
*CROSS-BORDER HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND ITS SECURITY
IMPLICATIONS ON BORDER COMMUNITY OF (NFUM), CROSS
RIVER STATE, NIGERIA*

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Abstract

Cross-border human trafficking is an illicit enterprise with huge security implications on Nigeria's border communities because victims are transported through the country's porous borders to other countries for the purpose of exploitation. The paper examines cross-border human trafficking as well as its implications on border security in Nfum. Data for the paper were collected from textbooks, journals, and internet materials, and analysed using narrative-analytic technique. The major findings of the paper are that cross-border human trafficking is driven by poverty, porous borders, negligence of parental duty, corruption among some border security operatives, spread of deadly diseases, war, low risk associated with the crime, and the tendency to portray Europe and United States as greener pastures by the media. Cross-border human trafficking has many effects including increase in the level of arms and ammunition smuggling through the borders, spread of deadly diseases around the border community, and increase in the spate of drug trafficking in the border areas. Also, cross-border human trafficking has underground economic benefits to the border community, and to the traffickers as the proceeds from the crime keep them in the business despite efforts by relevant authorities to mitigate the threats posed by the crime. Data for the study was collected via secondary sources. Among other things, the paper recommends that the government at all levels in the country should formulate robust and realisable policies aimed at poverty alleviation amongst the youth in Nfum, and in other border communities and states to discourage them from making themselves available to be trafficked.

Key Words: Human trafficking, border, security, border security, border community

Introduction

Human trafficking in Nigeria has reached a dangerous proportion, where large number of Nigerian women, girls and boys are

recruited from mainly villages through forceful means and transported to other places for the purpose of exploitation. Human trafficking has numerous security implications for Nigeria, especially in its

border communities. The international borders of Nigeria are largely porous, and this encourages the traffickers to easily transport their victims, especially vulnerable youths through the borders to other countries such as Libya, Cameroon, Benin Republic and Gabon for the purpose of sexual or labour exploitation. In numerous instances, perpetrators of human trafficking bribe the border security officials so as to easily carry-out their illegal activities, which invariably compromise security of border communities through illegitimate border crossings.

Generally, human trafficking has attracted the attention of the international community because of its threats to security. Monies realised from human trafficking is estimated at over \$31 billion USD annually. In 2005 alone, the United States projected that over 800,000 people were victims to cross-border human trafficking. Similarly, the United Kingdom Crime Agency report of 2014 showed that 732 children were trafficked for sexual exploitation, hence concluding that human trafficking affects 1 out of every 3 children globally per annum (Pati, 2014).

Nigeria is one of the countries in Africa where human trafficking flourish internally and externally, with its many implications

on the border security of the country. Human trafficking constitutes the third biggest crime in the world after economic fraud and drug pedaling. Human trafficking is comprised of about 25 percent of the entire criminal activities in Nigeria in 2014, and 29 percent in 2015. Human trafficking is also implicated for over 5 million Nigerians scattered around the world leading loss of their contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. In 2016, the average proceeds from human trafficking is about \$ 100 million (Iyanda & Nwogwugwu, 2016). In order to solve the problem of human trafficking in the country, among other things, Nigeria ratified the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children 2001. Also, Nigeria enacted national law called Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003. However, the problem of cross-border human trafficking continued to rear its ugly heads in the country despite efforts by the government to mitigate it. The foregoing is buttressed by the death of 26 Nigerian girls in Italian war Ship in 2017, who were victims of cross-border human trafficking (Punch Editorial, 2017).

More so, human trafficking negatively affects the security of Nigeria as it affects

largely the youths who are the future leaders in the country. Therefore, if the youths who are in their productive ages are allowed to be wasted, it implies that the future of the country would have been wasted. Also, since human trafficking is less risky than other crimes, and yields huge sums of money to the traffickers, the proceeds from the crime could be used in sponsoring other forms of criminal activities in the internal setting, hence endangering the security of the country. Nigeria is currently confronted with many security threats, hence allowing the menace of human trafficking to flourish would further threaten the security of the country. When there is huge security threats in a state, the government may not be able to effectively protect lives and properties of the citizenry as well as those of other nationals within its sovereignty.

Cross-border human trafficking has adversely affected the security of the country, especially in(Nfum) Cross River State, where the vulnerable youths in the state, especially the unemployed easily fall victims to human traffickers who largely carry-out their reprehensible activities at the border communities from where they transport the victims to other countries for the purpose of exploitation. In the countries of destination, the victims are made to carry

pedal illicit drugs, work as prostitutes or engage in other forms of criminal activities such as arms trafficking.

Essentially, there is connection between human trafficking and terrorism because terrorists use the same transportation networks as traffickers and smugglers to execute their activities (Keefer, 2016). Similarly, Welch (2017) noted that ISIS perpetuate human trafficking in order to exterminate religious and ethnic minorities in areas of their operation. This shows that there is relationship between human trafficking and security in the country, especially in border community of Nfum. Since proceeds from cross-border human trafficking is huge, some of the perpetrators of invest the money realised from the crime into illicit drugs business for more profits. Part of the proceeds may be used in sponsoring terrorists in other to discredit the government that fight criminality at both the internal and external settings. Sometimes, human traffickers may invest part of their proceeds in sponsoring some politicians to assume political power in order to secure quasi-government protection. This could weaken the fight against cross-border human trafficking if such politicians are eventually voted into power. With the threat posed by human trafficking especially cross-border human

trafficking in Nigeria, more efforts are required to eradicate the ugly trend, especially in the border communities before the menace completely destroy the security of the country. Therefore, this paper is geared towards examination of cross-border human trafficking and its implications on border security in (Nfem Cross River State.

Concept of cross-border human trafficking

Trafficking means illegal transport of goods across international borders, especially smuggled goods such as illicit drugs with the aim of profit maximisation. Recently, the concept of trafficking has been broadened to embrace the illegal transport of vulnerable people, especially children and girls for the purpose of exploitation. According to Ajagun (2012), the concept trafficking is derived from "traffic", which means travel or transportation. Trafficking is seen as a lucrative enterprise as well as flourishing criminal activity in the universe.

Atkins (2016) noted that human trafficking is contemporary slavery perpetuated through the use of force or fraud to gain commercial sexual or labour exploitation. Similarly, Ndiora (2015) asserted that human trafficking is an organised criminal activity which is perpetuated through a syndicate, not by a single individual. This

shows that human trafficking is not a one-person criminal activity. This further shows that human trafficking is perpetuated by criminally-minded individuals that work in concert with the purpose of personal enrichment through exploitation of virtues of the vulnerable people. Human trafficking, especially women trafficking, is highly organized and revolves around a female figure known as "madam" or "mama", who play active role in deceiving girls from vulnerable homes to leave their families for Italy or other European countries for the purpose of getting greener pastures. Next to "madam" is the "messenger", whose main responsibility is to transfer proceeds from the crime from Europe to Nigeria. Recruiters are at the base of the criminal network. The "recruiters" are employed by the "madam", and are charged with the responsibility of going to the villages with a view to deceiving or convincing vulnerable families to release their children with a promise of giving them greener pastures. There is also "intermediaries" at the transit country. The duty of the "intermediary" is to bribe border security personnel to ease border crossings for the victims as well as provide accommodation for them while on transit. Therefore, the "intermediary" is at the middle of the organisational structure of cross-border human trafficking.

Essentially, the victims are made to take an oath at the country of destination by "madam", and are forced to repay specified amount of money claimed to have been spent by "madam" in their journey to the destination country.

More so, Welch (2017) noted that human trafficking has three major aspects: the act, the means, and the purpose. The act includes recruitment or harbouring of victims, while the means include fraud and force. On the other hand, the purpose is for exploitation. Therefore, human trafficking involves smuggling as well as exploitation. Victims of human trafficking are characterised by poverty, poor level of education, young age, unemployment, sexual abuse, lack of family support as well as living in vulnerable places. Countries with huge gaps between the rich and poor in terms of economic status provides the atmosphere for exploitation and makes the poor to struggle to escape their pitiable conditions, while the rich benefit from cheap labour emanating from such decisions.

Human trafficking could be internal trafficking when it takes place within a country or external (cross-border) trafficking when it takes place across the national borders. The purpose of internal human trafficking is largely for illegal

adoption and domestic servitude, while the purpose for external human trafficking is largely for commercial sexual and labour exploitation as well as for organ harvesting. In external or cross-border human trafficking, Ghana, Nigeria, and Togo are the main countries of origin, from where domestic child labourers are transported through countries such as Gabon, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Niger to Europe for plunder.

From the foregoing, cross-border human trafficking has demand and supply side. The demand side is largely motivated by desire for cheap labour, while the supply side is driven by unemployment and poverty or desire for greener pastures. There is connection between cross-border human trafficking and slavery. Cross-border human trafficking has replaced trans-Saharan slave trade, while domestic human trafficking resembles the Osu system in Igbo nation. Osu system permits slaves to be dedicated to deities, and their children automatically become children of deities. Even though the law that created the Osu system has been abolished to the extent of its inconsistency with the modern way of life, the system is still practiced in some parts of Igbo nation. Therefore, cross-border human trafficking is defined, in this paper, as forceful recruitment of vulnerable

youths from poor families and their transportation from the country of origin through transit countries to a country of destination by trafficker(s) for the purpose of sexual and or labour exploitation.

Concept of border community

The origin of international border is traceable to the creation of the nation-state system by the Westphalia Treaty of 1648. International borders are creation of man, hence they are subject to conflicts and controversy. Nevertheless, there are natural borders such as rivers and mountains before the creation of international borders (Ekoko, 2004). According to Okeke (2017), the history of Nigeria-Cameroon border is traceable to the 1800s. It emerged as a product of extensive expansionist global power-politics involving signing of treaties and colonial masters. This shows that Nigeria-Cameroon border at Nfum is artificial and this could be responsible for the security concerns there.

Essentially, Houtun (2005) noted that border means a territorial limits of states in the contemporary international relations. This shows that border is within the sphere of geopolitics, which means a point of intersection between politics and geography. One of the uses of border is that it prevents unauthorised individuals from

crossing it from one country to another. Border equally means a limit of a state's sovereignty. Border crossings are regulated by the state through its immigration policies and executed through its border security agencies. Border is crucial to state policy because for any state or country to effectively assert its sovereignty, such a state must have effective control of its borders by eliminating unauthorised entrance into the country and exit from it. This shows that border is vital to international relations, and events or dynamism in international relations can alter international boundaries (Moraczewska, 2010).

At this juncture, it is crucial to present Nigerian map showing its different borders as in Figure 1.1.



Source: Okereke (2018)

Figure 1.1. Nigerian map showing its different borders

More so, Okeke and Oji (2014) opined that Nigerian border occupies about 923,768 square kilometers with about 36,450 kilometers of land and maritime borders. Nigeria shares borders with Chad and Niger Republic in the North, Benin Republic in the West, and Cameroon in the East. The country also shares Lake Chad with Niger Republic, Cameroon and Chad as well as maritime coastline in the Atlantic Ocean or Gulf of Guinea. Also, Nigeria shares 770 kilometers of land borders with Benin Republic in the West, while at the same

time, sharing 1,500 kilometers of land borders with Niger as well as 90 kilometers with Cameroon. In the South, Nigeria shares 853 kilometers of maritime borders with the Atlantic Ocean or the Gulf of Guinea. Therefore, all borders in Nigeria are approximately 4,910 kilometers. However, there is no consensus about the exact length and number of borders in Nigeria amongst the scholars. Available records to the Nigeria Immigration Service shows that there are 1,400 kilometers of illegal routes into Nigeria, which is 1,316 routes above the official number of border control posts which covers 4,047 kilometers, representing the total length of the country's land borders. In the North-East, Nigeria shares 1,690 kilometers borders with Niger as well as 87 kilometers of border with Chad. The various borders are not effectively manned. Therefore, the porosity of the borders is one of the major factors that has brought about increase in the spate of cross-border human trafficking in the country. Border community is defined, in this paper, as towns and villages located close to the border posts.

Effects of cross-border human trafficking on security in border community of Nfumu

Cross-border human trafficking has both positive and negative effects on security in

Nigeria border communities. The negative effects of cross-border human trafficking include increase in the spate of smuggling of illegal arms and ammunition, bad national image, violence, child labour, armed robbery, spread of deadly diseases as well as underground economic benefits for the traffickers, victims of cross-border human trafficking as well as to the border communities. The border communities benefit from underground economy and slavery in Nfum and this is not taxed or captured by the Federal Inland Revenue Services (FIRS). Illicit business enterprises like illicit drug and brothel businesses flourish in the border communities, which increase the revenue of the people involved in such businesses. For the victims, cross-border human trafficking has reduced their value as human beings. Some of the victims contract sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDs. Some of the victims contract sexually transmitted diseases through sexual exploitation in countries of transit or in countries of destination. Some of the female victims are sometimes raped many times through arrangements orchestrated by "madam". Also, cross-border human trafficking leads to arms trafficking, prostitution and drugs trafficking (Okereke, 2018).

In 2017, National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) rescued 135 victims of human trafficking in Cross River State, where 14 of the victims were rescued in Ikom, while 45 were rescued from Yala Local Government Area. Ikom is located close to Nfum land borders (Essien, 2017). In 2011, NAPTIP rescued 19 victims of cross-border human trafficking in Cross River borders in 2010 and 2011. It was discovered that 4 of the victims rescued are Cameroonians, while 15 are Nigerians. Within the same period, 475 cases of cross-border human trafficking were perpetuated in Nigeria and only 247 cases were investigated (National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters, 2011). In 2012, 13 victims were rescued and rehabilitated in the state (National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters, 2012). In the same year, 6 victims rescued are Cameroonians. Between 2013 and 2014, NAPTIP rescued 833 victims, while 22 of the victims are from Cross River State. This represents 2.6 percent of all the victims rescued in the country within the period. Between 2013 and 2014, 1,509 victims were rescued, 3 of the victims were rescued in Cross River land borders (National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, 2014). In 2015, 490 victims were rescued, out of which 11

victims were rescued from Cross River State land borders, while in 2016, 599 cases were reported, out of which 224 cases were investigated. From 2014 to 2016, 23 offenders of Cross-border human trafficking were convicted, while others are still being prosecuted (National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, 2016).

Ehiondero (2006) noted that Ekori, which is a town in Yakuur local government area of Cross River State has large number of unemployed youths. The foregoing provides steady supply of young boys and girls to be recruited by the traffickers. Therefore, the high level of poverty in the area makes the vulnerable youths to perceive cross-border human trafficking as a way of escape from poverty at home.

Connection between cross-border human trafficking and security of border community (Nfum)

Okereke (2018) noted that cross-border human trafficking hamper security of border communities in several ways. The study identified connection between the volume of small arms and light weapons, poverty, increase in the rate of crime or criminality, illegal border crossings, cross-border human trafficking and porosity of Nfum land border in Cross River State. Smuggling of light weapons through the

land border into the state is a serious security concern. In some cases, traffickers buy arms and smuggle it into the state with money they realised from cross-border human trafficking with the hope of making more wealth. With the large number of arms already smuggled into the state, and the high level of poverty amongst the people, the level of crime and criminality in the state could rise, hence worsening the security of the border community. Welch (2017) equally identified connection between external (cross-border) human trafficking and increase in the level of criminality in communities, but the study was conducted in United States, making the two areas of study different.

According to Eyo (2018), Governor Ben Ayade blamed the crisis in Cameroon on arms trafficking through 27 illegal routes in Cross River State. It was pointed out that 80 percent of security challenges in the state emanate from challenges posed by porous borders and criminal activities around the Nigeria-Cameroon land borders. Reports by African Independent Television (2018) showed that 37 people were arrested for armed robbery in Cross River State, while 20 persons were arrested for cultism, and 8 persons arrested for illegal possession of "weeds". Also, 5 persons were arrested for murder and 2 others for child trafficking in

2017. It was also reported that 11 firearms were recovered from the offenders.

Similarly, Eruke (2017) noted that 661 AK 47 were confiscated from criminal elements by the Nigeria Customs Service (NIS) at the borders. Some of these weapons were confiscated in Nfum borders as about 1.3 million unauthorised weapons are in circulation in Nigeria. From 2006 to 2007 alone, about 212 violent crimes were documented in the country, out of which 189 were carried out with firearms (Okeke & Oji, 2014).

Okeoghene (2017) noted that land borders in Cross River State are porous and not adequately demarcated making it easy for illicit border crossings. The porosity of the borders makes it difficult for effective border control at Nfum. This has many implications for border security in the state prominent among which is increase in crime. Similarly, Ehindero (2006) established linkage between poverty and border security. It was pointed out that adult literacy, life expectancy, Human development Index (HDI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in the state are 69.4 percent, 57.8 percent ₦2,626, and 0.513 respectively. The population of those in urban areas are 479, 275 representing 74.9 percent of the entire population, while that of rural communities

in the state is 1,432,022 representing 74.9 percent of the entire population. This shows that there is high level of poverty in Cross River State, which reflects in the spate of illicit border crossings through Nfum borders.

Essentially, illicit cross-border human trafficking can increase the spread of disease like HIV/AIDs in the border communities in Nigeria, hence affecting health security of the people of the border community. Cross-border human trafficking can equally facilitate entrance of criminal elements, especially terrorists into the border communities, hence worsening the security situation in the country.

Adebakin and Raimi (2012) noted that Nigeria is grappling with numerous security threats such as cold-blooded killings, ethno-religious conflicts, bombings and hostage taking. In 2010 and 2011, the Federal Government of Nigeria budgeted ₦422.9 billion and ₦563.2 billion respectively. Also, data available from National Bureau of Statistics (2017) showed that Cross River budgeted ₦2.7 billion for security from 2007 to 2017. Nevertheless, security around the border posts Nfum remains a huge concern.

From the foregoing, it is clear that cross-border human trafficking has connections with border security in border community

of Nfum. This can deteriorate the already bad security posture in the country is more and more arms and other contraband products move into Nigeria through the borders as cross-border human traffickers struggle to repatriate their ill-gotten money into the country since such money cannot be easily transferred through the banks because of financial regulations by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

This paper examined cross-border human trafficking and its implications on security of border community (Nfum). The paper x-rayed the drivers of cross-border human trafficking, effects of cross-border human trafficking on the people of Nfum, and connection between cross-border human trafficking and security of border community (Nfum). It was discovered that the drivers of cross-border human trafficking in Nfum include poverty, lack of access to quality education, porous borders, corruption among some border security personnel, lucrative nature of the crime, low risk associated with crime, and underground economic benefits associated with cross-border human trafficking to the border community and the traffickers.

Cross-border human trafficking has negative effects on security of border community (Nfum), and there is connection between cross-border human trafficking and security in border community of Nfum. In view of the findings, it is concluded that unless the drivers of cross-border human trafficking in (Nfum) Cross River States is addressed, the issue of security of the border community in particular and Nigeria in general of would remain a mirage.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are relevant in this paper in the light of the findings:

- i. The government at all levels in Nigeria should formulate robust and realisable policies aimed at poverty alleviation amongst the youths in (Nfum) Cross River State in order to discourage them from making themselves available for trafficking. This poverty alleviation programme should involve training and financial empowerment of the vulnerable youths in the area to embark of mechanised agricultural production as well as in web-designing;
- ii. Border security personnel, especially the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) should embrace the use of modern technology in profiling of those crossing through Nigerian

land borders at Nfum. This would involve the use of biometrics reading machine that would recognise the thumb-print of eligible immigrants into the country and emigrants out of it;

iii. The Border security personnel should be well-paid by the government in order to reduce the level of corruption in the country's borders posts;

iv. All the victims of cross-border human trafficking should be properly rehabilitated by the federal government through NAPTIP with view to providing them with lucrative skills that would take them out of poverty;

v. Punishment of offenders of cross-border human trafficking should be made to be commensurate with the offence of trafficking in persons;

vi. The government should encourage the various religious institutions in the country to preach against cross-border human trafficking in the state; and

vii. The government should come up with stringent birth control measures aimed at ensuring that parents do not bear more children than they can adequately cater for. Also, the government at all levels should encourage girl-child education in order to better their lots.

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