

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen it's a privilege to be able to speak to you on this critical topic.

First, I am director and cofounder of the Arise foundation which supports and delivers frontline anti-trafficking work in countries of origin, including Nigeria. I've also been privileged to work with the Order of Malta in various capacities and on various issues.

In my very brief remarks I want to offer a couple of reflections on some principles that might inform our combined efforts so as to improve care for trafficking survivors in Nigeria.

Friends, Nigeria has a poor reputation on the issue of human trafficking. From my experience of working with Nigerians they are a proud and patriotic people and many of them feel the wound of human trafficking in their nation viscerally.

So I think it is worth saying at the outset that, yes, there are many issues to confront, but there has been progress, and I think we should acknowledge and applaud it.

But, huge challenges remain.

As we have heard, Nigerian counter trafficking efforts focus disproportionately on shelter provision, and that provision is deeply inadequate.

So what about aftercare? Again, there isn't enough of it. Because resources are insufficient, care beyond a six week period is entirely entrusted to civil society organisations, which are not funded by the government. Mental health services are barely existent, and all available services are well over capacity. And that's before you get to the complex social-cultural issues that impede the success of reintegration services.

The UN Special Rapporteur lamented the lack of resources in 2018 arguing that there was a dependence on NGOs and CSOs which "have to scramble for funding from private entities and international donors"

In short it can be worse for returning victims than when they initially left.

But this isn't just about the lack of money. It's about the way money is given.

As you've heard, anti-trafficking organisations depend on donations. This dependency restricts the ability of local organisations to respond dynamically to the local issues as they manifest. Instead, programs tend to reflect the funding priorities of the donor agency.

Next - and I know a lot of people in this room know what I'm talking about - local organisations struggle to compete in a competitive funding environment. The increasingly professionalised and increasingly exclusive discipline of human rights and development makes things worse. Often local organisations struggle to articulate their projects in a way that the funding community finds credible, despite the fact that the work itself might be superb. We lack the ability to look beyond the paperwork. No wonder that the wrong stuff gets funded.

Much of this will not be NEW to you.

I'm saying it again because I believe that this conference presents an opportunity to take stock of where we are and what we have learned in this nascent contemporary anti-slavery movement, so as to sharpen our response.

So, here are a few ideas:

As we have heard there is a consensus around the need for more more support of community based interventions in Nigeria - especially around aftercare.

This stands to reason. Caring for someone who has been trafficked is necessarily local. You cannot provide healthcare or reintegration services at a distance.

This complements some recent scholarship on trust and slavery.

Professor Monti Datta's recent (soon to be published) work shows that there is a very significant correlation between social capital (especially trust) and prevalence of modern slavery.

He found that a one unit increase in "trust and social capital" predicts a 16% decrease in slavery. A two unit increase predicts a 32% decrease and so on.

There are two useful principles to be drawn out of the few last slides.

First it is clear that Nigeria needs community based interventions, second that those interventions need to build social capital between individuals and institutions. Put another way, Building trusting community partnerships is key to the success of anti-slavery endeavours in Nigeria.

Now. Who worldwide is placed to do this?

Who worldwide has massive dispersion and embeddedness in communities and enjoys high levels of community trust?

One possible answer which might surprise some in this assembly is: Catholic sisters. Arise is a secular charity, but we are unashamed fans of sisters.

This is because, on human trafficking, the work of sisters is the Catholic Church's principal boast, and ought to be the envy of other institutions. Strangely I have found that few Catholics know or understand the scale or impact of the female led movement within their Church. There's a lot of shortsightedness and fear of faith-based work in the development community. This is pretty silly when, on a purely secular analysis, sisters represent a huge force of highly qualified women working pretty much for free in the hardest to reach parts of the world for as long as it takes.

Sisters

They have unrivalled dispersion - 81 countries on the trafficking issue alone. Beyond human trafficking they are the largest humanitarian force in the world (over 1 million in the field). On Human trafficking there are thousands. IJM contrast.

To underline the point. Arise did some mapping work for a tea company in Assam. These are the locations of the company tea gardens. And this is where sisters are doing frontline charitable work in their area.

Similarly, this is a map of a particular clothing distributor's factories in Tirrupur, Southern India. And here is where the sisters are.

They are doing great work, but could do so much more with intelligent and strategic support.

So coming to a conclusion, I want to offer a couple of brief reflections.

Trust building between institution and individuals is difficult. It takes time and patience. This kind of work does not fit neatly within the dominant "impact" agenda with its short term focus on numbers. This kind of impact is important, of course, but we shouldn't repeat the mistakes of the past. Our support should be dynamic to meet the needs of the community, and provided in a way that enables them to build up their networks and local resilience.

Arise's experience would suggest that this is especially true of Nigeria. We need to think creatively about grant-giving and about how the principles of localism and social capital can be reflected in project design and implementation.

I'm telling you all this because no institution understands the need to see the big picture better than the Order of Malta, which has been doing this work for 900 years. Taking the long view is your forte. Taking the person-to-person approach is your forte. And as you stand at a new juncture on the issue of human trafficking, you are superbly well placed to leverage your broad network in a way which holds in view a broader conception of impact, and which prizes partnership development and trust building, and not just the short term impact that has dominated anti-trafficking endeavours to date.

Perhaps even more importantly, you are well placed to insist on individual human dignity and the spirit of unconditional loving accompaniment that is at the heart of true charity, and is necessarily local.

Thank you.