



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heartland Alliance International, the U.S. State Department, and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons in Nigeria Train Service Providers on Identifying and Supporting Victims of Trafficking

Maiduguri, Borno State, NIGERIA – October 1, 2017

Heartland Alliance International (HAI), in partnership with the U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (DOS TIP Office) and Nigeria's National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) have conducted a training on Trafficking in Persons, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Services for Survivors of Trafficking within the ongoing Lake Chad Basin crisis affecting Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. The training took place from September 25th to September 29th, 2017 in Maiduguri, Northeast Nigeria.

In the Lake Chad Basin, Boko Haram's attacks and military counter-offensives have displaced 2.3 million people. In Northeast Nigeria alone, 1.8 million people are internally displaced, more than half of them children. Persistent violence against civilians and insecurity continue to cause serious protection risks and rights violations. Women and girls kidnapped by Boko Haram have been subjected to physical and psychological abuse, forced marriage, sexual slavery and forced labor. Boys have been forced to fight as child soldiers, and young girls used as suicide bombers.

A wide range of government and civil society stakeholders attended this training, the principal objective of which was to enhance capacity of social service providers in the identification of, provision of services to, and appropriate referral for survivors of human trafficking, including former child soldiers and women and girls subjected to human trafficking by combatants. Trainers also worked with service providers to map out specific options for MHPSS services for survivors of trafficking.

This training was part of HAI's regional project, *Protect, Shelter, and Heal*, a two-year project to improve victim identification and comprehensive shelter-based services for victims of human trafficking in sub-Saharan Africa. The project is supported by the DOS TIP Office. Through this innovative project, HAI develops technical training models in different countries in the region, identified in consultation with the DOS TIP Office. The project also expands existing coordination efforts, helping national governments and civil society to better understand the various forms of human trafficking, develop data-driven responses and priorities, and create or enhance identification and referral networks to respond to the needs of trafficking victims.

About HAI

HAI is the global arm of Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights, a family of organizations that has been leading anti-poverty and social justice work in Chicago, USA for more than 129 years. HAI is comprised of nearly a dozen country offices in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America implementing programs on a broad range of human rights issues. HAI has significant expertise in the fields of trauma-informed mental health care and access to justice for survivors of torture and victims of rights abuses, in particular, human trafficking.

HAI began working in Nigeria in 2009 with a large-scale effort to bring high quality and respectful HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services to some of the country's most stigmatized groups. More recently, HAI has expanded its programming in Nigeria to focus on the needs of women and girls, particularly those who are extremely marginalized and hard to reach. With a strong background in gender equity and expertise in trauma treatment and mental health and psychosocial support, HAI has been training service providers to work with women and children who have been trafficked by Boko Haram and other militarized groups in Northeast Nigeria.

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