Our Mission:
Prevent modern day sex slavery (sex trafficking) and liberate enslaved women and girls through the direct eradication of root causes. We currently work in Nigeria and with Nigerian survivors globally to build a best practices model for the developing world.
Dear Partners,

2018 was a breakthrough year for Pathfinders... because of you!

The year saw our impact and influence continue to increase on a national level, having organized the first Human Trafficking Workshop in Edo State, Nigeria on behalf of Governor Obaseki in 2017, to a global level.

On a national level, Pathfinders was invited to organize, consult and facilitate the Office of the Senate President of Nigeria’s first Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Migration, which gathered hundreds of national and international stakeholder leaders to identify gaps and collaborate on the way forward. We took our message to over 30,000 mothers and daughters at CWFI’s international convention in Edo, warning them of the dangers of trafficking and unsafe migration. We were interviewed a dozen times throughout the year as a leading subject matter expert on national and international news broadcasts and radio, reaching millions to address the subjects of irregular migration, trafficking, and the exploitation of women and girls. We trained dozens of NYSC youth corpers and ambassadors, increased our volunteers to over 300 and served over 400 vulnerable women and survivors.

Globally—and beyond Nigeria—Pathfinders was invited to Italy on multiple occasions to speak at the Italian Parliament, to serve as a cultural mediator at the University of Rome’s Faculty of Law for Roman judges of the Rome Civil Tribunal (Immigration Section), to share learnings with other Italian NGOs and to New York University (Florence, Italy Campus) to educate and call out world leaders to end trafficking. We also served as consultants to the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on Trafficking, following which we were invited to speak at her side event at the UN’s Human Rights Council Session in Geneva on the impact of foreign trafficking policies on women and girls in Nigeria. We continued to serve as subject matter experts and consultants to the UK Home Office (via CPA UK), advising and contributing to its e-Handbook on the subject of modern day slavery. We increased our international referral partners from four to six countries, namely Russia, Italy, France, UK, Austria and Libya.

The foregoing events and your partnership have afforded us an opportunity to gain unparalleled access to key decision and policy makers (nationally and globally), to emerge as a thought leader and leading subject matter expert in Nigeria and to impact more lives than ever with holistic, transformative care.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and our staff, thank you for the commitment you’ve made to providing sustenance in the shadows for our survivors and for bringing light and truth to policy makers who have the power to end trafficking in one lifetime: ours.

Yours,

R. Evon Benson-Idahosa
Founder and Executive Director
By establishing best-practices in Nigeria for eradicating sex-trafficking (a global hotspot for trafficking and transit), we create a blueprint the world can use to eradicate sex-trafficking anywhere.

At Pathfinders, we’re not a team of outsiders trying to “fix” problems in Africa. We lead from within, engaging local leaders to build solutions for a global problem by addressing root causes.

We’ve identified four root causes that facilitate sex-trafficking and the sexual exploitation of women and girls in Nigeria and address these through our programming.

Our commitment is to ensure that the 100,000 girls in Edo State that are most vulnerable to being trafficked are rendered slave-proof by the year 2025.

Why we do what we do:

Because the dehumanization and subjugation of women and girls can be overcome in one lifetime. Ours.

Our theory of change is that trafficking ends when human dignity is restored. Human dignity is restored when government is engaged, community is empowered and individuals have access. Engagement, empowerment and access only happen in effective partnerships across all three segments.

An astounding 94% of all Nigerian women trafficked to Europe for prostitution hail from Edo State (UNDOC, 2016), with Italy being the number one destination country (11,009 women trafficked by sea in 2016). The souls and bodies of survivors are turned into commodities for financial gain while the survivors themselves are held in debt bondage, severely abused (often gang raped and physically assaulted), starved, tortured or infected with various sexually transmitted diseases before being deported back to Nigeria. Others who are victims of organ trafficking are murdered and never make it back to Nigeria.

PJI strives to turn the developing world right side up by providing sustenance in the shadows and demanding accountability and justice on behalf of survivors.

Why Start with Nigeria?

With a history in human trafficking through the Transatlantic Slave Trade, Nigeria has a unique responsibility and leadership role to play in ending modern-day slavery. By taking back the human capital, potential and lives that have fueled the human-trafficking industry, we give Nigeria the opportunity to thrive, not only in Africa but in the world.

An astounding 94% of all Nigerian women trafficked to Europe for prostitution hail from Edo State (UNDOC, 2016), with Italy being the number one destination country (11,009 women trafficked by sea in 2016). The souls and bodies of survivors are turned into commodities for financial gain while the survivors themselves are held in debt bondage, severely abused (often gang raped and physically assaulted), starved, tortured or infected with various sexually transmitted diseases before being deported back to Nigeria. Others who are victims of organ trafficking are murdered and never make it back to Nigeria.
The Justice Initiative (TJI)

Root causes addressed:
Policy and legislation that permit sex-trafficking with impunity.

Through this project, we educate, advise and call into account policymakers and gate-keepers who have the power to end sex-trafficking. By working with law enforcement, legislators, judges, and other decision-makers to create systems, policies and practices that close the gaps that permit trafficking, we reduce the number of victims.

Our work here is twofold: shed light on these systemic gaps and close them through training, accountability and legal advocacy.

Our solutions and impact:

By taking a ‘root-cause’ approach, we eradicate sex-trafficking before it has a chance to start. We thereby ensure the safety of women and girls today and for generations to come.

2018 Highlights

1.1 Continued subject matter expert consultation for UK Home Office (DEA UK Modern Slavery Project)
1.2 FU 92.7 FM Radio interview in Benin City, Nigeria
1.10 Began consultation to Office of the Senate President of Nigeria on human trafficking/irregular migration
1.30 Speaker at Italian Parliament’s Chamber of Deputies on our work at Pathfinders, providing recommendations to the Italian government on how to address trafficking and unsafe migration from Sub-Saharan Africa
2.1 Served as cultural mediator at the University of Rome’s Faculty of Law for three Roman judges who serve on the Immigration section of the Rome Civil Tribunal
2.15 Began consultation to members of the House of Representatives (Nigeria) on human trafficking/smuggling
2.21 CNN Interview (women’s rights in Nigeria)
2.35 Began consultation to members of the House of Representatives (Nigeria) on human trafficking/smuggling

Drafted Bill reflecting proposed amendments to Nigeria’s anti-trafficking legislation for House of Representatives members (pending)
Pathway To Freedom

Root cause addressed:
Lack of access to life-sustaining economic opportunity and basic social services.

Our core project prevents sex-trafficking, liberates trapped women and girls and provides a new path forward for at-risk women and girls.

Our programming has two arms: we help women and girls vulnerable to being trafficked (pre-trafficking) and assist those who have already been trafficked to leave captivity and rebuild their lives with custom PATH Plans, legal services, financial literacy, start-up capital, vocational skills training, education scholarships, counseling, medical services and housing.

Our 20-bed safehouse facility is the only one in Edo State dedicated exclusively to sex-trafficking survivors.

Our work reclaims the concepts of community, family, and trust among survivors. From there, we create the lateral bonds to facilitate a supportive economic network of women on their transformative journey from victim to survivor to thriver.
Truth Tellers

Root causes addressed:
Socio-cultural norms and paradigms that devalue the lives of women and girls.
Lack of inclusive community awareness and education.

Our community transformation/education project brings awareness to local communities about the hidden realities of sex-trafficking, its impact, alternative economic pathways and the power of women and girls. Truth Tellers accomplishes this through campaigns, training, seminars, daily public service announcements on radio and monthly outreach initiatives and workshops. Additionally, Truth Tellers engages male allies as a way of building cross-gender support and breaking down cultural norms around the devaluation of women.

1 million people sensitized via quarterly radio appearances / interviews

1.5 million people reached through radio PSAs every day

37,000+ followers across multiple platforms on social media

reach

100,000+ attending / participated in conferences that sensitized on sex trafficking, sexual exploitation and rape

5,000+ people sensitized through monthly outreaches in markets, churches, schools, etc.

125,000 people sensitized through quarterly PSAs in print and email

at least

August

7.30 Participant at Edos State Task Force Against Human Trafficking gathering of leaders to examine root causes of trafficking from Edos.
8.11 Speaker at CWIF’s 35,000 women international convention in Benin City on the dangers of trafficking.

September


October

10.1 Speaker at ‘The Platform Nigeria,’ Nigeria’s premier conference for national and international thought leaders and experts which reaches several million online and TV viewers.
10.5 Channels Television interview (women’s rights in Nigeria)
10.11 Channels Television interview (women’s rights in Nigeria)

December

12.27 End of year holiday survivors’ gathering.

Presentation of drafted Bill proposing amendments to Nigeria’s 2015 anti-trafficking legislation to major government stakeholders (ministries, departments and agencies) in Abuja.

October


16.2 Channels Television interview (women’s rights in Nigeria)
Joy was learning to become a make-up artist in Benin City but was having a hard time taking care of her two children as a single mother. During the summer of 2017, she met a woman at Oba Market in Benin City who introduced her to a recruiter who promised her a better life in Europe (not a life of prostitution as she later found out). By August, Joy was in the company of 12 other girls leaving Nigeria for France, via the Sahara Desert, Libya and the Mediterranean Sea. At Saba, their vehicle was ambushed, and she was kidnapped and held for ₦150,000 ransom. She had witnessed many in that truck die. Even though her elder sister was able to send the funds to her kidnappers, Joy was still held and sold into slavery. Eventually, she was released and was taken to a detention camp close to the seaside in Libya. The camp was repeatedly raided by Libyan militia. She witnessed the death of many others. Her family then paid an additional ₦50,000 for the smugglers to smuggle her from the camp and cross the sea. However, she was unable to secure a place in the boat and subsequently arrested by the Libyan Coast Guard who sent her to another detention centre where she was raped and starved. During a raid of the detention centre in November 2017, Joy was arrested and sent to another prison where she spent 2 weeks before the Nigerian Embassy in Libya arrived to release imprisoned Nigerians who were willing to voluntarily return to Nigeria. Joy was included in the group and returned in December 2017.

Joy was referred to Pathfinders by another survivor/returnee from Libya who gave her our Helpline card. As part of her PATH (Personalized Action to Healing) Plan, Joy was able to access basic necessities such as food, clothing, shelter as well as medical, legal, and counseling support. She eventually also received financial literacy training and start up capital from Pathfinders. She now maintains her own small business, providing make up and hair services in Benin City.

*The survivor’s name has been changed to protect her identity.*