-economic development (Hemming and Piper, 2010). According to Devi child trafficking has become highly lucrative and increasingly worthwhile as women and children are considered commodities which can be sold several times over.

While reporting on the major causes of child trafficking in Nigeria, UNICEF (2002) listed factors such as high level of illiteracy, unemployment, poor standard of living, desperation of poor and illiterate parents with large families for money.

The study by UNAFRI (2007) revealed that most of the victims' parents were either farmers, petty traders or in the lowest strata of the public and private sectors of the economy. The overall employment status of victims before they travelled also showed that 17% were employed, 47% unemployed and 33% were students. This can be shown in Fig. 1-3.

From all the literature reviewed, it could be seen that the promise or possibility of a better economic situation is a major motivating factor for victims to allow themselves or their children or wards to be trafficked. This shows that poverty must have been the underlying factor for the trafficking of women and children in Nigeria. The level of poverty in Nigeria rose from 46.3% in 1985-65.5% in 1996 (Federal Office of Statistics, 1999). By 2006, 7 out of every 10 households in Nigeria considered themselves to be poor (National Bureau of Statistics, 2006).

Table 1 shows the poverty trend in Nigeria prior to the Global financial crisis. However, from there seems to have been some changes.

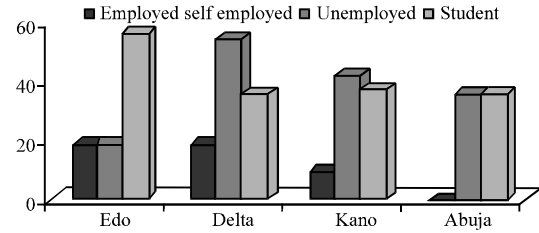


Fig. 1: Employment status of victims in some states and the federal capital territory of Nigeria. UNAFRI (2007)

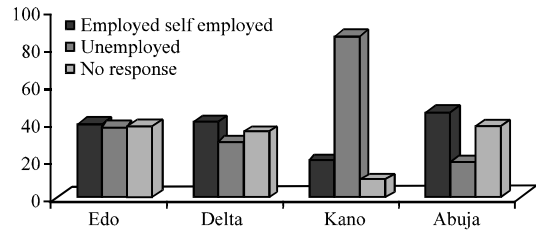


Fig. 2: Occupations of parents of victims in some states and the federal capital territory of Nigeria, UNAFRI (2007)



Fig. 3: Occupations of victims of trafficking in some states and the federal capital territory of Nigeria, UNAFRI (2007)

Years	Urban	Rural
1980	17.2	28.3
1985	37.8	51.4
1992	37.5	46.0
1996	56.2	69.8

Federal Office of Statistics (1999): Poverty profile for Nigeria, 1980-1996

**Global financial crisis and poverty in Nigeria:** The UNDP (2001) stated that Nigeria ranks 148th out of 173 in terms of abysmal living conditions.

The World Bank's September 2008 report stated that nearly 70% of Nigeria's population lives below poverty line (<1\$ a day).

The 2008 Human Development survey of the United Nations also ranked Nigeria the 25th poorest country of the world (measured on the basis of standard of living, life expectancy and literacy).

From the above, it could be seen that poverty level has been on a steady rise: being 46% in 1985, 65.5% in 1996 and 70.0% in 2008. It has been pointed out that poverty is a major causative factor for human trafficking, especially the trafficking of women and children in Nigeria while the global financial crisis has resulted in greater poverty all over the world due to globalization, it then means that with rising levels of poverty in Nigeria, the trafficking of women and children will most likely continue and even probably increase. This is in spite of the government agency that has been set up to tackle the problem, i.e., the National Agency for The Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) on 26th August 2006.

It can therefore be deduced from the foregoing that there is a significant relationship between the global financial crisis and women and children trafficking in Nigeria. Hence, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the global financial crisis and women and child trafficking in Nigeria is hereby rejected while the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

**Consequences of human trafficking:** Human Trafficking (HT) can be regarded as modern day slavery. Trafficking in women, especially the trans-border type can be equated to denying Nigeria the services of significant proportion of her labour force this is because in Nigeria, women constitute 49.7% of the national population and majority of these reside in the rural areas where they live mainly by exploiting the resources of nature. They are involved in agriculture as suppliers of labour, food crop and livestock producers, processors of food and fish products, marketers of peasant farm surpluses and transporters of farm supplies (Oluwasola, 1998).

If the agricultural sector is negatively affected, food crop production and supply will drop, leading to rising food prices. This will in turn aggravate the poverty situation in the country which might again lead to people getting trafficked. Other consequences include: emotional and physical damage of children the transmission of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases due to the sex trade involved in trafficking trafficking of women damages their role as care givers in homes and disorganization of families due to absence of mothers and children.

### CONCLUSION

There is rising poverty in Nigeria and this is at the root of human trafficking. Poverty has implications in the vulnerability of women and children to trafficking and its

negative consequences of HIV/AIDS and transmission of diseases. Human trafficking takes its toll on the agricultural sector, food prices and family organization.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

What could be done to tackle these problems are as follows:

- The government is to address the problem of infrastructural decay in Nigeria such as that of power. This will be a step in the right direction towards poverty reduction
- If poverty reduction measures are taken, the push and pull factors of HT will be reduced
- Efforts should be made to expand and strengthen the existing poverty alleviation measures such as are being pursued by the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). Policy measures must be put in place to include the needs of women as well as the other vulnerable groups
- The Federal Government should collaborate with NGOs, civil society groups and other relevant international agencies to take definite steps towards the full implementation of the UN protocol against human trafficking
- There should be collaboration between NAPTIP, the Police, the Immigration service, the State Security Service, the Nigerian Custom Service, NGOs, National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Airports and Seaport authorities as well as identified countries of origin and destination of the trafficked persons
- A comprehensive Management Information System (MIS) should be established by NAPTIP and other relevant agencies in form of a database for research and information gathering and sharing purposes

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