



**INSigHT**  
Building Capacity to  
Deal with  
Human Trafficking and  
Transit Routes in  
Nigeria, Italy, Sweden

## WP 3.2: Training for Law Enforcement

### Short report of the training

#### Exchange of good practice in multi-agency work to contrast human trafficking and to safeguard victims of human trafficking and exploitation

#### Guest speakers:

- *Chief. Commissioner Dr Lorenzo Ortensi*, coordinator of the of Vicenza's rapid response team
- *Vice-commissioner of state police dr Sebastiano Bartolotta*, expert from the central direction of immigration and the border police at the Italian embassy in Abuja- Nigeria
- *Dr Lucia D'Alessandro*, substitute prosecutor of the District Direction anti-mafia of Venice's public prosecution office
- *Dr Lina Trovato*, substitute prosecutor of the District Direction anti-mafia of Catania's public prosecution office

To organize the final session of the training we started with a internal meeting with anti-trafficking operators of the N.a.Ve Project, to better understand how to approach the phenomenon of trafficking and what kind of questions and suggestions we wanted the trainers to answer and investigate.

The first online meeting was held on November 19th 2020, the participants were:

- Gaia Borgato, Social operator of N.a.Ve Project and project coordinator for Equality ATI, INSigHT Project
- Silvia Etrari, Social operator of N.a.Ve Project and coordinator assistant for Equality ATI, INSigHT Project
- Michela Semperebon, Senior Researcher for IUAV, INSigHT Project
- Anti-trafficking operator of N.a.Ve project:
  - Giuseppina Di Bari
  - Devisri Nambiar
  - Elisa Bedin
  - Francesca Sguotti
  - Erika Lerco
  - Stefano Cosmo
  - Letizia Dri
  - Chiara Fontana





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- Vittorio Zanon
- UreomaOzoeze
- Elizabeth Omoyibo
- Blessing Igiehon
- Fatima Oukad
- Rafia TqeAkter
- Stela Pasat

During this meeting the staff prepared a list of questions for the individual interview (online sessions) of the trainers.

- 1) The first interview has been done with **Vice-commissioner of state police dr Sebastiano Bartolotta, expert from the central direction of immigration and the border police at the Italian embassy in Abuja- Nigeria** on December 11th 2020 (11.00am-13.00)

In February 2019 he started working in Abuja after the Public Security Department decided to open an embassy in Nigeria. Before that, there was a complete lack of collaboration. Nigeria is part of the Interpol network, but problems of collaboration have been present over the years. Now some change is starting to happen. The problem is not only an Italian problem but a problem occurring all over Europe. Sebastiano Bartolotta's work is that of starting collaborations with the judiciary police, in order to have answers from them. Recently, in September 2020, the ratification of the 2016 Rome international agreements has occurred: one agreement on reciprocal extradition, one on mutual assistance in penal matters and one on the transferring of condemned people. Another step forward has been the opening of the office of Dr Bartolotta, which helps all the police force. Among other projects, he organizes trainings for local police forces, offering help for equipment and frequent meetings with European colleagues. The presence of a judge who connects the department of justice in Nigeria is very important.

Italian public prosecution offices can present requests to this magistrate. In 2019, an agreement has been signed with the Nigerian Immigration Service with the goal of hiring two Nigerian officials at the Nigerian Embassy in Rome. These officials will have the task of carrying on activities to help the identification operations of Nigerian citizens to allow repatriation. They will be equipped with systems to connect with the database in Abuja.





Up until today there has not been collaboration because of the diffidence on the Nigerian part towards the European one, since there is some interest, on the Nigerian side, to take part an exchange of something, such as visas. There is also a technology gap for Nigeria, which does not allow the police force to complete simple tasks such as a registry check or a license plate check. Until not so long ago, a national archive for digital fingerprints was not even present.

In Nigeria there are different police forces: the police, the immigration service, the antidrug force, the finance police and the NAPTIP (a government agency against human trafficking). Each agency works on its own, and this constitutes a big issue. Nigeria consists of 37 states, and each agency has its archive divided by state. In the case of a request from Italy, details from the Nigerian state of provenience are needed; otherwise the police force of the capital Abuja has to forward the request to all the agencies in the 37 states. This is one of the main reasons many requests coming from Italy are not answered, since the systems is this complicated. In Nigeria, many people have not been to school or do not know their official birth date; for instance, the birth date is often made up when doing an official document. Recently the "NIS database" has been established, which contains the digital fingerprints of the people requesting digital passports, and little by little the police forces are entering all the people with a criminal record in the database. Dr Bartolotta is getting ready guidelines for the police forces.

Hence, a fundamental step in the requests from Italy to Nigeria is to point out the Nigerian state of provenience, the city of birth or the place of residence, as the birth date by itself does not help the request advance. With more information, it is easier to get in touch with the correct agency of the correct state of provenience. If possible, attaching digital footprints and identification documents is even more helpful. In case of people without any kind of documents forwarding a request is not the best option. With the future presence of the Nigerian officials in Rome people without identification documents could be helped in an easier way. The request coming from Italy has to be weighted, whether it is necessary, since corruption in Nigeria is high and there could be an information leak, or settlements between the Nigerian police forces and the incriminated people. This is the Nigerian situation. According to Dr. Bartolotta results can be improved and it is possible to collaborate more effectively.

- 2) The second interview has been done with **Dr Lina Trovato, substitute prosecutor of the District Direction anti-mafia of Catania's public prosecution office** on December 11th 2020(14.15-16.00)





Dr Lina Trovato starts off by thanking the organizers, since this is an important chance of meeting each other. All the speakers talked about the same points: common knowledge and multi-agency work are needed. If there is no common knowledge, multi-agency work cannot function. Dr Bartolotta's work is indeed very complicate. There must be a special attention to when forwarding request to Nigerian police forces, given the possible leaks. Unfortunately, this often brings to a lack of request. In many cases Italian public prosecutors do not involve the Nigerian side for this concern. Dr Trovato hopes this will improve over time.

In her office, under the prosecutor's indication, Dr Trovato has been introduced to the work done on human trafficking by providing papers and materials to read and by following debates and trials. She has been introduced to documents with names, bank account numbers, and birthdates. If Nigeria will corroborate on these documents and practices, this kind of international cooperation could be started with other countries as well. Dr Ortensi has talked about the problem of confidentiality and that many times investigations are not framed as such, but as sex trafficking. As for what regards confidentiality, confidential information does not include the full name of the person disclosing information, and they are not a basis for the start of investigations. A report from a victim can make investigations start, but the victim's information will be disclosed. Hence, the best way to bring forward elements to start the investigations will be from telephone tapping.

In Catania, co-assignments, meaning allowing a colleague not working in the Direction District Anti-mafia (DDA) to collaborate. Other ways are possible: for instance, for a long time Dr. Trovato was the only designated magistrate for human trafficking process in the DDA, lacking contact with the ordinary judiciary. From September of last year, a group working on human trafficking was constituted, made up from DDA magistrates and ordinary magistrates. To enter the group, priority is given to the magistrates working with exploitation of minor prostitution and prostitution. Organizational choices in the offices and departments are not neutral, they always carry a meaning.

Multi-agency works and attention to the anti-trafficking operators are fundamental to deal with the phenomenon of the Cults Nigerian groups. Anti-trafficking work can gather crucial information for the magistrate working on cult groups. In Palermo's public prosecutor's office investigations on cult groups started from a victim of human trafficking who started talking about her boyfriend's practice as a cult member. This brought under examination very powerful groups active on the territory. The anti-trafficking operator has to record and sense elements that would later help police forces.





Another important point is paying attention to the area and the perimeter of human trafficking and that of cults, since for instance cults do not take part in human trafficking. They deal with drug trafficking, operate parallelly to local mafia and operate differently in the north and the south. For instance, in Catania no mafia group would allow Nigerians dealing on the streets, but on the north they would allow it, since the mafia groups from the south working in the north work on supplying, not dealing.

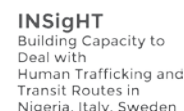
- 3) The third interview has been done with **Dr Lucia D'Alessandro, substitute prosecutor of the District Direction anti-mafia of Venice's public prosecution office** on December 17th (18.00-19.30)

Many starting points of practice have been introduced by Dr Trovato. Even before the pandemic, the territories around Verona and Vicenza have been the most active in the phenomenon of human trafficking. Often the crime of human trafficking can intersect other criminal activities such as drug trafficking, illegal entrepreneurial activities, IT crimes. We have witnessed episodes when women victims of human trafficking have been used as couriers for drug smuggling. In those cases, it is needed to give technological equipment to instill on the person under investigation, such as the software Trojan Horse. Unlike other ethnicities, such as those from Eastern Europe where the male figure is prominent, in Nigerian culture the key figure is the female figure of the madame.

These cult groups have been in the territory of Veneto since many years and are giving way to new methods of operations. In the phenomenon of the Nigerian cults there are many parallel elements to the traditional local mafia groups. The Nigerian mafia and the 'ndrangheta base both their hegemony on affiliation, which in the case of Nigerian mafia includes victims of human trafficking as well. The dual relationship among the victim and the madame is one of fear and dependency. The victim sees in the madame a reference point. This psychological domination is often tied to woodoo practices.

As for what regards the victim, the main issue is that of the withdrawal. The victim, under the rule of the madam, can decide to provide information in the beginning but withdraw later, especially in front of a judge. Hence, it is necessary that in cases of human trafficking the victim is protected by anti-trafficking bodies and feels ready to maintain his/her stance. The hearing is the crucial part. The issue that can arise is that criminal organizations are often connected to the ones in Nigeria, which makes investigations more difficult.





Coordinating among the anti-mafia public prosecutor's office and the district is fundamental: the appearance of the human trafficking case can happen in various ways. Sometimes victims can turn to the police forces, for instance. The investigation often starts from the territory. The public prosecutor's office cannot choose the judiciary police to work with, there are shifts in place. It is necessary to support the police forces with a more specialized department. Investigations have to be carried on with wiretappings and bugs. Hence, it is suitable to pair the specialized agency with a territorial organ.

Another kind of coordination that Dr D'Alessandro finds worth mentioning is the coordination among the ordinary public prosecution office and the one for minors. It is important to verify the cases that brought about problems and the issue of the disguise of the age of the victim of human trafficking. Setting up a dialogue between these actors can help with the investigation process.

The multi-agency work is crucial, and with it the common language acquired when working together, with permeation of reciprocal knowledge. Establishing times for sharing would help with developing common languages.

- 4) The fourth interview has been done with **Chief Commissioner Dr Lorenzo Ortensi, coordinator of the of Vicenza's rapid response team** on January 12th 2021 (15.30-16.30)

The role of the judiciary police inserts itself into a phase prior to that of the public prosecutor. A charge of human trafficking can be taken seriously by the report office of the public prosecutor's office, but it is possible that it is notable to initiate the process for the start of investigations. An intervention from the prosecutor is needed, which is a central figure in the investigations in human trafficking. The procedural choice is that of taking into account a series of events aside from the relationships with the agencies predisposed for the victims of human trafficking.

It is fundamental to understand what the victim of human trafficking is expecting. The investigations are confidential by nature and coordinated by a prosecutor. Listening to a victim is aimed at gathering information for investigations, with in mind the safeguard of the person as well. Often, choices made here do not appear hareable or comprehensible. People who have been working in this field for years know that some things cannot be said. It is crucial not to work as separate entities. The relationship cannot consist of just one meeting, since there is the possibility of other needs for the investigations, hence it is important not to lose touch with the victim.







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From the point of view of internal organization the work of the investigative office is critical and decisive, especially for its role of collector inside the administration of both the police force and the Carabinieri.

These individual interviews have been uploaded in a reserved area of the Insight project website. The participants who registered to the final session received the password of the area and were invited to follow the registrations before the webinar.

On January 21st 5 anti-trafficking operators of the N.a.Ve project met the trainers to organize the final meeting that's been held on January 27th 2021 on Zoom platform.

In the first part of the meeting the trainers explained their job and reviewed the contents of the individual online sessions.

The second part of the meeting has been dedicated to the debate with the public.

All participants agreed that structured and timed training is needed for an exchange of good practices in order to deepen mutual knowledge and understand how to cooperate to combat trafficking and protect victims of human trafficking. It is very important to engage the Prosecutors to organize structured training, as they have the key role to start and run investigations well and to quickly close the processes with the right measures against the traffickers.