

Social Dialogue

Magazine of The International Association of Schools of Social Work



Social work
through a black
feminist lens

BLACK LIVES MATTER: a reflection

The Social workers role in mitigating gender inequality in Nigeria: the feminist approach

Against All Odds: Reflections on African Feminism and Gender

bell hooks - bio of black feminist's contribution to critical pedagogy



ISSN: ISSN 2221-352X



Social Dialogue #23

The International Association of Schools of Social Work

Social Dialogue is published by The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW). It is the copyright of IASSW and published three times a year and distributed worldwide.

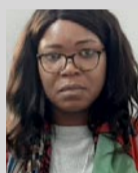
Website: www.socialdialogue.online / ISSN: 2221-352X

CONTENTS

Editor in chief - Carolyn Noble	3
Guest editor - Tracy Omorogiuwa	4
Guest Editor - Irene Gyan	6
President's report	7
Centering Black Feminist Praxis in Academia	9
bell hooks - bio of black feminist's contribution to critical pedagogy	14
BLACK LIVES MATTER: a reflection	19
Black Women: The Disrespected, Forgotten and Neglected Group	24
Politics Of Respectability and Its Impact on the Mental Health Of People Of Colour.	29
A Discourse of Females Issues in Nigeria: Exploring the Place of Social Work from the Lens of Policy Advocacy	34
Social Work Education Through a Liberian Feminist Lens	39
My Journey to Self-Discovery: From Nowhere and Everywhere	44
Analysing contemporary African Australian experiences through an intersectional feminist lens	49
Against All Odds: Reflections on African Feminism and Gender	54
Reflections on anti-oppressive interventions with young Nigerian women victims of trafficking in Italy	59
The Social workers role in mitigating gender inequality in Nigeria: the feminist approach	64
Intersectionality in Japan - Considering the Oppression of Zainichi Korean Women through the Lens of Black Feminism	70
Indianisation/ Bharatiyakaran of Social Work: A national mission towards indigenising Social Work Education in India	75
Women Interest group Report, July 2020	78



Vittorio Zanon,
Social Worker Verona
Municipality City Office,
Italy



Blessing Igiehon,
Cultural Mediator, Project
Network Antitrafficking of
Veneto Region, Italy



Oluwakemi Victoria Ajibola,
Social Worker, President of
Nigerian Women Association,
Italy/Nigeria

Reflections on anti-oppressive interventions with young Nigerian women victims of trafficking in Italy

The numbers of landings of young Nigerian girl victims of human trafficking from Libya have put the Italian anti-trafficking services in crisis. Reflections are needed that lead to changes in consolidated approaches on the part of social services. How can we really help young trafficked minors with the available public services? What to do to create effective inclusion paths? How to manage the traumas they have? How to make these young girls truly protagonists of their own empowerment paths? How to promote a good motivation in adhering to programs that are "imposed" by the service system? How can there be trust from someone if they do not give trust first? We tried to respond to these questions by changing our perspective and listening with open minds to the young women we met.

Context

Since 2016 in Verona (a city with more than 250,000 inhabitants of the Veneto region, in the north-east of Italy) there has been a huge increase in young Nigerian girls being trafficked for sexual exploitation. Of the many migrant landings from Libya in 2016, there were more than 11,000 Nigerians (IOM 2017). Since their arrival the number of Nigerian prostitutes detected every night on the streets of Verona increased from less than 30 in 2014 to 120 detected in 2017. These women/young girls were mainly from Edo State (Okoye-Agwu 2019). In 2015-16, the European Commission estimates that a quarter of trafficking victims were minors (Save the Children 2019), but it should be noted that almost always girls declare themselves to be of age, and many have no perception of being victims of trafficking (IOM 2017) and that indeed the payment of a debt is considered normal and not exploitation (EASO 2015). From 2015 to 2018, almost 30 young Nigerian victims of trafficking were identified as minors (some as young as 13 years old) and were placed in protected communities. Proportionally, the number of adults accessing adult anti-trafficking services also created a kind of saturation in national anti-trafficking projects that found themselves having almost exclusively Nigerian women as clients. The same was true within government reception devices for asylum seekers who, in addition to being even more subjected to numbers, did not have specific skills for managing people who were victims of trafficking and were often used instrumentally by criminal organisations as logistical support for exploitation.

The huge influx of migrants, especially young Nigerian girls and the complexity that characterizes them has put a great deal of pressure on the child protection system and the anti-trafficking projects, from the objective difficulty of finding structures in which to welcome girls, to the concrete management of individual projects.

Protection interventions and actions

The social worker of the City of Verona and the cultural language mediator of the NAVE Network Anti-trafficking for Veneto project (financed by the National Anti-trafficking Plan) jointly took charge of the situations. The way in which the ministerial social protection and inclusion projects manage and take charge has shown difficulties in the maintenance of the rules and in achieving the objectives of helping these young Nigerian women gain some autonomy over their lives. This is complicated by the limited capacity to adapt and be flexible by the same anti-trafficking services that risk revictimising the girls seeking help.

The approach of the aid report is based on unconditional acceptance, the absence of judgment, the guarantee of a listening space. As a Social Service there was a need to be more effective in the interventions of the various actors involved in the project to help girls in the creation of interpersonal relationships of trust, as previous attempts resulting in the failure in helping due both to limits of intervention devices and to the increasingly complex problems detected (voodoo, young age, poor literacy, connivance of families of origin with networks of exploitation, poor motivation, adolescent behavior, trauma outcomes, miscarriages, self-harm, attempted suicides, hospitalizations, removals, risky and deviant behaviors, unconscious use of social networks).

Therefore there was a need to question and change approaches and modalities of intervention, in order to be more effective in the paths of individual inclusion, to change perspective and to put the real protagonists of the paths of inclusion back at the centre.

In view of the mandate and the indications received by their madams and the networks of exploitation, girls almost always tend to declare themselves 18 years old to the Italian institutions, for an understandable distrust they place in public services that they do not know.

In protective measures, after the first action of identifying the victim as a minor, with the help of the judicial authority to the placement in a protected structure, the appointment of a guardian and the activation of international family investigations, carried out at the victim's country at her familyhome by the staff of the international Organization for Migration (IOM) was undertaken. In particular, these actions facilitate the building of a positive relationship, as these girls often have an objective feedback that as services they try to take care of them from the knowledge of their families of origin.

In the approach with these young Nigerian girls, the gender difference of the social worker has been acted upon (white and male, like many of the clients they met when they were forced into prostitution): removing this potential obstacle to building the aid relationship can become a resource through the building of interpersonal trust.

Creating the relationship of trust

It was therefore decided to do a group work between minors and young people of just 18, in charge of the Social Service. Focusing on unconditional acceptance and self-determination of people, a group empowerment process has been initiated to accompany young Nigerian victims of trafficking followed in an anti-opportunity pedagogical path of liberation (Freire 2002 e Dominelli 2015). To the group, named Ubuntu that means "I am because we are" also participated, a Nigerian girl with a role as a peer educator. Since September 2018, meetings lasting 4-5 hours and attendance every 6 weeks have been held.

As a choice of conducting activities, it was chosen not to give excessive structuring to the meetings and to use animation techniques to facilitate an informal climate that facilitated relations and free expression, trying not to emphasize the differences between the participants and also enhancing the convivial moments with the lunch shared and prepared by each girl. The main goal is not to transmit content, but to stimulate a process of maturation and self-awareness. The message was very clear from the start: "as a public care system we are very much in difficulties: we need it to be you that will make us understand how to help you better." The girls thus understood the role of active participation required; at the same time, the challenge for the Social Service and the reception systems was to get more involved, to restore confidence in girls and recognize their skills and abilities in self-determination. The themes covered were then those shared chosen by the girls (life in the community, regularization paths, health, emotions, interpersonal relationships), they also addressed the involvement of institutional and private social actors who were invited to participate in specific meetings. In this way the girls were able to

talk directly with the staff of the Police, staff of the gynecological health area and mental health, lawyers of the Italian Refugee Council, staff of UNHCR Sweden, IOM, educators of other communities.). In addition, at the first conference of the Italian Care Leaver Network some girls participated in bringing the ongoing experience to the University of Trento.

After a year and a half, some initial indicators of outcome are identified: continuity of presence and active participation in meetings, group climate, interactions between girls inside and outside the group, creation of closeness and trust towards institutions, holding paths of inclusion, increased attention, awareness and willingness to put more emphasis on, as well as an increase in the number of people involved with public health services.

Due to the health emergency related to the covid face to face meeting hve been suspended and other ways have been sought to keep the group alive, so it has maintained the bond that has been created individually with the girls and, however more difficult, also with the group, with which they have experimented some group activities in collective video calls and interactions through a WhatsApp group.

Factors and attitudes that facilitate active empowerment (or anti-opportunity path):

- Sincerity and being on the same level while maintaining direct and transparent communication
- It is a welcoming and listening attitude without judgment; this facilitates the openness and account of one's own needs;
- Confidence, even before asking for it;
- Knowing how to wait for the timing to trust and empower themselves;
- Be flexible and accept mistakes, explain and give new possibilities;
- Do not judge or be influenced by prejudices in order to start from the demands they bring and strengthen autonomy and personal dignity;
- To be open to the recognising ethnocultural differences also in the identification of any personalized and appropriate psychological pathways of care.

While girls still maintain specific problems in their individual paths over time, thanks to the group dimension that has been started, it facilitates the enhancement of their personal resources and abilities, as well as the expression of desires and choices of future paths that are not pre-packaged. In this regard, in recent years there has also been the ability to organize an assisted voluntary return for an 18-year-old girl who has applied to return to Nigeria with her newborn son. Thanks to the organization of government re-entry projects, with additional funding activated by the City of Verona and the NAVE Project, and thanks to the valuable and active collaboration of the Nigerian Woman Association (which is based in Verona and Lagos), it has been possible to design and follow over time this intervention of voluntary return to Nigeria of

this young mother, and thanks to the support activity of NWA she was accompanied in her professional retraining and the organization of a new life in Nigeria, safe from risks of re-trafficking or personal safety.

This trial has somewhat anticipated the activities that NWA is carrying out in Nigeria through a Help Desk in Lagos (and in Benin City), awareness and prevention activities to human trafficking but also to further interventions to support young victims returning to Nigeria, including from migrations within Africa. These activities, which started thanks to the INSigHT project (www.insightproject.net), study activities, networking between non-governmental projects, local institutions (schools, NAPTIP) to carry out training and awareness activities in schools and with local populations towards specific targets most at risk, with the aim of creating the conditions for people to be more aware of the risks of trafficking and that they can be supported in building alternatives to being trafficked

Conclusive perspectives

In conclusion, accompanying these young women to be protagonists of their lives with dignity starting from their own abilities and the strengthening of personal skills can be an action not only for the recovery from a condition of victim of trafficking (or potential victim), but to become an active protagonist of their lives, able also to counter and prevent actions of violence and exploitation on themselves and on other young women, both in the countries starting and destination. If a reception approach that keeps operators at the same level of proximity leads to positive relationships on an individual level with these young women victims of trafficking, in some respects the work to be done is within the institutions and reception structures, which must accompany a change in the use of methods of intervention aimed at empowerment and the construction of an anti-oppressive liberation.

References

Dominelli, L. (2015) Servizio Sociale. La professione del cambiamento Erickson pp.330

EASO European Asylum Support Office (2017) EASO Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria Country Focus, giugno 2017, pp.92 source

Freire, Paulo (2002) La pedagogia degli oppressi Edizioni Gruppo Abele, pp.206

OIM Organizzazione Internazionale per le Migrazioni (2017) La tratta di esseri umani attraverso la rotta del Mediterraneo centrale: dati, storie e informazioni raccolte dall'organizzazione internazionale per le migrazioni pp.38 source

Okoye, U. O. & agwu, P. C. (2019) "Why the high figures of sex-work migrants in Edo State, Nigeria? Considerations for socialwork practice" in Social Dialogue n.20 February/March 2019, pp.56-58

Save the Children (2019) Piccoli schiavi invisibili. I minori stranieri vittime di tratta e sfruttamento in Italia IX Edizione, pp.62 source

Social Dialogue

ISSUE 23

