

POVERTY ALLEVIATION AS a MEANS OF STEMMING THE MENACE OF
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND PROSTITUTION.

BY

SEO OGBONMWAN

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Edo Global Organization is an Umbrella Organization of all Edo State indigenes in the Diaspora, it is a non-governmental and non political organization with the primary aim of reviving the fortunes of Edo State and in turn Nigeria's fortunes and has just had its annual conference in Turin in Italy. One of the sub themes of the annual conference was ways and means of stemming prostitution of Nigerian girls and human trafficking from Nigeria into the cities of Europe and Turin particularly stands out as one such destination of Nigerian girls. That was the main reason for choosing the venue in the first place but unfortunately the target audience of trafficked Nigerian girls did not show up at the venue of the event in spite of our efforts. Even those who helped to put it together chickened out at the last minute possibly for fear of their 'madams' and handlers. Another possible reason advanced was that we were probably in Turin to facilitate their deportation; nothing could have been farther from the truth as our primary concern was their welfare and wellbeing as fellow Nigerians and also as fellow human beings. There was a climate of fear and intimidation. We however informed formally the British and American Embassies and the Italian Police of our presence in Turin. The hotel manager was also advised to beef up their security because of the fear of the men of underworld who benefit immensely from this illegal trade.

Our security arrangements turned out to be superfluous as the meeting and workshop were held in a very serene atmosphere. Those who attended had a good dose of information and witnessed a brain stormy exercise on why human trafficking and prostitution is appalling and more importantly information on how to turn their lives around for the better and various opportunities that abound for returnees from the cities of Europe discussed by Roland Otaru Esq, SAN with contributions from the floor. In the communiqué adopted at the end of the conference every participant agreed that poverty alleviation amongst Nigerians at home is the single most important factor in stemming human trafficking and prostitution by our women although others believed that transparency and accountability in government presented by Dr SEO Ogbonmwan has a contributory role as money spent in awarding and re-awarding the same contract by successive governments can be put to good use in improving the lives of Edo people thus alleviating poverty and its harrowing effects.

That poverty alleviation amongst Nigerians at home is the single most important factor in stemming human trafficking and prostitution by our women was predicated on the presentation of the First Lady of Adamawa State, Her Excellency Dr Halima Nyako who is a Physician by profession and Consultant Radiologist seconded to the Federal Medical Centre in Yola from the Military Base Hospital in Yaba Lagos in addition to her functions as the First Lady of Adamawa State . Adamawa State was created about the same time as Edo State in 1991. It is a typically poor state in the North East of Nigeria bordering on Cameroon Republic and lacking infrastructure of an old State like Edo

State which enjoyed the pride of place as part of Bendel State of Nigeria; regarded then by all as the number one state of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Due to mismanagement and corruption by the various military governors deployed to the state from other states of the Federation of Nigeria and compounded by the nine years of PDP rule in the State headed by a son of the soil Lucky Igbinedion, Edo State is now regarded as one of the most backward states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Adamawa state was also ranked as one of the poorest and most poverty stricken states in Nigeria. The state lacked the basic infrastructure, skills and facilities for empowering its citizens at the grassroots level. Previous administrations failed despite numerous efforts to rid the state of its abject poverty. We were curious to know how they performed the magic that seems to have transformed Adamawa State from a very poor state in 1991 at its creation into a forward looking state in the Federal Republic in 2009. That was the basis of her invitation to tell us how it was done so that we can appeal to the present government of Edo State to learn from a forward looking state like Adamawa. For one; Adamawa state does not have extra revenue from oil like Edo State or Bayelsa State, nor does it have heavy internally generated funds like Lagos state but the leadership of Adamawa State has been able to 'extract water from the rocks' to move Adamawa State forward. The outstanding results borders on good leadership and abhorring corruption and sharp practices. The administration, under His Excellency Governor Murtala Nyako believes that it can fight and reduce poverty, enrich the people at the grassroots and pave way for the socio-economic development of the state through **GRASSROOTS SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME (GSEEP)**.

The objectives of GSEEP includes improvement of literacy rates, improvement of social service delivery, creation of a knowledge repository for strategic decision making, capacity development, improvement of employment rates, promotion of food security, encouragement of the establishment of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), encouragement of industrial development, and above all poverty reduction.

In a very eloquent, matter of facts and convincing attitude, Her Excellency Dr Halima Nyako went further to discuss the methods of poverty alleviation in Adamawa State which included formal education and basic skills acquisition, farming skills acquisition, special assistants apprenticeship programmes, vocational technical training which equips the recipients for self employment for life, affirmative action for women empowerment, infrastructural development, micro credit finance initiative etc. This is akin to what happens in Europe and America where education is geared towards acquiring skills and subsequent self employment. Adamawa state has shown by her success story that the calibre of men that can make a difference in the lives of ordinary Nigerians abound in the country but they are either not opportune to serve their father land due to zoning and selection of candidates for position in the government of the nation or they become corrupt as soon as they set foot on government house as they are tied to the apron strings of their god fathers who masterminded their selection to the post and would ultimately siphon the state resources for his personal gains using the conduit governor godson. 'A typical Greek gift'

It is for the above reasons that Nigerians should fight to ensure that there is true democracy in the country and that the votes of the electorate's counts, supported by a viable, visible, incorruptible and fearless judiciary. The positive experiment in Adamawa State as espoused by the First Lady of the State Dr Halima Nyako at Edo Global Organization annual Conference in Turin, Italy should be emulated by Edo State and in fact all other states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The leadership of Adamawa State has shown that prudence, diligence, good use of available resources, commitment to set goals, and above all transparency, accountability coupled with good leadership are the key to success in an economic stricken state and leaders with such qualities abound in Edo State. The only unfortunate thing is that those who possess these qualities are afraid to come out and contest elections which is a 'do or die affair' and the fear for their lives due to the ruthlessness of the godfathers in politics in Edo State who order maiming, punishment flogging, assassinations, armed robbery, kidnapping and killing of their opponents who dare to challenge them. To contest election in places like Edo State, you have to have a small army of hired thugs who will be at your beck and call and an inexhaustible source of funds to buy everybody and anyone who may try to block your path to the governorship mansion in Osadebey Avenue in Benin City. We of Edo Global Organization call on the present Edo State Governor who won the governorship race after a protracted court battle to make a difference in the lives of Edo people during his stewardship as governor of the state as he has time and the good will of Edo people on his side. He is advised to learn from his colleague from Adamawa on prudence, purposeful leadership and abhor the usual ways of Edo State governors of milking the State treasury dry without any significant infra structure to show for it, He should emulate the legacies of General Samuel Osaigbovo Ogbemudia and late Professor Ambrose Alli of Blessed memory whose legacies are still seen everywhere in Edo State. Finally he should help to create a conducive atmosphere for free and fair elections and leave his footprints in the sands of time in Edo State politics, socioeconomic and infrastructural development and empowerment of Edo people especially women and children who bear the brunt of the effect of poverty in any nation and by so doing prevent the trafficking of our women and children into Europe for the purposes of prostitution and slavery in the 21st century.

SEO Ogbonmwan, Obstetrician & Gynaecologist is a Nigerian Political Observer based in the UK.

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Edo, take your cue from Adamawa

Adamawa State was created about the same time Edo State in 1991. It is a typically poor state in the North-East of Nigeria. It lacks infrastructure of an old state like Edo State which enjoyed the pride of place as part of Bendel State of Nigeria; regarded

then by all as the number one state of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Due to mismanagement and corruption by the various military governors and compounded by the nine years of PDP rule in the state headed by the son of the soil Lucky Igbinedion, Edo State is now regarded as one of the most backward states in Nigeria.

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For one, Adamawa State does not earn extra revenue from oil like Edo State or Bayelsa State, or does it have heavy internally generated funds like Lagos State but the leadership of Adamawa State has been able to extract water from the rocks' to move Adamawa State forward. This, according to the First Lady of Adamawa State, Dr. Halima Nyako, a guest speaker at the annual conference of **Edo Global Organisation** recently held in Turin, Italy, is attributed to the methods of poverty alleviation in Adamawa State which included formal education and basic skills acquisition, farming skill acquisition, special assistants apprenticeship programmes, vocational technical training which equips the recipients for self employment for life, affirmative action for women empowerment, infrastructural development, micro credit finance initiative et.cetera through the instrumentality of "GRASSROOTS SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME (GSEEP).

We of Edo Global Organisation call on the Edo State governor to make a difference in the lives of Edo people during his tenure as he has the time and the goodwill of Edo people on his side.

Dr. SEO Ogbonmwan,
Edo Global Organisation,