Media Mapping:
Covering Modern Day Slavery in Edo State

Oak centre

Acknowlegement

About Oak Centre:
Oak Centre is a forward thinking think tank focused on research, innovation, and policy development. By working with experts, policymakers, and grassroots organisations, it produces data driven insights, shapes digital strategies, and fosters impactful solutions.
Its goal is to transform knowledge into action, promoting sustainable growth and resilience.

The Nigerian Media and Modern-Day Slavery Today

Introduction

The 2017 Cable News Network (CNN) report on slave auctions in Libya shocked the world. Although Modern Day Slavery (MDS) is far from a new phenomenon, the videographic evidence by CNN brought this horrific reality into the television, computer, and mobile telephone screens of everyday people across the world. The outrage was instant and vociferous.

Yet MDS is the lived reality of millions of people across the world. In the same year CNN reported on slave auctions of Africans trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea into Europe, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that over 1,586 persons died in the process of that precarious journey. Furthermore, the IOM reports, over 8,000 migrants were successfully repatriated to 24 countries.[1] At the top of that list was Nigeria, with 4,316 persons.[2]

According to 2017 data from the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking In Persons (NAPTIP), 75 per cent of Nigerian rescued trafficking victims had Libya or Italy as their destination countries.[3] In other words, the journey via the Mediterranean Sea to Europe was the primary purpose of migration in 2017 in Nigeria.

Specifically, NAPTIP finds a clustering around both the destination countries and the states

[1]IOM (2017), Voluntary Humanitarian Return (VHR) Assistance & Reintegration Support to Stranded Migrants in Libya, 10 October- 23 October. Available at: https://www.iom.int/sitreps/libya-voluntary-humanitarian-return-vhr-assistance-reintegration-support-stranded-migrants-4.
[2]United States Department of State (2018). Trafficking in Persons Report, p.332. Available at: https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/282798.pdf.
[3] 2017 NAPTIP Report, p. 23. Available at: https://www.naptip.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2017-DATA-ANALYSIS-FINAL.pdf.
[4]Ibid., p.20

of origin of rescued victims. Destination countries are mainly Libya and Italy, bearing in mind that Libya is merely a transit country. Within Nigeria, states of origin of victims cluster around Edo state, the highest at 19.6 per cent in 2017. [4]

This is followed by Delta, Benue, and Bauchi states, respectively. Notwithstanding the widespread occurrence of this phenomenon, backed up by testimonials from returnees, the Nigerian media has largely ignored this social problem.

The shock which met the 2017 CNN report highlights the degree to which the wider public remains unaware of the egregiousness of the MDS phenomenon.

Objectives and Methodology

Given this background, Oak Center for Journalism Development (OCJD) embarked on a media mapping and research exercise of the reportage of modern day slavery in Nigeria. This pilot project focused on Edo State.

Given the high prevalence of trafficking in persons and MDS in Nigeria, and Edo State in particular, the media coverage of this social problem is less than commensurate. The main objectives of this media mapping are to:

- Interrogate the prevalence of MDS in Nigeria, and Edo State, in particular.
- Analyse the media coverage of MDS in Edo State.
- Establish the interconnection between high media focus, the elevation of social issues to public discourse, and the potential for policy change.

This report will present these findings to show possible intervention points to elevate media coverage of the MDS phenomenon as a first step towards arousing public discourse and broadening the landscape for policy

intervention.

Data collection for this work was twofold, quantitative and qualitative. In the first instance, OCJD conducted a survey, with 270 respondents taken from 18 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Edo State.

The questionnaire was designed to probe the degree of familiarity that the Nigerian public has with the MDS phenomenon as deduced from their engagement with traditional, new, and social media. [5] Amongst other things, the survey probed the sources and types of information regarding irregular migration.

Secondly, the research also conducted key informant interviews and focus group discussions to obtain richer and more nuanced input from practitioners (media houses), victims of MDS, and other key actors (CSOs, government intuitions, NGOs).

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4,316 At the top of that list was Nigeria, with 4,316 persons.
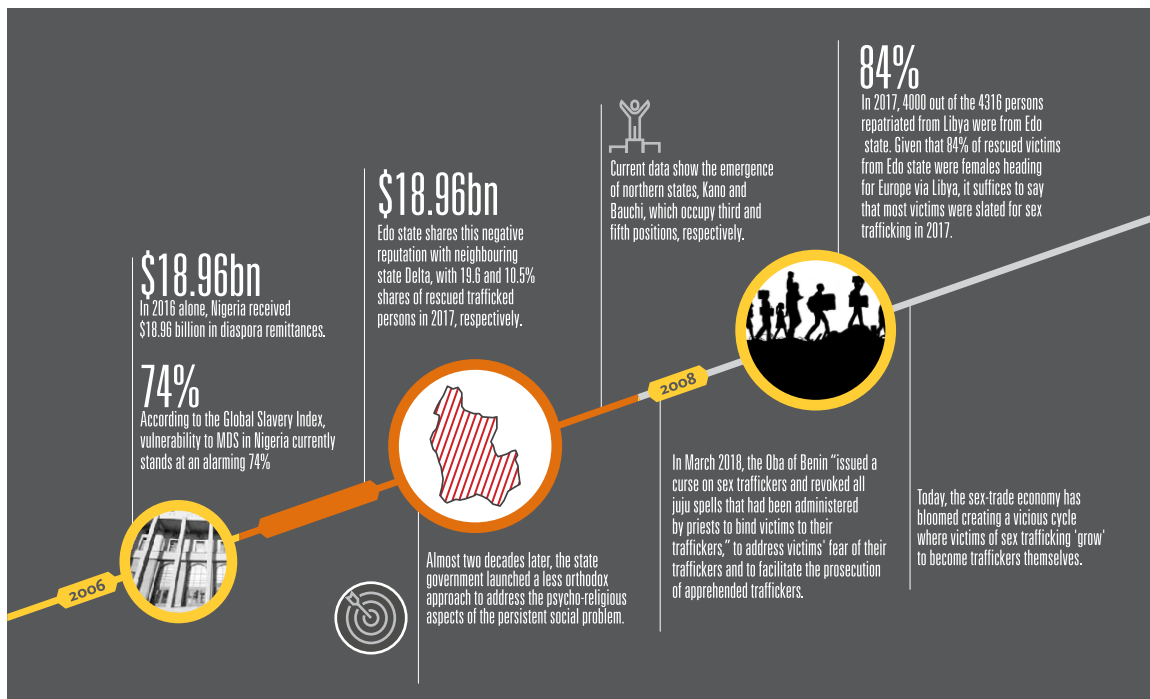
Modern Day Slavery in Nigeria

Overview

In 2016 alone, Nigeria received $18.96 billion in diaspora remittances.[6] Hence, the diaspora remains a significant source of income for persons at home. This highlights the allure of international travel, often in the form of irregular migration.

According to the Global Slavery Index, vulnerability to MDS in Nigeria currently stands at an alarming 74 per cent.[7] The vulnerability to MDS measures the connection between MDS and systemic factors such as governance issues, lack of basic needs, and inequality. This vulnerability to MDS, coupled with the perception of external opportunities, presents perfect push and pull factors that help perpetrate MDS in Nigeria.

Given these socio-economic contexts, Nigeria remains a source country for MDS, with most victims ending up in Europe, primarily Italy, Spain, Austria, and Russia.[8] Traffickers, mostly of Nigerian origin, operate with criminal networks throughout Europe. MDS takes different forms, and these differentials cluster around the sex, age, or origin of the victims.

For example, most females are victims of domestic servitude and sex trafficking, whereas males are mostly victims of forced labour and street begging. Victims are recorded in at least 40 countries across the globe.[9]

84%
In 2017, 4000 out of the 4316 persons repatriated from Libya were from Edo state. Given that 84% of rescued victims from Edo state were females heading for Europe via Libya, it suffices to say that most victims were slated for sex trafficking in 2017.

$18.96bn
Edo state shares this negative reputation with neighbouring state Delta, with 19.6 and 10.5% shares of rescued trafficked persons in 2017, respectively.

Current data show the emergence of northern states, Kano and Bauchi, which occupy third and fifth positions, respectively.

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Almost two decades later, the state government launched a less orthodox approach to address the psycho-religious aspects of the persistent social problem.

2008

In March 2018, the Oba of Benin "issued a curse on sex traffickers and revoked all juju spells that had been administered by priests to bind victims to their traffickers," to address victims' fear of their traffickers and to facilitate the prosecution of apprehended traffickers.

Today, the sex-trade economy has bloomed creating a vicious cycle where victims of sex trafficking 'grow' to become traffickers themselves.

[6]IOM 2018, p. 31
[7]Current data available from: https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/2018/data/maps/#prevalence.
[8]International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (2015). Briefing paper for the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially in women and children. Available at: http://imadr.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/IMADR-Briefing-Paper_Human-Trafficking-in-Nigeria_5.11.2015.pdf.
[9]US DOS (2018), p. 331.

Modern Day Slavery in Edo State

As the poster child for trafficking in persons in Nigeria, Edo State remains a primary case of concern, along with neighbouring Delta State, with 19.6 and 10.5 percentage shares of rescued trafficked persons in 2017, respectively.[10]

However, contrary to perceptions that MDS is largely concentrated in the South-South and South-East regions of Nigeria, current data show the emergence of northern states, Kano and Bauchi, which occupy third and fifth positions, respectively.[11] Nonetheless, this special media mapping focuses on Edo State, leaving room for subsequent expansion to other states in the country.

In 2017, 4,000 out of the 4,316 persons repatriated from Libya to Nigeria were from Edo State.[12] Given that 84% of rescued victims from Edo State were females heading for Europe via Libya, it is likely that most were victims of sex trafficking in 2017. In general, women travel for two main purposes: (1) for sex work (2) for other forms of purportedly cheap labour.

In reality, traffickers entrap these women into slavery and forced sex work. Before leaving the country, most are subjected to traditional oath taking, causing a psycho-religious enslavement to their traffickers. Some are sold, resold, and forced to pay exorbitant prices to regain their freedom.

In 2017, 4,000 out of the 4,316 persons repatriated from Libya to Nigeria were from Edo State.

In one case, Monica (not her real name) was trafficked twice; first to Russia in 2014, where she was forced to pay $138,000 in two years to her smugglers, and then to Libya, where she was sold multiple times before finally returning to Nigeria, having failed to cross the Mediterranean Sea.

This social epidemic in Edo State has drawn both domestic and international attention. Although sometimes impeded by budgetary constraints, NAPTIP remains the top agency dealing with the issue of trafficking in persons in Nigeria. Multiple programs have emerged over the years, sometimes in collaboration with NAPTIP, to address root causes of sex trafficking in Edo State.

As far back as 2002, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) set up the first-ever coalition of NGOs, the Edo State NGO Coalition against Trafficking in Persons (ENCATIP), to fight trafficking in persons in Edo State.[13] Almost two decades later, the state government launched a less orthodox approach to address the psycho-religious aspects of the persistent social problem. In March 2018, the Oba of Benin "issued a curse on sex traffickers and revoked all juju spells that had been administered by priests to bind victims to their traffickers," to address victims' fear of their traffickers and to facilitate the prosecution of apprehended traffickers.[14]

Yet this widespread occurrence of irregular migration, especially for sex trade, in Edo State is a relatively new phenomenon that only began to take root in the 1980s. Edo women who first migrated to Italy responded to the demand for "low-skilled labour in agriculture and services."[15]

Others traded in jewellery and clothing. Only women who fell into serious economic difficulty resorted to sex work for survival. Today, the sex-trade economy has expanded, creating a vicious cycle where victims of sex trafficking 'grow' to become traffickers themselves.

[10]NAPTIP 2017, pp. 18-19.
[11]Ibid.
[12]USDOS (2018), p. 331.
[13]UNODC (undated). Preventing and combating trafficking of Minors and Young Women from Nigeria to Italy (project NGA/T18).
  Available at: https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/t18-traffickingip.html
[14]USDOS (2018), p. 331.
[15]Braimah, T. S. (2013). Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria: Causes and Solutions. Global Journal of Human-Social Science Research, p. 20.

Media Reportage of Modern Day Slavery in Nigeria

The Nigerian Media in History

Nigeria has a rich media culture that predates the country itself. The first newspaper, Iwe Irohin, was launched in Abeokuta in 1859.[16] Since then, the media has built a strong reputation for championing the causes of freedom from colonial rule and surviving several decades of military dictatorship.

Across Africa, the Nigerian media is noted for its role in the pan-Africanist movements against colonial rule. Domestically, the Nigerian media grappled with military dictatorship, especially during the era of the so-called guerrilla journalism in the 1990s.

Across the board, including both traditional and new media organisations in Nigeria, the landscape has shown deterioration in quality in the past few decades.[17] The proliferation of media organisations, especially in the latter category, has not contributed meaningfully to the development of the Nigerian media.

Rather, the influx of new voices, coupled with technological development, has seen the rapid rise in poor quality and factually-weak media reportage. Consequently, technological advancement, which has also increased audience access to news media, has not necessarily resulted in a more informed audience.

Challenges in the Nigerian Media

The general deterioration of the Nigerian media has its root causes in several factors, mainly a reflection of the general malaise in the country as a whole. This study identifies three main factors that have contributed to the decline in the quality of news reportage in Nigeria:

- Meagre resources for media organisations, consequently reflected in the poor remuneration, training, and development of journalists. Reporters are forced to work on salaries that do not cover basic needs. Opportunities for professional growth are also stifled when there are no training resources. Reporters are often deployed to the field without requisite skills or training.

- Advanced communications technologies expand the media space yet lower the bar for entry into media production, hence the proliferation of low-quality production. The rapid entry and exit of new media organisations into the media space is commonplace. Setting up a media organisation, completely based on digital distribution, implies that capital investment excludes expensive printing and logistical costs. However, it also implies that entry into the industry does not necessarily require the rigour, professionalism, and commitment that

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[16]Amenaghawon, F. (2010). Proliferation of Journalism Schools in Nigeria: Implication for Quality and Professionalism.

[17]Traditional Media: Made up of print newspapers, radio, and television that do not necessarily rely on digital distribution. New Media: News organizations that are primarily distributed digitally or which combine traditional and digital distribution methods.

heavier financial investments would require.

- The trickledown effect of public office corruption, which fuels corruption in the private sector, including the media, and stifles innovation. Government corruption has the trickledown effect on all other sectors. In the media space, this includes the proclivity for bribe-taking, story squashing, and the general tendency for journalists to cover 'profitable' sectors.

Government corruption, as well as media reliance on advertisement income, also limits innovation and restricts the kinds of stories that journalists can write.

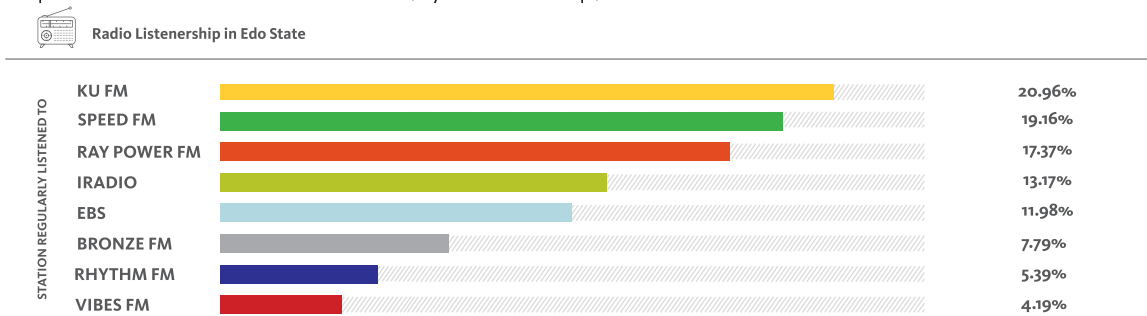# Media Treatment of Modern Day Slavery in Edo State

Overview

The treatment of Modern Day Slavery in Edo state, and other parts of the country, is reflected in the shock and furore that met the 2017 CNN exposé. In some quarters, especially in communities where sex trafficking is commonplace, the rigour of the journey and the darker elements of survival abroad are known, and even accepted. In some quarters, especially in rural areas where traffickers prefer to recruit from, the details of irregular migration are not always widely known.[18]

The role of the media, therefore, lies in articulating and distributing these stories in ways that are accessible to different audiences.

The challenges faced by journalists in Edo State are a microcosm of the general malaise in the industry. Specifically, the coverage of MDS in the country is limited and shaped by the realities described in the previous section but further complicated by social and cultural norms in the state.

The media space in Edo State is not saturated, with six (6) main televisions stations and eight (8) main radio stations. With new media organisations, quantification is difficult, since territorial restrictions do not apply.

Top Radio Stations in Edo State (by listenership)[19]

📻 **Radio Listenership in Edo State**

STATION REGULARLY LISTENED TO		
KU FM		20.96%
SPEED FM		19.16%
RAY POWER FM		17.37%
IRADIO		13.17%
EBS		11.98%
BRONZE FM		7.79%
RHYTHM FM		5.39%
VIBES FM		4.19%

[18]Briaimah (2013: 20) names the following Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the state as the most endemic: Oredo, Ikpoba–okha, Ovia North East, Uhunmwonde, Egor, Orhionmwon, Esan North East, Esan Central, Etsako West, and Ovia South West.
[19]Data based on outcomes from 2018 Oak Center for Journalism Development (OCJD) survey.

Media Consumpton

The interrogation of public engagement with the media in Edo State, particularly regarding MDS, shows a pattern that is rooted in the cultural and normative contexts of the state.
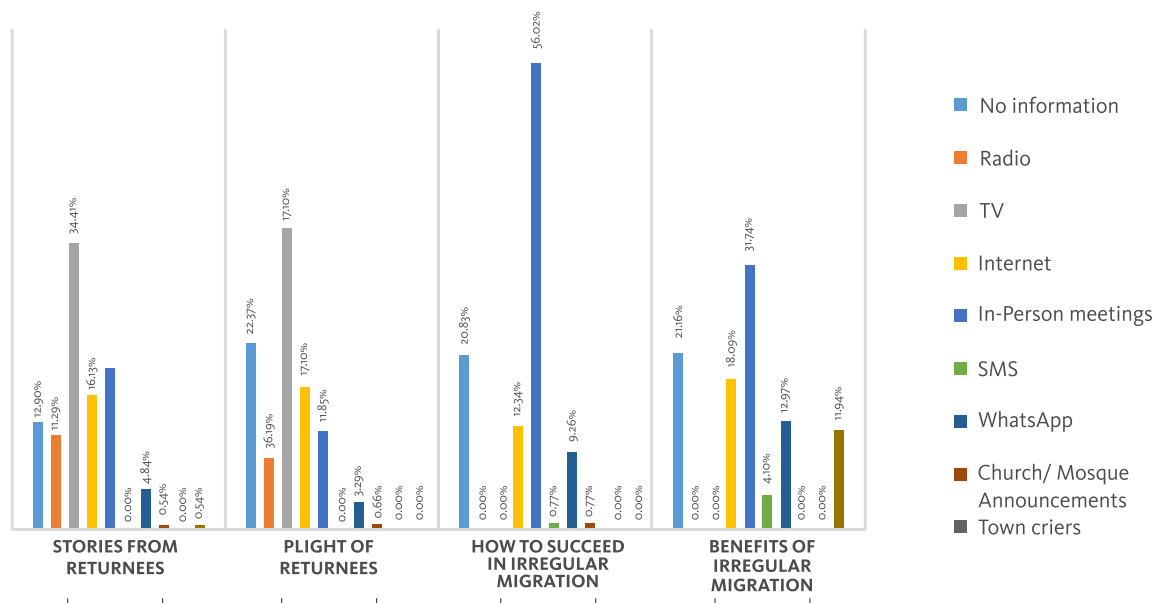
The programmatic leanings of the media in the state shows a non-commensurate attention to the MDS issue, given the prevalence of the sex trafficking scourge.

The probe to uncover the sources of information relating to MDS (including decisions to travel, access to information regarding the demerits of irregular migration, and access to traffickers) showed a complex weave of mutually reinforcing relationship between would-be-migrants and traffickers, mediated by traditional media, word of mouth, and the social media, including messaging platforms like WhatsApp. In most instances, the media has played an ambivalent role.

On the one hand, traditional media organisations help to spread stories on the danger of irregular migration and act as a conduit for government deterrence messaging. On the other hand, social media and messaging platforms (Facebook and WhatsApp) are also avenues through which traffickers, or 'buggers', connect with interested parties across the state.

MDS information received (Audience Feedback)[20]

Information received on MDS: Channel

Legend:
- No information
- Radio
- TV
- Internet
- In-Person meetings
- SMS
- WhatsApp
- Church/ Mosque Announcements
- Town criers

STORIES FROM RETURNEES: 12.90%, 11.29%, 34.41%, 16.13%, 0.00%, 4.84%, 0.54%, 0.00%, 0.54%

PLIGHT OF RETURNEES: 22.37%, 36.19%, 17.10%, 17.10%, 11.85%, 0.00%, 3.29%, 0.66%, 0.00%, 0.00%

HOW TO SUCCEED IN IRREGULAR MIGRATION: 20.83%, 0.00%, 0.00%, 12.34%, 56.02%, 0.77%, 9.26%, 0.77%, 0.00%, 0.00%

BENEFITS OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION: 21.16%, 0.00%, 0.00%, 18.09%, 31.74%, 4.10%, 12.97%, 0.00%, 0.00%, 11.94%

[20]Data based on outcomes from 2018 OCJD survey.

In general, the relationship between the public, especially rescued victims, and the media, is less than cordial and steeped in suspicion on the part of the public. Three main issues prevail.

■ **Suspicion for the media/media corruption.** Allegations of media corruption are rife. Corruption in the media allegedly takes two forms: Firstly, media organisations demand money in bribes and tilt the story in the favour of the highest bidder.

For example, stories of government corruption and the non-payment of allowances to rescued victims have remained largely unreported by the media. Victims claim the relevant government authorities have bribed media organisations. In discussions in OCJD, returnees from Libya claimed that the Nigerian media deliberately whitewash their reports to avoid incriminating the government. According to the victims: "The media has also not been helpful. They come here and interview us, asking us lots of questions. When they get back, they remove all that we have said that they think would affect the government [...] Why is that? Because they are afraid of their media house being shut down. They edit what we tell them and report a different thing."

Secondly, victims allege that their stories are not being told accurately because journalists demand bribes to spread their stories. Allegations against the media on bribe-taking is rife. The so-called 'brown envelope' is commonplace, whereby journalists take money in exchange for dropping or changing stories to meet the demands of the bribe-giver.[21]

■ **Disconnect between public media consumption and the deterrence policy of the government, especially those executed through the media.** Would-be migrants seek different kinds of information from government sources. When seeking resources to help them embark on irregular migration, they seek in-person information or use messaging platforms like WhatsApp.

Furthermore, different media platforms serve different purposes and hold differing interests for them. For instance, the government sends it's mass anti-sex trafficking jingles via TV and radio, using programs that mostly hold no interest to the victims. This implies that non-traditional media channels serve a more useful purpose than traditional channels, yet this is not reflected in the communications strategy of the government.

■ **Ineffective Messaging.** This stems from what appears to be an antiquated approach to strategic messaging. According to respondents, direct messages against irregular migration are trite and ineffective. This explains why, notwithstanding the extensive anti-trafficking programme of the government, in collaboration with local and international organisations, the scourge has not abated. Respondents argue that evidence-based programmes that are also interactive will serve better than the short jingles preferred by the government. In the words of a participant: "Jingles are not that effective.

The government should [...] sponsor programmes like educative dramas that attack the dangers of trafficking and migration."

The research also shows that certain programmes, especially radio, are more appealing. This is due to three factors: the interactive nature of radio programmes (for instance, call-in opportunities); the innovative nature of the programmes (for instance, Speed FM's pidgin English

[21]BBC (2015). Nigeria's 'brown envelope' journalism. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31748257.
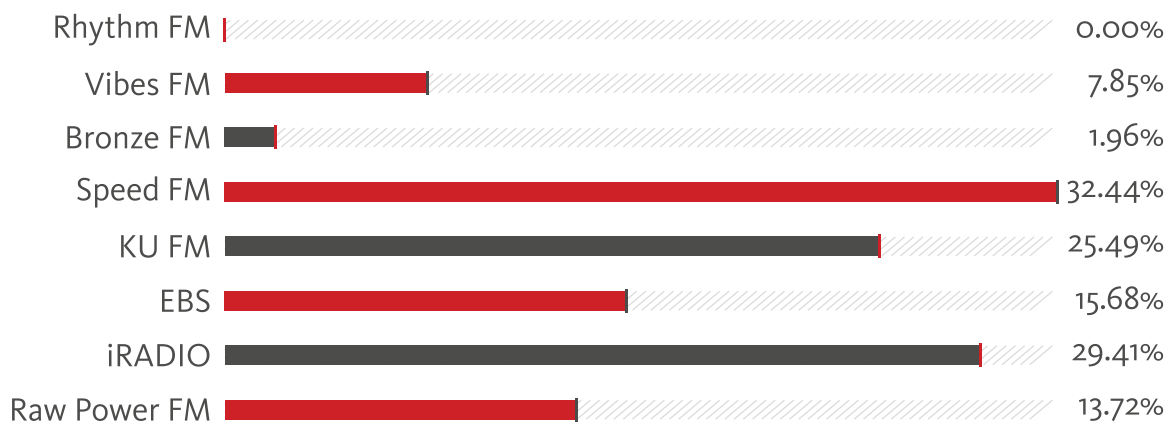
programmes); and the flexible timing of radio programmes that align with daily life patterns of the public (for instance, commute time radio programmes).
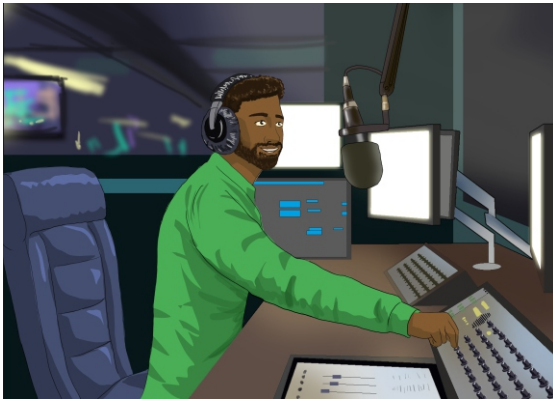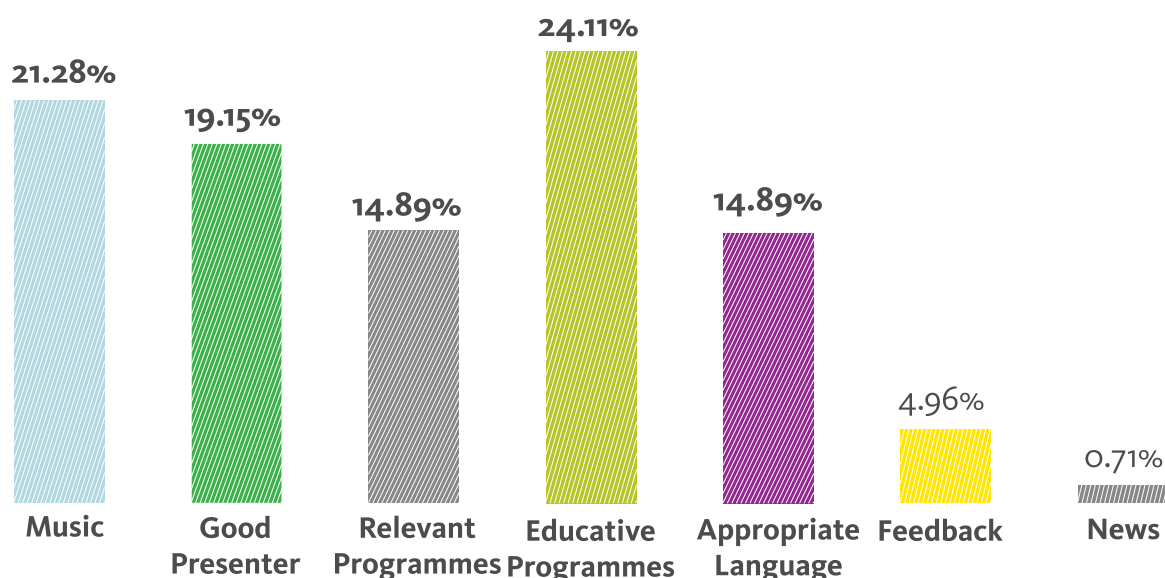

> "[The media] edit what we tell them and report a different thing because they are afraid their media houses will be shut down [by the government]." – Libya Returnees.

> "Jingles are not that effective. The government should [...] sponsor programmes like educative dramas that attack the dangers of trafficking and migration."

Radio stations with MDS programme

Station	Percentage
Rhythm FM	0.00%
Vibes FM	7.85%
Bronze FM	1.96%
Speed FM	32.44%
KU FM	25.49%
EBS	15.68%
iRADIO	29.41%
Raw Power FM	13.72%

Reason for Radio Station Preference

21.28% Music
19.15% Good Presenter
14.89% Relevant Programmes
24.11% Educative Programmes
14.89% Appropriate Language
4.96% Feedback
0.71% News

Challenges and Opportunities in the Media

The general limitations on resources, which explains the poor remuneration and professional development of journalists, has been highlighted as one of the root causes of the poor coverage of MDS in Nigeria, and Edo State in particular. Within this context, other challenges also predict possible spaces for intervention. This research highlights the following challenges in Edo State:

Global Vs. Local Media Dynamics: Local reporters have neither the platform nor the budget to conduct elaborate reports like their counterparts in the West. This limitation extends beyond funding and reach, it also highlights the production quality, trust, and validation that global organic stations like CNN have over local news. Opportunities for intervention: Local and international organisations can fund special programmes for local media. This could cover professional development for journalists, provide funding for in-depth reporting, or provide a global platform for wider dissemination.

Corruption and Nepotism in the Local Media: Responders highlighted the problems of whitewashed reportage that downplayed the stories of the victims to protect the interests of local government officials. This includes cases where empowerment programmes for victims are shabbily executed or not implemented at all. Squashed stories leave victims in even more vulnerable situations, which could potentially push them back into the trafficking in persons trade. Opportunities for Intervention: Government and interested organisations should set up monitoring systems to ensure that programmes are executed.

Media ownership/Editorial Censorship: Similar to corruption-induced censorship, private media ownership also exposes organisations to the whims and interests of the cooperate owners of the news organisations. In many instances, the cooperate arm can control the editorial department, thereby controlling the publication of stories and

reports. Often, this is detrimental to MDS reporting where criminal networks and other interested parties can both shape the form of coverage and prevent reportage of certain issues. Opportunities for Intervention: Journalists can source external funding from recognised fellowships and grants that allows them freedom to report MDS issues, without the restriction of their local media organisations.

Cultural Norms and Societal Cover-Up: A popular position of respondents alleged collusion and cover-up by society in general. The allure of foreign travel and regular repatriation of cash by families in the diaspora has created a cynical approach to dealing with the scourge. Although migration for sex work is a relatively new phenomenon in the history of Edo State, it is gradually becoming normalised in the state, such

that families are defensive of their own relatives who are either victims or willing participants. This places the media in a difficult situation where they are accused of being the moral police or where information is inaccessible due to family collusion and cover-up. Opportunity: well thought-out and innovative social programmes should be designed to address this sociological process of normalising crime.

Regional and National Legal Provisions: The freedom of movement provision of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been, disingenuously, taken advantage of by transnational criminal networks. In combination with confusing legal and policy provisions at the national and state levels, the prosecution of perpetrators of MDS is problematic. Adoption and ratification of international norms to ensure the rights and dignity of persons

do not always imply execution on the ground. Opportunity: media reportage could focus on the difficulties of the judicial process when dealing with both victims and perpetrators of MDS. Such stories, if well-executed, can provide viable tools for advocacy groups to address the gaps in existing legal provisions.

Security: Journalists who report on MDS run the risk of possible retaliation by highly-motivated transnational criminal networks. Furthermore, the meagre resources available to media organisations also imply virtually nonexistent health and life insurance schemes for journalists. Therefore, journalists deprioritise MDS stories. Opportunity for Intervention: Media organisations should factor in the security concerns of journalists who are willing to cover MDS stories.

Limits of Newsroom Strategies: Most news organisations assign beats to their reporters, who, in turn, focus exclusively on assignments and are usually unable to take on additional focus areas. This places limits on innovation on the part of reporters.

Reporters can be trained to take advantage of their beat expertise to report fresh angles on bigger issues, such as MDS. Relatedly, beat reporters are usually ignorant about other thematic areas outside of their beat. MDS, reported often as news stories (for example, when repatriations occur), remains under-reported, with most journalists lacking a basic understanding of the issue.

Opportunity for Intervention: Media organisations should broaden beat focuses for journalists. As a important social problem, MDS issues should be elevated and appropriate trainings administered to relevant groups of

reporters across several related beats such as: law enforcement, health, social development, finance, foreign affairs, and others. This way, a broader crop of reporters can identify MDS-related issues within the context of their assigned beats.

Press Corps Censorship: Another form of corruption in the media comes in the form of internal censorship by media clubs and associations, such as press corps. This organised censorship is an advanced form of corruption in which club members are paid off by interested parties to limit the reportage of particular issues. In general, club leadership agrees with patrons on the angle of reportage or on zero or limited coverage of the issue.

Cooperative journalists are then paid off in bribes, while non-cooperative members are denied access to relevant information or even press briefings. Opportunities for Intervention: Journalists should expose such organisations and conduct internal processes for dismantling the criminal set-ups.

In general, many of the challenges faced by the media in covering the MDS phenomenon in Edo State also highlight opportunities for intervention. The challenges are not insurmountable. The challenges that involve the media also require immediate attention if this problem is to be addressed at its root. In general, the prospect of dealing with the MDS problem in Edo State could serve as a potential model for preventing the further spread of social problems, as rising insecurity across the country continues to create more and more vulnerable populations.

Conclusions

Overview

The emergence of MDS in Edo State is often attributed to socio-economic factors. It is commonly argued that young people seeking greener pastures are forced to take extreme risks to escape abject conditions at home. However, this study finds that economic explanations do not necessarily provide a complete explanation for this complex social problem.

The economic situation of Edo State relative to other states in the country offers counter-intuitive explanations for the prevalence of MDS in the state. According to the University of Oxford's Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), as the fifth out of 37, Edo state is better economically positioned than 30 other states in the country and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) with regard to poverty levels. In 2017, Edo State had just 4.5 per cent of its population in severe poverty, compared with Zamfara State at 72.7 per cent. [22]

The MPI measures poverty levels based on ten (10) indicators that measure education, health, and standard of living for households.

However, debunking the single causal economic explanation does not dismiss the economic factors that contribute to the emergence and sustenance of irregular migration. Most voluntary participators in irregular migration claim to do so for economic reasons. Among current victims rescued from Libya are persons who claim they would return to Libya if the opportunity presented itself. Due to government inefficiency, negligence, or corruption, most victims are stranded without substantive economic support from the government, contrary to the initial agreement, the victims claim.

As a result, some of them are either currently facilitating the movement of willing migrants through Kano to Libya, en route to Europe, sourcing for financial means to make another journey, or planning to return to the trade as traffickers in the near future. As Michael (not his real name) says: "I want to go back to Libya. If I see a buyer who is willing to buy my father's land, I will sell the land and use the money to travel back to Libya."

[22]Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (2017). "Nigeria Country Briefing", Multidimensional Poverty Index Data Bank. OPHI, University of Oxford. Available at: www.ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-poverty-index/mpi-country-briefings/

Reccomendation

Media

Create educative and interactive programmes to engage with the public and expand public discourse on MDS.
Create a monitoring system that checks bribery and other forms of corruption.
Adopt innovative approaches in story-telling by pursuing different themes that are largely ignored in the reportage on MDS. Journalists should create enterprise stories that show the different phases of disengagement from irregular migration, such as the difficult legal hurdles and usually lenient punitive provisions under the law for perpetrators.
Media organisations should encourage and fund research-based reportage of MDS issues.
Journalists should collaborate and form networks to help create stronger stories and foster collaborative storytelling.

Media organisations should adopt best practices for coverage of MDS. A good example is the Ethical Journalism Network's (EJN's) Five Point Guide for Migration Reporting.[23]

Local NGOs/INGOs

Set up a monitoring and evaluation process that checks all government promises and agreements are fulfilled. These should also ensure implementation of organisational programmes as well.

Fund investigative stories and support story distribution on global platforms.
Conduct thorough research to lend support to policy programmes. Ensure that programmes and projects are research-based or research-supported.

Create more community-based projects that acknowledge local actors and their contributions.
Collaborate with other like-minded organisations to share resources and data and avoid duplication of activities. This will also prevent organisations from working at cross-purposes.

Relevant organisations should be encouraged to provide psychosocial support services in the affected communities. MDS victims often live with long-lasting psychological trauma, which often remains ignored with the focus on economic empowerment.

Organisations can facilitate access to alternative sources of livelihood as support to victims. Local and international NGOs can provide these services in support of or in tandem with government initiatives.

Government (Nigeria and Edo States)

Ensure that all policies, programmes and projects are research-driven.
Create community-based programmes that harness voices and talents within the community.

Establish monitoring processes to curb

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[23]EJN's five-point guide includes: (1) Report Facts, not bias (2) Know the law (3) Show Humanity (4) Speak for all (5) Challenge hate. The guidelines advocate the coverage of migration issues in a way that present facts but also show sensitivity to the victims, while remaining cognizant of the power of influence that the media wields in shaping public opinion.

corruption and ensure full execution of government projects.

Create viable economic opportunities in the state or create sources of income for the state. Work with local or international organisations to create programmes that address the needs of victims and vulnerable populations.

Oak centre

Oak Centre is a forward thinking think tank focused on research, innovation, and policy development. By working with experts, policymakers, and grassroots organisations, it produces data driven insights, shapes digital strategies, and fosters impactful solutions. Its goal is to transform knowledge into action, promoting sustainable growth and resilience.