

Welcome to Nigeria



The Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Nigerian Women Returnees

SSIIM UNESCO Chair, University IUAV of Venice



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

Prepared by SSIIM UNESCO Chair, University Iuav of Venice (Italy)

E-book produced as part of the INSigHT Action (Building capacity to deal with human trafficking and transit routes in Nigeria, Italy, Sweden)

SSIIM UNESCO Chair, University IUAV of Venice, June 2021



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Suggested quotation: Semprebbon M. and Abe O. M. (2021) *“The Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Women Returnees in Nigeria”*, SSIIM UNESCO Chair, University IUAV of Venice.

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union, contracted by ICMPD through the Mobility Partnership Facility. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of IUAV and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union and the one of ICMPD.

Layout by: Associazione 2050

ISBN: 978-88-31241-44-1

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Acknowledgments

The INSigHT Research Team wishes to thank all the people that contributed to the compilation of this document. Special thanks are due to: ICMPD and the European Commission for comments on this e-book as well as the support throughout the INSigHT Action; the partners of the INSigHT Action, particularly Victoria Oluwakemi Ajibola, Blessing Nwadineke, Abosede Otukpe of Nigerian Women Association Verona; Ruth Evon Idahosa and Suzi Chun-Turley of Pathfinders Justice Initiative for agreeing to be interviewed during the research and for inviting us to join the events organised within the INSigHT Action; all the stakeholders who agreed to be interviewed and shared information on their work, their projects and experience, as indicated in the table of interviews, namely: Sandra Vermuijten and Elizabeth Olayinka Adekunle, Nigeria-German Center (Lagos); Morenike Omaiboje and Atinuke Ogunbayo, WOCON; Alex Oturu, NCFRMI; Mienye Mimi Badejo and Bayo Adenusi, FMLE and MRC; Osita Esemene, Patriotic Citizen Initiative; Lilian Garuba, ETAHT; Laura Uwangue, GPI; Bose Aggrey and Uchechi Chukwuma, Web of Heart Foundation; Roland Nwoha, Idia Renaissanc; Patience Ifeajuna and Bolaji Akomo, Ipaja Transit Home; Funmi Kogbe, Solidarity for Women in Distress; Godwin Morka, Daniel Atokolo, Hajara Tunde-Osho, Stephen Selowo, Ikhidero Abieyuwa, Rachel Uzor, Bose Jimoh, Nosa Mamman-Odey, Mnena Ajeseni, NAPTIP. Our thank you goes also to Giovanna Marconi, Project Manager of the INSigHT Action and Coordinator of the SSIIM UNESCO Chair for her precious support throughout the research and particularly during the pandemic. Last but not least we wish to thank our families and friends for having been encouraging and supportive throughout the project and in particular Abe Ronke, Gladys Farotimi and Luca.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

AVR: Assisted Voluntary Return	NAPTIP: National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons
CC: Concerned Citizens	NCFRMI: National Commission for Refugees Migrants and IDPs
CDS: Community Development Service	NCS: Nigeria Customs Service
COSUDOW: Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Woman	NGC: Nigeria-German Centre
CSO: Civil Society Organisation	NDLEA: National Drug Law Enforcement Agency
DFID (UK): Department for International Development	NHRC: National Human Right Commission
EASO: European Asylum Support Office	NELEX: National Electronic Labor Exchange
EC: European Commission	NEMA: National Emergency Management Authority
ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States	NIS: Nigeria Immigration Service
ECPAT: End Child Prostitution and Trafficking	NOA: National Orientation Agency
ETAHT: Edo State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking	NNVS: Nigeria National Volunteer Services
EU: European Union	NPC: National Population Commission
MFA: Ministry of Foreign Affairs	NPF: Nigeria Police Force
FME: Federal Ministry of Education	NPS: the Nigeria Prisons Service
FMIC: Federal Ministry of Information and Culture	NRM: National Referral Mechanism
FMLE: Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment	NSCDC: Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps
FMWA: Federal Ministry of Women Affairs	NWA: Nigerian Women Association
FRONTEX: European Border and Coast Guard Agency	MRC: Migrant Resource Centre
GIZ: Gesellschaft Für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Cooperation)	NYSC: National Youth Service Corps
GPI: Girls Power Initiative	PJI: Pathfinders Justice initiative
ICMPD: The International Centre for Migration Policy Development	SMEDAN: Small and Medium Scale Association of Nigeria
IDPs: Internally Displaced Persons	SUBEB: State Universal Basic Education Board
IFRA: French Institute of Research in Africa	UN: United Nations
ILO: International Labour Organisation	UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
IOM: International Organisation for Migration	USAID: United States Agency for International Development
JRP: Joint Return Programme	WAN: West Africa Network for the Protection of children
LEA: Law Enforcement Agency	WOHF: Widows and Orphans with Hope Foundation
LGA: Local Government Areas	WOCON: Women Consortium of Nigeria
MRC: Migrant Resource Centre	WOTCLEF: Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation
NACTAL: Network against Child Trafficking, Abuse and Labour	

Terms used in the study

A **child** is any person younger than 18 years, according to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the 2000 UN Trafficking Protocol. The Nigerian Child Rights Act¹ similarly defines a child as anyone under 18 years. This conflicts with the Nigerian Young Persons Act² which designates a child as an individual below the age of 14. This law considers individuals aged 14 to 17 as "young people". The provision of the Child Rights Act should overrule any other law, but the fact that the Child Rights Act is not ratified in all Nigerian States poses evident difficulties.

A **Migrant**, in the global context, is a person who is outside the territory of the State of which they are nationals or citizens and who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate. In the EU/EFTA context, a person who either:

- (i) establishes their usual residence in the territory of an EU/EFTA Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another EU/EFTA Member State or a third country;
- (ii) or having previously been usually resident in the territory of the EU/EFTA Member State, ceases to have their usual residence in the EU/EFTA Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months³.

Human trafficking / Trafficking in persons shall mean

- (a) the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.
- (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;
- (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

Art. 2.1 of Directive 2011/36/EU includes three constitutive elements of this crime: acts, means and purpose. The act is linked to the establishment of control over a person; it consists in the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of

¹ Available: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx> Last access: 04/02/2021.

² See State Party Reports – Nigeria – by UNICEF. Available: [https://www.unicef-irc.org/portfolios/documents/424_nigeria.htm#:~:text=Sections%206%20\(1\)%2C%2027,are%20subject%20to%20special%20procedures](https://www.unicef-irc.org/portfolios/documents/424_nigeria.htm#:~:text=Sections%206%20(1)%2C%2027,are%20subject%20to%20special%20procedures) Last access: 10/02/2021.

³ See the definition provided in the EMN EU Glossary. Available: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_en. Last access: 04/02/2021. See also the UN Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration.

control over them. The means are the way in which control is attained: the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person. The purpose is the exploitation of the trafficked person.

Irregular migration includes movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination⁴.

Migrant smuggling refers to the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the irregular entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident⁵.

Return refers to the movement of a person going from a host country back to a country of origin, country of nationality or habitual residence usually after spending a significant period of time in the host country whether voluntary or forced, assisted or spontaneous. As further specified in the 2019 IOM Glossary, the movement could be within the territorial boundaries of a country, as in the case of Internally Displaced Persons and demobilized combatants; or between a country of destination or transit and a country of origin, as in the case of migrant workers, refugees or asylum seekers⁶.

Assisted Voluntary Return is the voluntary return or voluntary departure supported by logistical, financial and/or other material assistance⁷.

Forced Return refers to in the global context, compulsory return of an individual to the country of origin, transit or third country (i.e. country of return), on the basis of an administrative or judicial act⁸.

In the EU context, the process of going back – whether in voluntary or enforced compliance with an obligation to return – to: one’s country of origin; or a country of transit in accordance with EU or bilateral readmission agreements or other arrangements; or another third country, to which the third-country national concerned voluntarily decides to return and in which they will be accepted⁹. The 2019 IOM Glossary further specifies it is an act of returning an individual, against his or her will. In the global context, forced return is a broader term which includes any action having the effect of returning the individual to a State, including expulsion, removal, extradition, rejection at the frontier, extra-territorial interception and physical return.

The term “forced return” is not used at all in European Union legislation. Council Directive 2008/115/EC (Return Directive) which regulates the return of migrants whose stay has been found to be illegal refers to return following a return decision as “return”, not “forced return”. In order to avoid confusion with the return of migrants based on their free will and without any direction from the State, the EMN has named ‘return’ when occurring in compliance with a return decision, “forced return”. If the term ‘forced return’ is used in the European Union environment (e.g. in the metadata of Eurostat), it is understood as synonymous with “removal” – i.e. the physical transportation out of the country following a return

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ EMN EU Glossary and 2019 IOM Glossary on Migration. Available: <https://www.iom.int/glossary-migration-2019> Last access: 04/02/2021.

⁷ EMN EU Glossary.

⁸ EMN EU Glossary.

⁹ Ibidem and art. 3(3) of Directive 2008/115/EC (Return Directive).

decision. Outside of European Union legislation the term “forced return” is more commonly used and understood as a return which occurs once a return decision has been issued¹⁰.

The IOM further specifies that the **spontaneous return** is the voluntary, independent of a migrant or a group of migrants to their country of origin, usually without the support of the States or other international or national assistance¹¹.

Return Programme is a programme to support (e.g. financial, organisational, counselling) the return, possibly including reintegration measures, of a returnee by the State or by a third party, for example an international organisation¹².

Reintegration Assistance is the support either cash, in kind or combined, provided by a

host country to a returnee, with the aim of helping the returnee to lead an independent life after return¹³.

Rehabilitation generally refers to programmes and initiatives aiming to support victims of trafficking in their path to reintegration into the society upon return to Nigeria. No definition can be found in EU legislation, in the EMN EU Glossary or the IOM Glossary. It can be found in the Nigerian Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act¹⁴ and it is commonly used by stakeholders in Nigeria.

¹⁰ EMN EU Glossary.

¹¹ 2019 IOM Glossary on Migration.

¹² EMN EU Glossary.

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/tehis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=54f98a284> Last access: 27/01/2021.

Executive Summary

This e-book is part of a series of five e-books produced by the INSigHT Action that is aimed to build the capacity of key stakeholders to deal with human trafficking and secondary routes in Nigeria, Italy and Sweden, with specific attention to trafficked women and girls¹⁵. This specific e-book intends to focus on returns to Nigeria and on rehabilitation and reintegration programmes.

According to EU data (2018), Nigeria was the first among the top non-EU origin countries for victims of trafficking registered in the EU in the period 2015-2016. Nearly half of the victims with Nigerian citizenship were registered in Italy and the majority were women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation, the main target of the INSigHT Action. In 2018, the number of Nigerian arriving by sea and land to Italy decreased considerably. It must not be underestimated that there is a lack data relating to secondary movements within the EU. IOM (2017) stressed that transport through transit countries, such as France and Germany, but also Sweden, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands, and Switzerland should be under more scrutiny. These movements are certainly relevant also as far as returns are concerned, including assisted and voluntary returns, forced returns and returns facilitated by NGOs. Between 2017 and 2019, nearly 16,000 migrants of Nigerian origins were returned to the country. 12,000 joined the IOM assisted and voluntary return programme, mostly in Libya (89%). Only 7,000 (58%), however, obtained support for reintegration (Alpes, 2020).

Nigerian government agencies, including NAPTIP, NCFRMI, ETAHT, have been doing many efforts to curb human trafficking, starting with considerable steps forward in normative terms in the last two decades. Even earlier, Nigeria was one of the first countries to ratify the Palermo Protocol and some of the Nigerian states passed the Child Rights Act to domesticate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2003, the Nigerian Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act was passed - with subsequent amendments. More recently, in 2017, a National Referral Mechanism was introduced and specific guidelines published to ensure its implementation. Considerable efforts have been made also by various NGOs with their engagement in anti-trafficking activities first and in return, rehabilitation and reintegration in the more recent years, often leveraging on partnerships and funding by international organisations, embassies, the EU and EU Member States (see Sempredon, 2020). Little is known about rehabilitation and reintegration programmes to date, thus this e-book aims to provide an overview.

Our research has focused on the programmes carried out by both state actors and NGOs. Its geographical scope included Lagos and Edo State, which are the focus of the INSigHT activities, but stretched throughout the wider territory of Nigeria. The research included interviews with stakeholders and two young Nigerian returnees, visits to key stakeholders, participant observation in activities carried out by the INSigHT Action partners in Nigeria and secondary research undertaken in the period June 2019 - January 2021. Unfortunately, our fieldwork was severely restricted by the on-going Covid-19 pandemic, especially as far as interviews to returnees were concerned and we recommend more work should be carried out in this sense to explore the experiences of returnees themselves, in order to continue giving them voice and ensuring their full involvement in the definition of policies and programmes

¹⁵ For more information please visit the INSigHT Action website: <https://www.insightproject.net/>

The e-book provides a description of the services (medical, psychological, employment services) provided by and the collaborations among stakeholders. It highlighted critical aspects that require attention for improvement, to ensure Nigerian returnees can be effectively protected and helped reintegrate, while also addressing the risk of re-trafficking to which they are exposed. First, shelters capacity is insufficient to cover the larger territory of Nigeria and very few shelters are available for lone mothers with children, an increasing target characterised by several forms of vulnerability. Returnees are scattered in different shelters. Some are orphanages, with no adequate facilities, as they are targeted to different social groups, including vulnerable individuals too. Critical issues in terms of safety are evident for people under the threat or lure of exploiters. Second, investment is needed in services: there is a lack of basic medical services in most shelters (i.e. medical tests are rarely carried out upon admission to programmes) and a scarcity of psycho-social and counselling support. Various reports suggest that shelters are often operated by insufficiently trained staff and are poorly managed. The closed shelter policy implemented by NAPTIP has been particularly criticised, in spite of its formal objective to protect people, as relevant shelters have features that are similar to detention centres that severely limit people's liberty of movement. More attention is required to improve employment and training opportunities, particularly by encouraging stakeholders to collaborate and address the needs of beneficiaries effectively. Supporting returnees in finding employment is at the core of any positive path of reintegration. While the length of stay in shelters is on average of six weeks, this is often an insufficient time to foster reintegration. In various cases, returnees' stay was extended, but this often resulted in their transfer to a different shelter, with the risk of a fragmented discontinuous programme of support. We recommend a holistic approach should be adopted to deal with returns.

We have been particularly struck by the use of the term "rehabilitation and reintegration programme" in Nigeria. The term has become widespread in Europe too. Outside of the anti-trafficking field, rehabilitation is normally associated with medical treatment and therapy. Rehabilitation suggests something needs readjusting, recovering, restoring to enhance abilities following an accident or a disrupting event. While medical rehabilitation is normally considered as the last (generally) positive step of a process, reintegration may not be the last step of migration, it can be experienced with ambiguous feelings with respect to the countries of origin and destination. More generally it is a very challenging phase. Hence we further stress the need for a holistic approach. In our view the involvement of dedicated trained social workers would best favour the adoption of such an approach.

Their professional role offers them a unique privileged position for the adoption of an integrated approach and to push towards improved coordination among all relevant reintegration actors (i.e. welfare, health, psycho-social stakeholders). They are especially trained to identify clients' needs and resources and to favour their empowerment. Not least, social workers have a tradition of engaging with communities and community leaders and to press for relevant social matters and clients' rights to be addressed by policymakers. Social workers can arguably promote a holistic multi-dimensional approach to reintegration, by considering returnees' experience in the countries of migration, their self-identification and sense of belonging with the countries of origin, destination, transit and return, their social networks and the limits of integration programmes, including also scarce consideration for returnees' aspirations and expectations. While some may experience return as the failure of their migratory project and suffer from stigmatisation from their family and community, for some it may represent (also) an escape from debt bondage (Peano, 2010). In other words, return can be experienced in multiple ways that can be liberating and/or constraining. Failing to take returnees' experiences and expectations into consideration is not likely to favour reintegration. Listening to returnees would not

only contribute to strengthening their motivation and favouring their engagement, but also to building trainings that are more customised to their needs hence more likely to produce positive outcomes.

In order to promote the improvement of rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, we recommend government agencies should activate an independent monitoring mechanism aimed to ensure: homogenous standards of admission to shelters and programmes; minimum standards of reception and regular self-assessment of the services provided; improved collaboration and sharing of information among shelters and anti-trafficking stakeholders, to ensure the best use of resources; implementation of a follow-up procedure after beneficiaries leave the shelters. The nomination of an independent Ombudsperson to whom returnees but also potential victims of trafficking could report complaints is also strongly advised.

Beyond rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, our research pointed to the emerging need of raising awareness among rehabilitation and reintegration stakeholders, and more generally anti-trafficking stakeholders, on the existence and of the functioning of the National Referral Mechanism.

As soon as returnees arrive in Nigeria, it is crucial that a correct referral is made to ensure returnees are protected and assisted in accessing a reintegration programme, but several problems have been identified. We argue that multiple “return labels” have been produced by the current return framework that have in turn produced a dichotomy in the services provided. Returnees can arrive in Nigeria through an assisted and voluntary return programme, operated by IOM, or through a facilitated return procedure, with the direct involvement of a Nigerian NGO or through a forced return, operated by Frontex. Access to reintegration is more likely in the first two cases. Forced returns can even result in returnees being transferred to jail because they are perceived as criminals, having violated migration laws. More generally, in none of these programmes or procedures are all returnees granted access to reintegration opportunities, with severe risks in terms of their exposure to re-trafficking. There is certainly a dire need for more transparency on the procedures of all forms of returns, more communication between sending countries and Nigeria and more research on how returns are implemented and the impacts they have on returnees. NAPTIP has a crucial role too in ensuring effective referral procedures are operated, which also means making raising awareness on stakeholders on its coordination role and ensuring communication lines are clearer not only to anti-trafficking stakeholders, but also to returnees, families and communities, many of whom still do not know the agency.

Another crucial role of NAPTIP concerns rescuing in Nigeria. According to its report, the agency rescued a total of 114 victims in the second quarter of 2020. From inception to June 2020, the agency – that also relies on other stakeholders and agencies - rescued a total of 15,199 people. Several limitations were posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, to the detriment of returnees and victims of trafficking more generally. Many believed that during the global pandemic and the first lockdown, traffickers’ activity would slow down. In fact, a report by the NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command showed that internal trafficking has been fluctuating. The month of March, when Nigeria was in lockdown, had the highest number of interceptions, showing that traffickers played on the back of the lockdown and continued recruiting. All the people rescued were Nigerians and the states recording the highest number of people were not Edo State nor Lagos (that are normally considered as the hubs of trafficking), thus pointing to the importance of looking not only at transnational but also internal trafficking dynamics, not only in Edo State and Lagos, but throughout the Federation.

Throughout our fieldwork, many hints have pointed to the fact that the fight against trafficking can only continue by addressing its multiple evolving dynamics and forms, beyond transnational sexual exploitation and labour bondage. We strongly recommend Nigerian and EU institutions should consider more carefully the ground causes of trafficking that also apply to re-trafficking. They seem to remain in the backdrop of anti-trafficking interventions, where present at all. It is clear that trafficking is still considered as an acceptable form of income by very poor families and this is likely to continue in view of the socio-economic difficulties the on-going pandemic is bringing with it. Yet, insufficient attention is given to its ground causes.

Many awareness raising campaigns have been organised over the last decades, by targeting potential victims, families, communities and the society more generally. Campaign messages have focused on the ills of irregular migration. Hardly any information has been provided in terms of actual alternative solutions for survival. There is no strong evidence of any positive impacts of the many awareness raising efforts and yet trafficking does not seem to be diminishing. There is arguably more awareness across communities and potential victims themselves of the fact that trafficking can entail some forms of exploitation, but the actual implications are still largely unknown by many and most importantly hardly any alternative is promoted to encourage people to stay in Nigeria or search for a regular channel for migration. We strongly encourage European institutions should take up these critical issues and the wider critical issues we have highlighted regarding returns and rehabilitation and reintegration programmes, in the framework of the new Migration Pact and more generally as far as the global migration regime is concerned. There is evidence that migration policies have been ineffective in countering trafficking. Paradoxically they have encouraged individuals to take more complex, often less safe, routes, as some authors have pointed out.

In our view, the Pact's focus on returns is misleading, not only in relation to trafficking but also smuggling and more generally migration movements. More specifically, the proposed provisions open up a series of critical matters that should be reconsidered. First, its focus on returns is in contrast with the migration policies promoted in the ECOWAS region. The latter have been clearly favouring people's liberty of movement, although, following the externalisation of border controls by European institutions, such liberty has been constrained. Second, the Pact proposes a more complex framework for returns, compared to the existing one, thus making the principle of non-refoulement very challenging to implement. It proposes a standardised faster procedure that does not involve an adequate system of risk assessment and referral, thus exposing returnees to a high risk of re-trafficking. Not to be underestimated is also the fact that an adequate system of risk assessment and referral is often missing in sending countries too, hence returnees are not granted protection in the first phase of the return procedure either. In general, it is evident that return procedures need monitoring and more transparency, particularly with reference to forced returns. Besides, more sharing of information is essential between sending and receiving countries to ensure that an effective risk assessment is carried out and a punctual referral eventually allow returnees to enter a reintegration programme.

We have experienced various challenges throughout our fieldwork, not only due to the pandemic, but also in connection to the difficulty of accessing data, in part because of reticency on the side of stakeholders, in part because of data is collected to a limited extent by stakeholders themselves. As researchers we believe that further research should be supported over the coming years. NAPTIP involvement in research has been poor, because of limited resources. The agency should facilitate tertiary institutions and independent researchers to carry it out and EU institutions should provide

funding support. In particular, research should be carried out to explore: the evolving dynamics of both transnational and internal forms of trafficking and their connection, the interlinkages between trafficking, smuggling and migration, the (scarcely explored) consequences of the Oba of Benin's pronouncement on potential victims and victims, evolving forms of recruiting, such as digital recruiting, for both men and women, the potential effects of the #EndSARS protests in terms of new migration movements. Dedicated funding should support longitudinal studies aimed to evaluate reintegration programmes and their outcomes, while also considering the conditions of return, with the full involvement of returnees. We strongly believe that any positive reintegration can only occur whereby programmes address returnees' expectations and ambitions, while also ensuring that some regular migration channels are open for people to allow for safe travel and full protection whereby people do not find alternative for survival in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Nigerian authorities



- ✓ Working towards the eradication of poverty, that has been continuously identified as one of primary causes of human trafficking, by providing increased educational and employment opportunities across all states and by actively involving and collaborating with social workers and relevant ministries for a more holistic multi-dimensional approach;
- ✓ making the roles and responsibilities of NAPTIP, ETAHT, NCFRMI more visible, starting with the enhancement of online channels, to all relevant stakeholders, communities, families, victims and potential victims of trafficking, as knowledge of their roles is still limited, particularly across communities;
- ✓ strengthening the coordination role of NAPTIP with respect to stakeholders and NGOs and with increasing focus on the protection of survivors and returnees;
- ✓
- ✓ calling for the Child Rights' Act to be passed in all states and ensuring guidelines are provided for effective guardianship;
- ✓ calling for a task force against trafficking to be created in other states beyond Edo and ensuring families and communities are included in the remits of the task forces;
- ✓ nominating an independent Ombudsperson to whom survivors but also returnees more generally can report complaints and address critical issues on return and reintegration programmes;
- ✓ revisiting agreements with the EU and EU Member States on returns and regulation of returns, calling for more communication on AVR but also forced returns that to date are rather untransparent, with the primary goal to facilitate effective identification and referral of survivors and of any vulnerable person, particularly women and children;
- ✓ ensuring continuous engagement, on the side of NAPTIP and CDS groups, in awareness-raising, through: search for funding by donors; recruitment across of professionals and volunteers in all Nigerian states; provision of adequate materials and tools for specific target groups, including primary and secondary schools, communities, community leaders, families; delivery of messages on survival alternatives rather than the ills of irregular migration; sharing of existing good practices with all stakeholders involved and facilitation of collaborations among them;
- ✓ improving awareness-raising efforts (i.e. with informative billboards with contacts of NAPTIP and relevant agencies) at airports and borders to discourage traffickers and to promote the protection of victims and potential victims and all returnees;
- ✓ ensuring full implementation of the National Referral Mechanism, on the side of NAPTIP, including the production of operative guidelines on referral, the organisation of dedicated capacity building, with a gender- and child-friendly approach, and the sharing of data, to ensure NAPTIP is in charge of all traffic cases, as in its mandate, to favour fast prosecutions and the full protection of victims (i.e. avoiding showcasing victims);
- ✓ contributing to eliminating bureaucratic bottlenecks (i.e. in judicial procedures);



- ✓ seeking partnership with the Nigerian Bar Association to ensure support of pro bono lawyers and lobbyist groups for victims;
- ✓ increasing the capacity of NAPTIP and ETAHT shelters, but also of shelters run by NGOs and ensuring the provision of adequate facilities, shelter conditions (i.e. by rethinking the closed shelter policy) and services, with priority to minimum medical services (i.e. organisation of medical tests prior to admission), psycho-social support and counselling by specialised trained staff, with specific attention to the needs of women, children and mothers with children and more generally with an individualised survivor-centred approach;
- ✓ putting in a place, on the side of NAPTIP, a monitoring mechanism to ensure: homogenous standards of admission to shelters and programmes; minimum standards of reception and regular self-assessment of services (as indicated by the NRM and by drawing from good practices); the sharing of information among shelters and stakeholders on activities and programmes undertaken by beneficiaries in shelters; implementation of a follow-up after beneficiaries leave the shelters; the development of a more transparent and accountable system;
- ✓ improving coordination with NGOs, on the side of NAPTIP, regarding the delivery of services to returnees and survivors, particularly as far as trainings and concerned, to ensure most effective services tailored to clients' needs, full knowledge by government agencies, NGOs and clients of the available opportunities;
- ✓ ensuring effective coordination of rehabilitation NGOs on the side of NACTAL;
- ✓ ensuring continuous active collaboration in transnational cooperation on the prosecution of traffickers (i.e. on-going collaborations with the Italian and UK governments), through continuous efforts for the development of adequate tools and equipment for investigations, for data sharing among all law enforcement agencies and across all federal states.

Recommendations for European authorities



- ✓
- ✓ returns are implemented with effective referrals and risk assessments, in full respect of fundamental human rights and with improved collaboration and sharing of information between sending and receiving countries, to ensure the protection of returnees
- ✓ providing funding to Nigerian agencies and NGOs with priority on the following: establishment of specific shelters and services for mothers with children, children and women
- ✓ continuous transnational cooperation among anti-trafficking professionals in Nigeria and destination countries to promote improved customised services for survivors and returnees
- ✓ full implementation of the National Referral Mechanism including adequate capacity building for all stakeholders, also through transnational cooperation
- ✓ implementation of specific measures to eradicate poverty as the primary root cause of trafficking, by integrating funding measures outside the anti-trafficking field and by promoting awareness campaigns across communities promoting available alternative opportunities for survival
- ✓ calling for increased collaboration among NGOs, more coordination on the side of NAPTIP and NCFRMI on their respective roles, continuous accountability and transparency in the conduction of funded projects, to prevent forms of corruption, as highlighted by government agencies and NGOs themselves
- ✓ provide funding for research on the following: longitudinal transnational evaluations of awareness raising projects and return programmes, with the full involvement of returnees and local communities
- ✓ evolving trends of internal and transnational trafficking.


Recommendations for Nigerian NGOs



- ✓ Lobbying for the Child Rights' Act to be passed in all states and a task force against trafficking to be created in other states beyond Edo;
- ✓ lobbying for the nomination of an independent Ombudsperson to whom survivors but also returnees more generally can report complaints and address critical issues on return and reintegration programmes;
- ✓ contributing to the coordination of NGOs in the delivery of services to returnees and survivors, particularly as far as trainings and concerned, also with the involvement of survivors, to ensure most effective services tailored to clients' needs, full knowledge by NGOs and clients of the available opportunities, also in cooperation with FMLE and the MRC;
- ✓ lobbying for and contributing to the establishing of a monitoring mechanism by government agencies to ensure: homogenous standards of admission to shelters and programmes; minimum standards of reception and regular self-assessment of services; the sharing of information among shelters and stakeholders on activities and programmes undertaken by beneficiaries in shelters; implementation of a follow-up after beneficiaries leave the shelters;
- ✓ increasing the capacity of shelters and ensuring the provision of adequate facilities, shelter conditions and services, with priority to minimum medical services, psycho-social support and counselling by specialised trained staff, with specific attention to the needs of women, children and mothers with children and more generally with an individualised survivor-centred approach;
- ✓ contributing to full implementation of the National Referral Mechanism by: ensuring that all members of staff are aware of it, participate to and call for capacity building on identification and referral, with a gender- and child-friendly approach and with attention to ensuring the effective protection of survivors;
- ✓ seeking partnership with the Nigerian Bar Association to ensure support of pro bono lawyers and lobbyist groups for victims;
- ✓ ensuring effective collaboration with NAPTIP and relevant agencies on returns facilitated by NGOs to contribute to transparent procedures and to promote effective identification and referral for all returnees;
- ✓ collaborating with all stakeholders engaged in awareness-raising projects, in particular with CDS groups, and searching for funding from donors and Nigerian authorities to ensure: awareness-raising is carried out across all Nigerian states; adequate materials and tools are used for specific target groups, including primary and secondary schools, communities, community leaders, families; messages focus on alternatives to trafficking rather than the ills of irregular migration; good practices are shared with all relevant stakeholders.

✓

Recommendations for Researchers

- 
- ✓ Calling for and ensuring independent research to be conducted on the following:
 - a longitudinal evaluation of the impact that anti-trafficking activities have had on the lives of returnees, by collecting the experiences of returnees and making them heard, as far as return and reintegration are concerned, particularly for women and children, also to ensure programmes are tailored to their needs and hence more effective;
 - the conditions of return, with focus on families and communities, not only in Edo State but also other states of the Federation;
 - the evolving dynamics of trafficking, in face of the (poorly explored) consequences of the Oba of Benin's pronouncement, the evolving forms of recruiting by traffickers, (the poorly explored) digital recruiting, the potential effects of the #endsars protests on migration and trafficking.

Introduction

The phenomenon of human trafficking has been characterised by continuous changes and evolving dynamics and has become more and more complex over the years (Manbe, 2016), requiring the increasing attention of multiple stakeholders at local, national, international and transnational levels. Nigeria, popularly referred to as the giant of Africa due to its large population - over 208 million - has long been known as playing a triple role as source, transit and destination country for girls, boys, women and men trafficked for the scope of sexual and labour exploitation (Joshi, 2002; Onyejekwe, 2005; Unesco, 2006).

As explained by Eghafona (2018), for a long time, the phenomenon was not considered as a national problem. The Nigerian government was in denial of its existence until, in 1997, the then Nigerian Ambassador to Italy, Judith Attah, addressed the issue at the Interpol General Assembly. Trafficking in human being had already been growing more visible, thanks to the engagement of Amin Titi Abubakar with the WOTCLEF Foundation and of the then first lady of Edo State, Eki Igbinedion, whom, in 1999, set up the NGO Idia Renaissance.

Based on a non-systematic search of newspapers back copies, for the period 1983-1989, WOTCLEF reports that several cases of children trafficking were already reported in Bauchi, Imo, Anambra and Cross river. Through the same source, it was found that girls trafficked for the scope of sexual exploitation has been escalating since the 1990s. As at 1998, 20,000 Nigerian girls were reported to engage in commercial sex work in Italy¹⁶.

In 2003, NAPTIP was set up with the responsibility to fight trafficking and the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act was passed in 2003. Since then, numerous efforts have been made to combat the phenomenon in the country and many projects have been and are still being funded to support on-going efforts in terms of awareness-raising, capacity building, rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives, particularly in Edo State, but also in Lagos and other parts of the country (see Semprebou, 2020 for an overview of projects in the period 2010-2019). Yet, progress in the fight of human trafficking has been reportedly limited, with considerable pending challenges for Nigeria, that in 2020 was downgraded to Tier 2 Watch List (US TIP Report, 2020), but also to EU and non-EU countries.

As at 2020, Nigerian people victims of trafficking were identified in more than 29 countries of the world. Nigeria ranked 32 out of 167 countries with the highest number of slaves and, according to estimates, 74,7/100 people in the country were vulnerable to modern slavery (Global Slavery Index, 2018). With specific reference to trafficking to Europe, the majority of Nigerian victims have been known to come from Edo State - in the south-eastern part of Nigeria -, mostly via Libya. More recently, French authorities have reported an increasing number of victims originating from northern states.

Authors have documented different typologies of trafficking in women and children, including the following: prostitution, domestic help, *diya* or “blood money”, begging, baby harvesting. Most girls and women are trafficked internally or across national boundaries as sex slaves. Nigerian girls have been found in brothels and on the streets in West Africa, but also in Asia, the Middle East and Europe. They are often recruited on deceit through family and relatives and, in most cases, agreements are sealed

¹⁶ As reported by WOTCLEF. See document “Understanding the Anti-trafficking Law in Nigeria” (not available on the web).

by taking an oath to pay back an agreed amount, mostly in foreign currencies used in destination countries (Unesco, 2006; Okojie, 2009).

Child trafficking also exists, and it is often associated with young boys engaged in bonded labour (IOM, 2015). Many children are awarded a job within or outside their immediate environment. Such jobs could comprise domestic work, in and outside Nigeria (Ellis and Akpala, 2011; Nnadi, 2013), but also street hawking, babysitting, agricultural work, etc. A third form of exploitation is associated with *diya*¹⁷ or “blood money”. It has been identified in the northern part of Nigeria and it involves the deception of children into travelling to Saudi Arabia for shopping purposes while the actual criminal plan involves pushing the child in a running luxurious vehicle to crush the child to death in order for the family to obtain a payment from the insurance company (Unesco, 2006; Kigbu and Hassan, 2015; Manbe, 2016). A fourth form of exploitation consists in the recruitment of vulnerable children to beg in the streets. This practice has spread around major cities in Nigeria, but more recently it has been internationalised to Saudi Arabia (Manbe, 2016). Some indications of exploitation in begging, not with Nigerian children, in Europe derives also from the research work of the INSigHT Research Team¹⁷. A fifth form of trafficking is associated with a system whereby girls are forced to stay in illegal shelters - often disguised as orphanages, maternity homes, or religious centres - are raped and forced to carry and deliver children to be sold for illegal adoption (Makinde, 2016). The plurality of all these practice has been noticed in Lagos, Abia, Ebonyi, as also explained during the interviews that the INSigHT Research Team carried out in Lagos.

Some of the people that fall victims of trafficking eventually return home. While considerable research has been undertaken to understand migration and integration in destination countries, since the 1990s (starting with work by Stephen Castles and John Berry), “return migration has been the great unwritten chapter” (King, 2000). Less studies have focused on this part of migratory movements, although attention to it has grown in the most recent years.

Kuschminder (2017) has recently provided an overview on the academic debate. As she explains, migration and development scholars have examined the experiences of diaspora returnees, who are often expected to act as agents of change. In the migration literature, the theme of return has gained more attention in the past five years in coincidence with the increase in asylum claims and the growing consensus among EU Member States that returns should be the privileged option in the management of migration. IOM has been facilitating assisted voluntary return programmes, with the number of returnees reaching peak levels in the period 2015-2016.

Irrespective of the type of return, returnees are expected to eventually reintegrate. However, there is little understand of the process and what it involves. Return has been mainly intended as the process of going back to the country of origin and reintegration as the process that follows. Notwithstanding, various scholars have highlighted that return is more than going back and that reintegration can take considerable time (Rogge, 1994; Koser and Black, 1999). In other words, return is not necessarily the final part of migration trajectories, but one part of it, in face of increasing fluid forms of mobility (Riiskjaer and Nielsson, 2008; Cassarino, 2014; Koser and Kuschminder, 2015; Kleist, 2017; Triandafyllidou and Ricard-Guay, 2019).

¹⁷ See the E-book by Sempredon et al. (2021) *The practice of begging between freedom of choice, exploitation, trafficking and the connections with organised crime. Focus on Nigerian people*. It will be made available soon on the website of the INSigHT Action: <https://www.insightproject.net/project/publications/>

In policy terms, return has been addressed by distinguishing between assisted voluntary returns and forced returns, with the former referring to migrants who decide to return to their country of origin upon receipt of a reintegration package. The decision is more likely to be made by migrants whose asylum claim is rejected. Hence the voluntariness of the decision is not fully evident. It is made in situations involving limited (if any) alternative options (Webber, 2011; Ashutosh & Mountz, 2011; Brachet, 2015), restricted to those offered by humanitarian actors within a wider framework of externalized migration management (Ashutosh and Mountz, 2011; Cuttita, 2014; Brachet, 2015; Cassarino, 2016, 2017; Triandafyllidou and Ricard-Guay, 2019; Alpes, 2020)¹⁸. More and more frequently in transit countries with inhumane and degrading conditions, such as Libya, IOM has offered return as a response (Alpes, 2020).

Returns are fraught with many challenges. The focus of service provision is generally on meeting basic needs: shelter, food and any essential services (medical, psychological, etc.). Returns are exceptionally difficult for returnees, even more for forced returnees (Schuster and Majidi, 2013). They may not be a pleasant experience at all (Allen and Morsink, 1994; Rogge, 1994), adding to the fact that it can follow the experience of severe exploitation and multiple forms of re-victimisation (Baye, 2012). The experience of return is also associated with individuals' experiences and social status prior to migration in the country of destination and with the conditions of their return. Returnees are not always accepted by their communities, they can suffer stigmatization and feel unwelcome, besides experiencing exposure to risks (Webber, 2011; Brunovskis and Surtees, 2012; Alpes, 2020). This suggests that policy definitions should not focus on individuals only, but also on the receiving society. In this direction, Kuschminder (2017) proposes to address returns and reintegration through reintegration strategies focusing on four dimensions: cultural orientation (bringing back the experience from the country of migration), social networks, self-identification and sense of belonging (with respect to both the countries of origin and return), access to rights (structural issues, access to services and assistance, to the labour market, etc.).

The Nigerian Government has appeared to be very cooperative in organising the returns of national citizens (see also Shaidova, forthcoming). But returns may push returnees into the web of traffickers again as well as push them to undertaking even more dangerous travel routes (Andersson, 2014; Schapendonk and Steel, 2014). Returns are generally considered as an optimum policy choice, by European authorities, but they are far less optimal for returnees. On their side, Nigerian government agencies and NGOs have been engaging more and more, particularly in the most recent years, in reintegration programmes.

The focus of this publication will be on Nigerian returnees who were trafficked for the scope of sexual exploitation. We will look specifically at women and girls, who are still considered to be most vulnerable to human trafficking, according to EU data. In 2020, nearly three quarters (72 %) of all registered victims in Europe were females. Nigeria was recorded as the first country in the list of the top five countries of origin of female victims. Females prevailed also among the people rescued in Nigeria, in 2019 (80,6%) (NAPTIP, 2019). Children (aged 0-17) are similarly represented in high proportions among rescued people (49,8%) (NAPTIP, 2019: 9).

¹⁸ This was also underlined by the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants during a session of the UN Human Rights Council. 18th June – 6th July 2018. Available: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/G1812517.pdf>
Last access: 02/02/2021.

This e-book aims to provide a critical overview of the Nigerian system of rehabilitation and reintegration for returnees, particularly women and young girls. In line with the INSIGHT Action objectives, the publication's main goals include the following: to provide evidence-based data to favour the understanding of how the anti-trafficking system functions in Nigeria and to contribute to informed policymaking; to improve the capacity of stakeholders in Nigeria, but also in Europe, to implement effective measures against trafficking and the growing risk of re-trafficking, while also providing inputs for improved protection and support measures.

The first section introduces the research design and the difficulties encountered throughout the research, including the spreading of the Covid-19 pandemic. The second provides a qualitative overview of the phenomenon of trafficking from and within Nigeria. The third sketches out the relevant normative framework. The fourth section is the core section of the e-book and focuses on returns and rehabilitation and reintegration programmes to then conclude with final remarks in section five.

Section 1

About the e-book

This e-book is part of the INSigHT Action that is aimed at building the capacity of stakeholders to deal with human trafficking and secondary routes in Nigeria, Italy and Sweden, with specific attention to women and girls engaged in prostitutions and young men involved in street begging¹⁹.

The aim of this specific e-book is to explore the system of prevention, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration, with more detailed attention to the latter, and the needs of returnees. Returns are a crucial (and yet not necessarily final) phase of migration and trafficking associated movements, but very little and scattered information is available on related processes and programmes. This e-book will contribute to filling this gap by mapping existing programmes of rehabilitation and reintegration in Edo State and Lagos and by examining the strength and weaknesses of the system and its implementation measures, in view of the challenges posed by trafficking. The ultimate scope is that of contributing to the improvement of returnees' protection, by encouraging the adoption of increasingly customised measures and approaches and by facilitating returnees' access to the system. We hope this will positively impact on the support provided to returnees while also preventing any form of further revictimization.

The following specific questions will guide this e-book:

- How many so-called programmes of rehabilitation and reintegration exist in Edo State in Lagos and what services do they provide?
- Who are the main stakeholders implementing these programmes?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of these programmes? What are the pending challenges for the future?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Nigerian system of protection overall?

Unless otherwise specified, when we draw from our own research, the terms young women and young girls will be used to refer respectively to women and girls who have been victims of trafficking and have returned to Nigeria, to avoid their re-victimisation. Furthermore, the terms victims and survivors of trafficking will be used interchangeably, coherently with the increasing use of the second term in Nigeria, and not only, and with the specific aim to stress and remember the agency that is always intrinsic in each individual's life, as shown by the literature on the autonomy of migration (see for example De Genova, 2017). Additionally, we use the term forced returns with reference to its use in the global context (see the section Terms used in the study), as it is commonly used by Nigerian stakeholders, that is to say returns associated with a return decision issued by a national government.

¹⁹ For further information see the dedicated website: <https://www.insightproject.net/> Last access: 20/12/2020.

Methodology

Data collection and analysis

This e-book has been compiled by drawing from qualitative and quantitative data collected in the period June 2019 - September 2020. Quantitative data draw mostly from EU reports, the US State Department report and data by NAPTIP. Collecting quantitative data, both on returns and rehabilitation and reintegration programmes (admissions, exact length of stay in shelters, services provided, etc.) from Nigerian stakeholders proved hardly possible. In most of cases data is lacking or not readily available for access.

Qualitative data includes: information from the INSigHT Gap Analysis Report (Semprebon, 2020); insights gathered from fieldwork conducted mostly by the Oluwafemi Moses Abe, from August 2019 to January 2021 (attendance to the Action events and 11 meetings/visits to various stakeholders); 19 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders and two with young returnees, carried out between March and August 2020, all conducted by Oluwafemi Moses Abe (see table of interviews in the appendix). We have included a short description of the experience reported by a returnee during the INSigHT Rehabilitation Workshop organised by Pathfinders Justice Initiative on January 14th and 15th 2021²⁰.

Only two interviews could be organised with young women because of the restrictions of the Covid-19. Most of the shelters were closed to visitors in order to avoid the spread of the virus and the INSigHT Research Team, together with the stakeholders to whom authorisation had been asked, agreed it would not be adequate to interview them online. The young women whom we managed to interview, were interviewed at the NAPTIP or NAPTIP Lagos zonal commands.

Interviews were all conducted in English. Nine were conducted via the zoom platform or whatsapp video, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, the others in person, at the working premises of interviewees. Most were conducted with one person only. In few cases, two members of staff were present. The interviews with the young women were conducted at NAPTIP officers, in the presence of the Head of counselling and rehabilitation units, as deemed most adequate by them.

The focus of our interviews was on the actual programmes of rehabilitation and reintegration, the services offered and the critical issues perceived by stakeholders. Interviews with the young women focused on their experience of these services.

Exception made for interviews with beneficiaries, all interviews were recorded and transcribed with the softwares Express Scribe, VirtualDJ, Audacity1.3Beta and, in part, manually, while the analysis was done through manual coding. Notes were taken with reference to interviews with the young women, as punctually as possible. The names indicated in the table are invited for privacy and protection reasons. All interviewees have been asked to sign a consent module before participating to the interview.

²⁰ Details are available: <https://www.insightproject.net/pathfinders-rehabilitation-workshop-january-14-15-2021/>; minutes are also available on the INSigHT website: <https://www.insightproject.net/project/events-and-documents/> Last access: <https://www.insightproject.net/project/events-and-documents/> 22/02/2021.

The sampling method followed these criteria:

- identification of the main state actors by reading anti-trafficking reports and attending seminars and events;
- identification of relevant CSOs through state actors and INSigHT Action partners;
- identification of other CSOs through the snowball technique, that is to say by asking each interviewee to refer of colleagues and relevant stakeholders.

Many calls were organised prior to and following interviews in order to organise the actual meeting or call, present the INSigHT Action and ask for authorisation to access relevant data. It was also possible to visit some stakeholders and their centres, in the period August 2019 – August 2020) (see appendices).

Difficulties of access to data and the fieldwork

Generally speaking, difficulties were encountered to reach out to stakeholders in the first place, as it had already emerged during the preparation of the Gap-analysis Report. Making contacts with stakeholders and people victims of trafficking in the shelters proved extremely difficult due to the following reasons: stakeholders, especially NGOs are scattered around communities in Lagos and Benin and not always easy to reach; itineraries and schedules for appointments are particularly hard to handle in Nigeria, due to long distances and constant severe traffic congestion; stakeholders, especially government agencies, rarely update their websites with contact details and information; formal senior approval was always required before interviews could be organised, with considerable delays; in specific cases, in spite of senior approval, interviewees were afraid of exposing themselves and asked not to record the interview.

It should also be emphasised that many stakeholders showed some form of distrust towards the researcher, owing to previous negative experiences with researchers who had not respected the confidentiality and anonymity terms set out before the interview (i.e. through unauthorised use of videos and pictures of victims of trafficking, dissemination of photos and information through Facebook, etc.). Adding to this, stakeholders have been rather reticent to provide information and sceptical about collaborating without a mutual benefit. As it also emerged during the Gap Analysis Meeting in Benin, it is worth considering that stakeholders are more likely to be willingly involved in research if they see a direct advantage in their collaboration.

Challenges were faced also with virtual interviews because of the limited knowledge of many stakeholders of virtual platforms and media, while most of them had to deal with poor network and power shortage.

Finally, it was extremely challenging to collect any quantitative data from stakeholders as they rarely update their websites, if they publish similar data at all; because of reticence to share data and also because they collect limited data and the data collected is hardly disaggregated.

Section 2

A qualitative and quantitative overview of human trafficking from and within Nigeria

In this section we will present some data on migration human trafficking related movements from and within Nigeria, by pointing out the recent trends in the EU and the multiple facets of internal and external trafficking. We will then present a short overview of the total number of cases received by Nigerian authorities, investigated, charged to court and the resulting convictions, to then recall the main pull and push factors that have so far explained the phenomenon of trafficking.

Migration movements and human trafficking from and within Nigeria

Recent trends in the EU

The Frontex 2918 Risk Analysis Report states that trafficking from Nigeria to Europe is an organised, age-long migration system. It has been going on since the late 90s but has grown stronger in the second decade of 2000. Following uninterrupted movements, with regard to the European context, the period between 2015-2017 witnessed an increasing arrival of Nigerian women and girls in Italy and Spain.

According to the EU Data Collection Report on Human Trafficking (2018), in the period 2015-2016, Nigeria was the top non-EU country of citizenship of the people registered as victims of trafficking, accounting for a total of 2,084 individuals (table 1). This data confirmed the trends highlighted by Eurostat (2015) for the period 2010-2012.

With reference to EU-27 Member States, in the period 2017-2018, a total of 14,145 people were registered as victims of trafficking. Italy was the second country with the largest number (EC, 2020).

Concerning the country of origin, 49% were EU nationals and one third (34%) were registered in their own EU Member State. As in the period 2015-2016, the main country of citizenship of non-EU victims was Nigeria (3,112), followed by Albania (1,814), Vietnam (1,535), China (1,064) (table 2). Notwithstanding, UNHCR statistics show that the number of Nigerian arrivals by sea and land into Italy decreased in 2018 (-5% with respect to the previous year (table 3) and that Nigeria is no longer in the top five non-EU countries of origin of victims. Nevertheless, the number of people who start a journey from Nigeria to reach Europe remains largely unknown. Data is partial and unreliable and it is questionable whether migration from Nigeria to Europe is actually decreasing or whether movements are rather taking multiple shapes and directions.

Not to be underestimated is also the fact that the EU Commission Report does not include any data relating to transfer and secondary movements internal to the EU. Yet IOM (2017) stressed that transport through transit countries and by sea to destination countries (mainly Italy, Spain, France and Germany, but also Sweden, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands and Switzerland) should be under scrutiny. Furthermore, the 2nd EU Report in the Progress of Human Trafficking (2018a) highlighted how internal trafficking, within the territory of Member States, is on the rise. This clearly points to the need of addressing the phenomenon of trafficking in its transnational dimension.

2015		2016	
Citizenship of registered victims	Number of registered victims	Citizenship of registered victims	Number of registered victims
Nigeria	842	Nigeria	1242
Albania	648	Albania	749
Viet Nam	537	Viet Nam	562
China	202	China	537
Eritrea	158	Afghanistan	134
India	123	Eritrea	129
Morocco	99	India	126
Philippines	89	Pakistan	126
Sudan	84	Morocco	119
*	79	Philippines	118
Total (Top 10)	2861	Total (Top 10)	3842
Others (Non- EU, outside top 10)	1543	Others (Non- EU, outside top 10)	2126
Unknown citizenship	249	Unknown citizenship	256
Total Non-EU	4404	Total Non-EU	5968

TABLE 1: TOP NON-EU CITIZENSHIP OF REGISTERED VICTIMS (SOURCE: EU 2018 DATA ON TRAFFICKING, P. 90)

Rank	2017		2018		2017-2018
	Citizenship	N	Citizenship	N	Citizenship
1	Nigeria	1 574	Nigeria	1 538	Nigeria
2	Albania	831	Albania	983	Albania
3	Vietnam	786	Vietnam	749	Vietnam
4	China	466	China	598	China
5	Sudan	240	Sudan	363	Sudan
6	India	199	Eritrea	335	Eritrea
7	Eritrea	197	India	294	India
8	Ukraine	139	Pakistan	175	Ukraine
9	Iraq	123	Ukraine	162	Pakistan
10	Pakistan	123	Philippines	159	Philippines
Total (Top 10)		4 678	Top 10 NEU	5 356	Top 10 NEU
Non-EU outside top 10		10 216	Non-EU outside top 10	10 160	Non-EU outside top 10
Unknown citizenship		488	Unknown citizenship	488	Unknown citizenship

TABLE 2: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU BY NON-EU CITIZENSHIP (TOP 10) (SOURCE: EU 2018 DATA ON TRAFFICKING, P. 27)

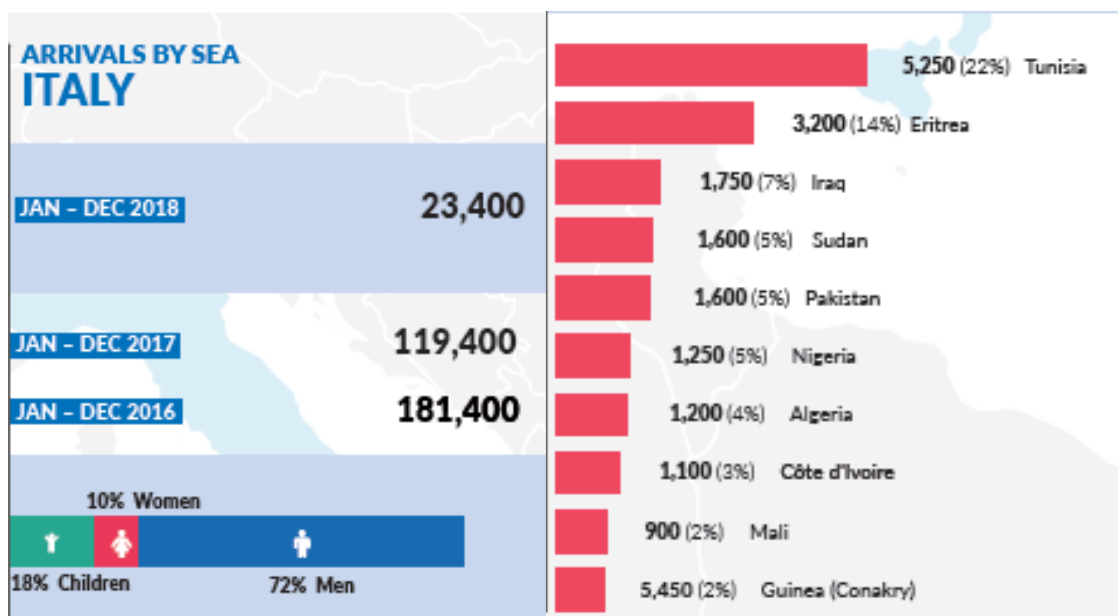


TABLE 3: ARRIVALS BY SEA TO ITALY 2018 (SOURCE: UNHCR. AVAILABLE AT: [HTTPS://RELIEFWEB.INT/SITES/RELIEFWEB.INT/FILES/RESOURCES/68006.PDF](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/68006.pdf) LAST ACCESS: 28/01/2021)

Evolutions in air and land routes

Previous hints of variations on migratory routes have been confirmed. While in the period 2012 to 2017, Libya was the main hub for smugglers to transport sub-Saharan migrants across the Mediterranean Sea to Italy - and further to other EU countries, dynamics changed in 2018. As reported by Frontex (2020), the Libyan Coast Guard increased its patrolling activities in the Mediterranean Sea and the Italian authorities further modified SARs policy, thus making sea crossings more difficult and expensive, while also pushing migrants towards alternative routes, including Algeria and Morocco, via Mali and Mauritania and then Spain to boat.

Confirming trends in previous years, Frontex reports that most detections of fraudulent documents, in 2019, were reported on air routes. Italian airports were the most affected by this increase. A large majority of detected fraudulent document users were identified in Italy upon arrival from Casablanca – the top departure airport for detections, with an increase by 114% compared to 2018. Detected fraudulent document users were mostly from sub-Saharan countries, including also Nigeria (table 4). Many Italian airports recorded a noticeable increase in the number of attempts to travel within the EU/Schengen area using fraudulent documents.

Fewer detections of illegal border crossings have been reported. At the same time, a considerable rise in secondary movements has also been registered inside the EU/Schengen, as evidenced by - undetailed - discoveries of such movements (38% more compared to 2018). Secondary movements by sea grew in 2019 too. These movements will remain a crucial area of attention (Frontex, 2020).

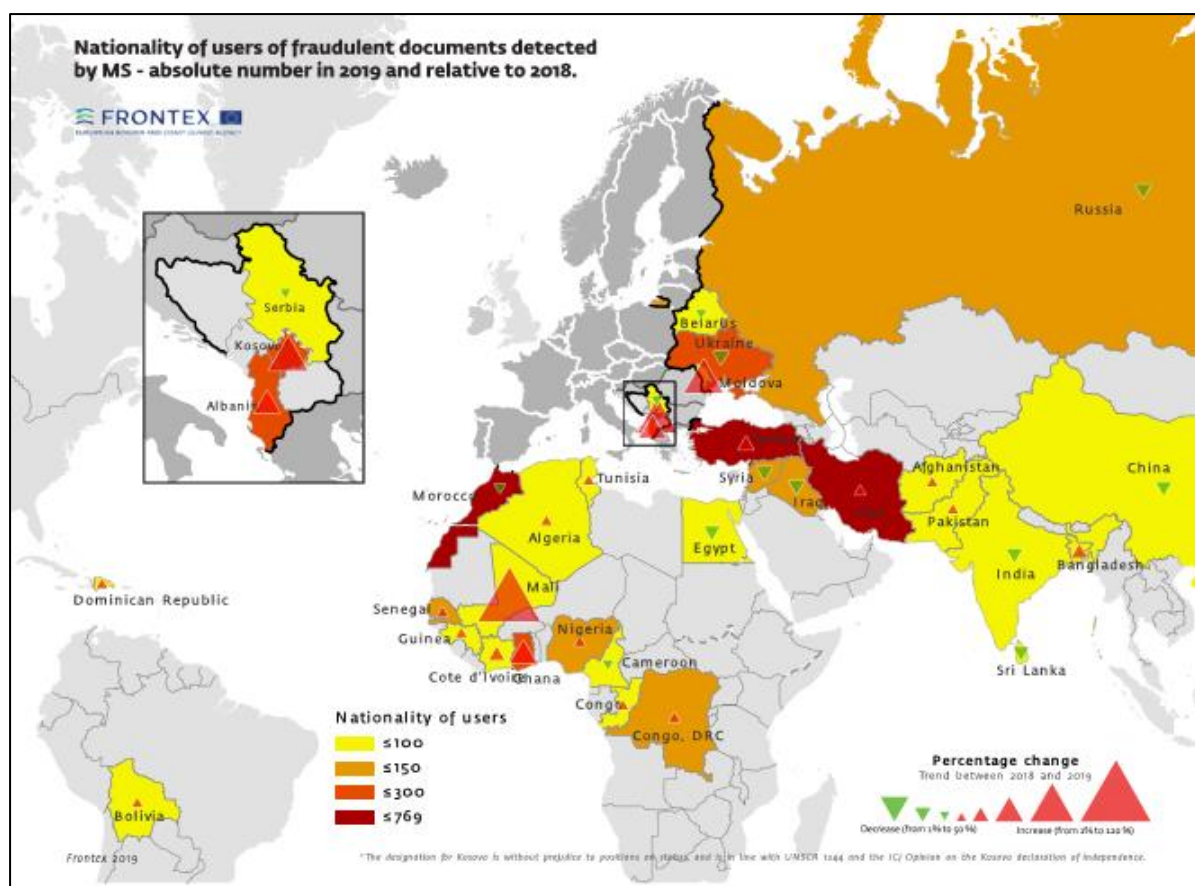


TABLE 4: NATIONALITY OF USERS OF FRAUDULENT DOCUMENTS DETECTED BY MEMBER STATES – ABSOLUTE NUMBER IN 2019 AND RELATIVE TO 2018 (SOURCE: 2020 FRONTEX RISK ANALYSIS, P. 29)

Regarding arrivals on Southern Italian shores, a total number of 181,436 people was recorded in 2016, decreasing to 119,369 in 2017, to a considerably lower number in 2018 (23,292), to rise again in 2020 (34,134). The Nigerian nationality figured as the first in 2017, with a total of 18,153; in 2018 it figured as the 6th, with a total of 1,250; in 2019 and 2020 it did not figure in the first ten nationalities²¹.

As a result of changes in border policies and bilateral agreements between Italy and Libya, there has been a decrease in the number of arrivals on Southern Italian coasts. However, this does not mean there are fewer people who fall into the web of exploiters, but that it is less likely for them to enter the asylum and reception system, at least upon arrival in Italy.

Important data relate also to the transfer of Nigerian people to CPR (Centri di Permanenza per Rimpatri – Centres of Permanence for Repatriation). As of April 2020, 113 Nigerians (25 women and 88 men) were in Italian CPR. Other 39 Nigerians were repatriated²². Over the years, Italy has been carrying out an increasing number of forced returns to Nigeria, although data is not transparent, nor easily

²¹ Data draws from the Cruscotto giornaliero of the Ministry of Interior: 31/12/2017, 31/12/2018, 31/12/2019, 28/12/2020. Available at: <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/cruscotto-statistico-giornaliero> Last access: 12/12/2020.

²² Data provided by the Garante Nazionale dei diritti delle persone detenute o private della libertà personale. Rapporto sull'attività di monitoraggio delle operazioni di rimpatrio forzato di cittadini stranieri. Relazione al Parlamento 2020 (Ombudsperson for the rights of detained people and people deprived of their liberty. Report on the monitoring of repatriation activities of foreign citizens. Report to Parliament 2020).

accessible. The destination airport is Lagos and the main departure airport is Rome Fiumicino. In 2016, out of 5,817 repatriated people, 151 were of Nigerian nationality. In the following years, the total number of Nigerian people returned to Nigeria corresponded to 279 in 2017, 189 in 2018, and a peak of 348 in 2019²³. Returns have been implemented also from other EU Member States, as indicated by IOM (2020)²⁴, according to which over 160,000 migrants – with irregular legal status in the EU – are returned annually to their country of origin, either through a forced or voluntary return. In 2019, 28,256 were assisted by IOM to return from Europe, accounting for 43.6% of the total. Germany was the country which the highest number of returnees assisted.

Repeated asylum applications

In 2019, 715,000 applications for international protection were lodged by third-country nationals in the EU/SAC area (EU/Schengen-associated countries area), 13% more than in 2018. In the same year, 9% of all asylum applications were repeated, following a negative decision on a previous application. This phenomenon regards particularly nationals of Serbia, Russia, Moldova, but also Sri Lanka, Senegal and Nigeria (the last three representing more than 15% of the total applicants).

People trafficked for sexual exploitation: gender and age profiles

In the EU-27, over 46% of the people registered as victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation, which still represents the main form of exploitation. However, trafficking for the scope of labour exploitation regarded 22% of the registered people, with a considerable increase, with respect to 2015-2017 (data on the EU-28 substantially changes the figure: 60% for sexual exploitation versus 15% for labour exploitation – see tables 5 and 6). Non-EU victims were trafficked mainly for sexual exploitation (41%), again with a considerable group of people trafficked for forced labour (22%) and other forms of exploitation (24%). Among the top five non-EU citizenships of people trafficked for sexual exploitation, Nigeria is still the first (68%) (table 7).

Nearly three quarters (72 %) of all registered victims were females, including both women and girls - 23% were male (table 8). Although the number of victims of EU-nationality has grown, girls still represent 69% of child victims with non-EU citizenship. Nigeria is the first country in the list of the top five nationalities of female victims (table 9).

Age is a relevant variable: children accounted for 22% of registered victims (table 10) – and nearly three quarters were EU citizens. The majority of child victims (64%) were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation and the vast majority (78%) were girls.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ See General trend section on the Migration Portal website. Available at: <https://migrationdataportal.org/regional-data-overview/europe> Last access: 26/01/2021.

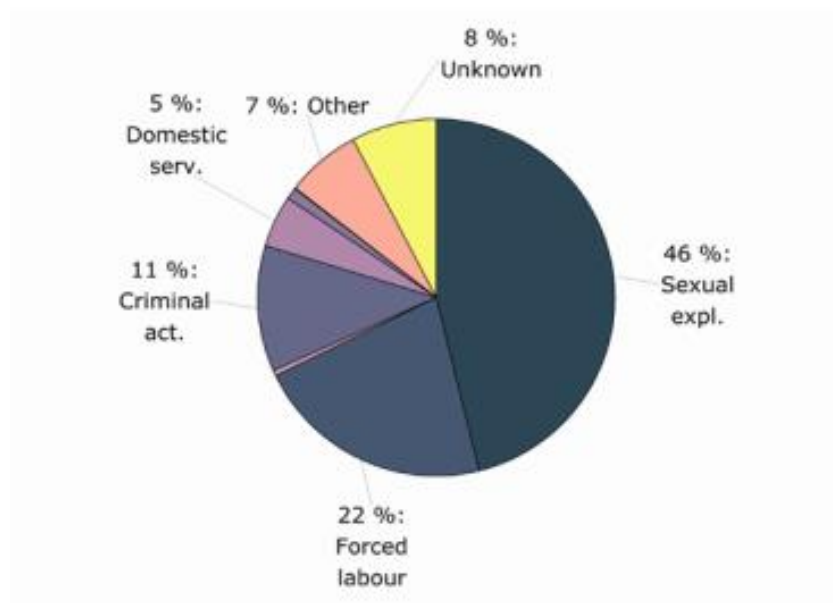


TABLE 5: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU BY FORM OF EXPLOITATION (SOURCE: EU 2020 DATA ON TRAFFICKING, P. 16)

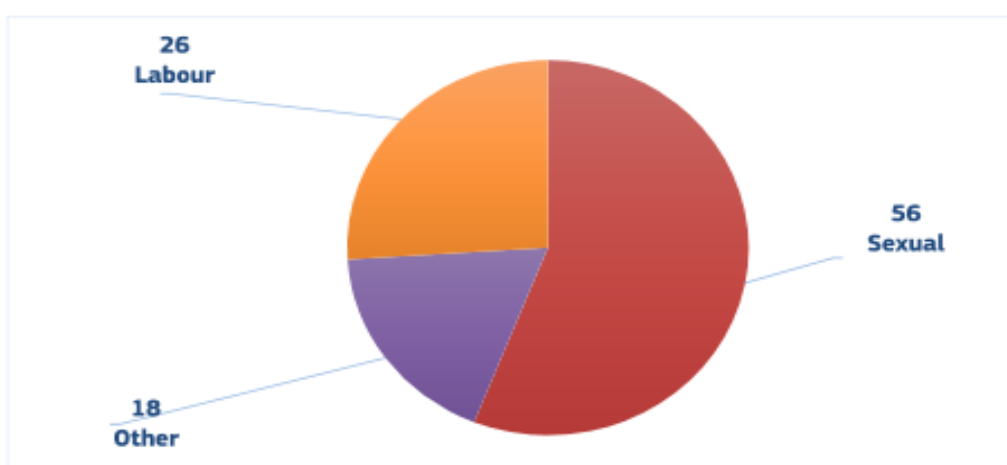


TABLE 6: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU BY FORM OF EXPLOITATION (SOURCE: EU 2018 DATA ON TRAFFICKING, P. 55)

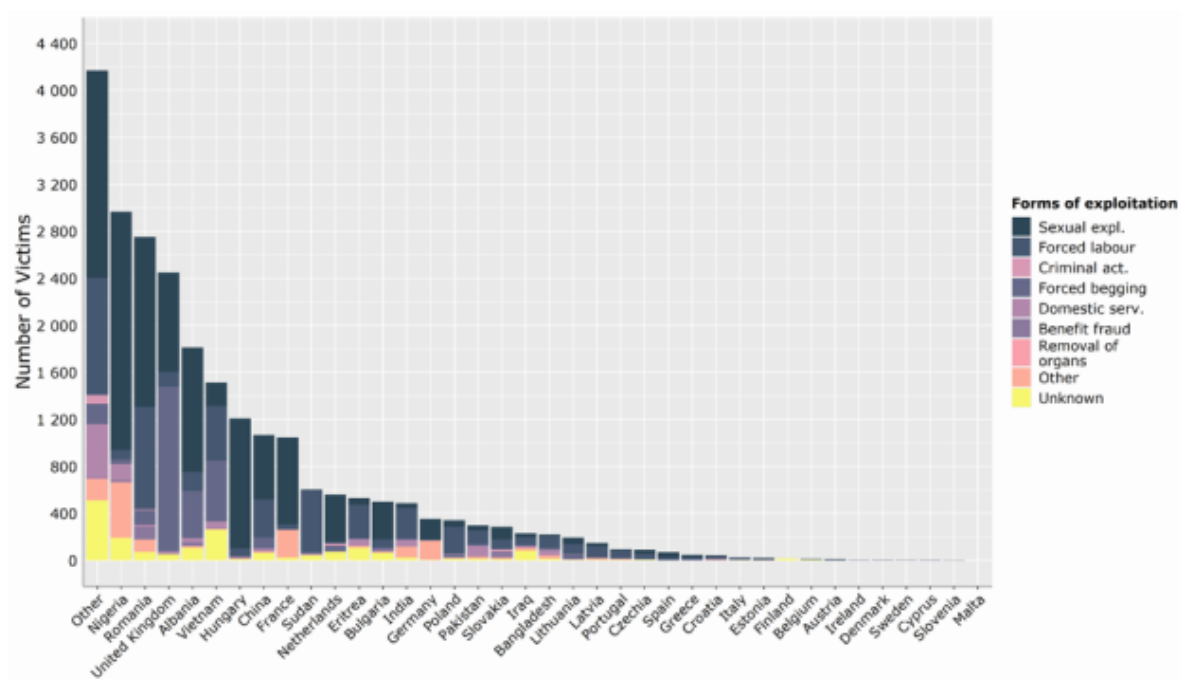


TABLE 7: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU BY CITIZENSHIP AND FORM OF EXPLOITATION (SOURCE: EU 2020 DATA ON TRAFFICKING, P. 28)

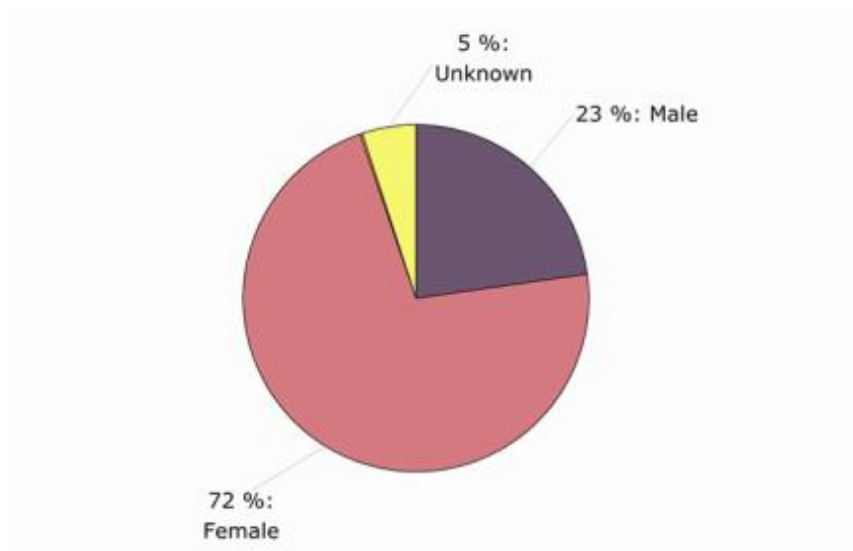


TABLE 8: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU-27 BY SEX (SOURCE: EU 2020 DATA ON TRAFFICKING, P. 18)

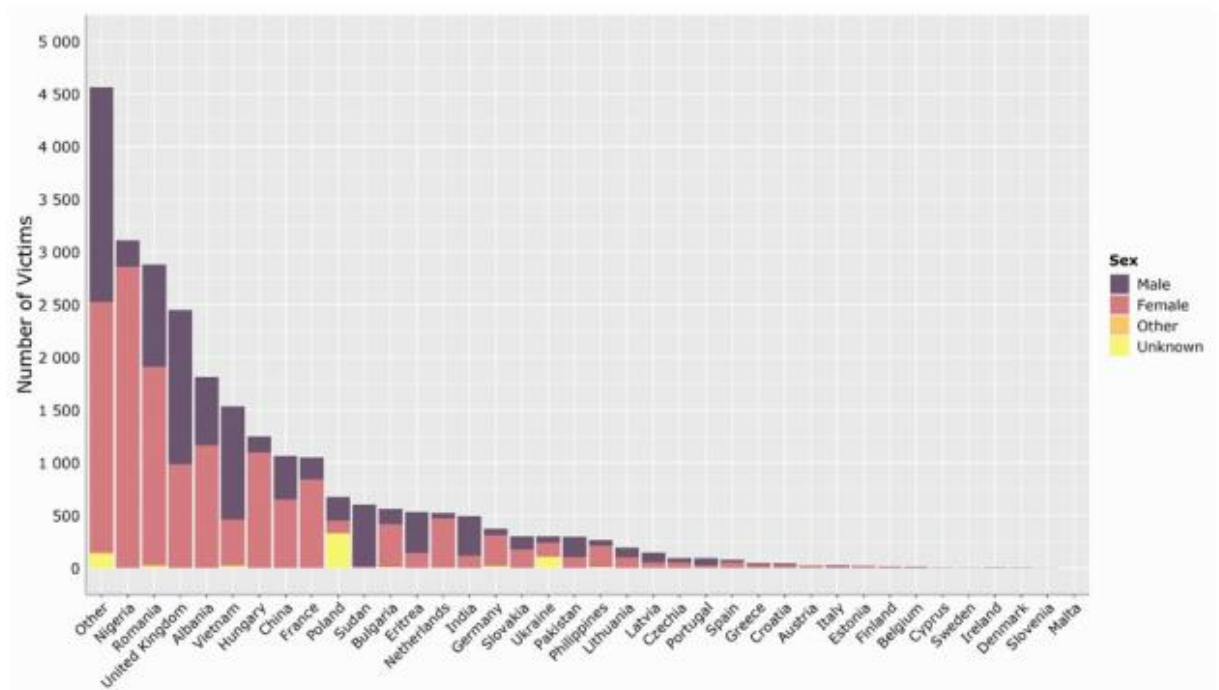


Table 9: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU BY CITIZENSHIP AND SEX (SOURCE: EU 2020 DATA ON TRAFFICKING, P. 30)

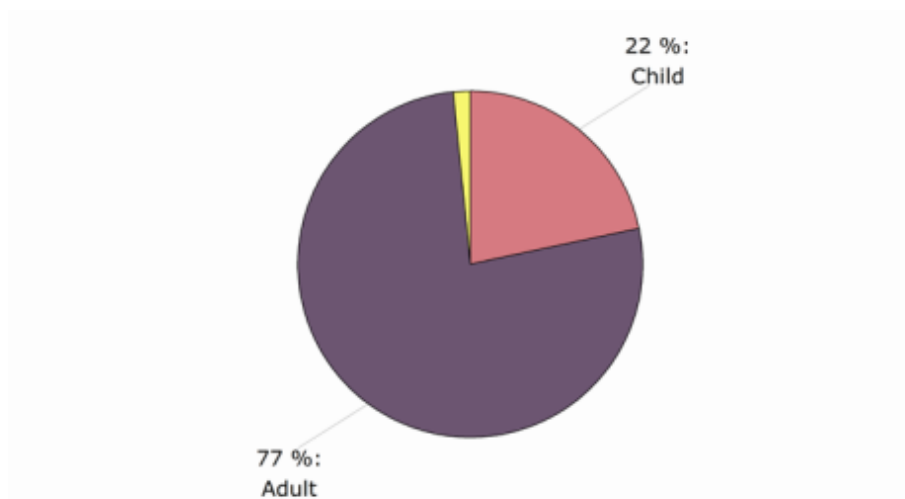


Table 10: VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING IN THE EU-27 BY AGE (SOURCE: EU 2020 DATA ON TRAFFICKING, P. 20)

Internal and external trafficking

A (now dated) study revealed that the level of internal trafficking is much higher than transnational cross-border trafficking. Stronger public and media attention to the latter has contributed to producing a distorted scenario. The same study estimated that between 750,000 to one million persons are trafficked annually in Nigeria. About 75% of the people are trafficked across the states of the Federation, 23% within the states and 2% across Nigerian borders (NAPTIP, 2005). This suggests that attention must be drawn to the multiple facets of trafficking both internal and external to Nigeria.

Nigerians have a tradition to migrate abroad for different reasons, linked to the internal socio-economic and political situation and to the expected living conditions in destination countries. It was fashionable to seek overseas study to give the family entitlement to relocate to a desired economic buoyant nation, coupled with the expected rich academic knowledge and skills. In other cases, regular openings for labour migration paved the way for many Nigerian professionals to migrate, as it was the case when Saudi Arabia called for nurses and doctors, particularly women, to occupy medical positions. Other alternative reasons to migrate were associated with the willingness to ask for international protection in Europe.

In 2004, Nigerians were said to be the fifth-largest group of asylum seekers based on ethnic and religious grounds. Yet, most of their applications were rejected on the grounds they would better settle in neighboring states and west African countries rather than in Europe, with evident responsibilities on the side of European states for the missing protection granted to them, as repeatedly reported by several sources.

As reported by Afaha (2013), the demand for low-skilled labour in the agricultural and service sector in Italy, in the 1980s, gave rise to a first flow of Nigerians travelling to Italy. Some women worked as sex workers, independently, until the migration restrictions imposed by the Italian Government, in the 1990s, resulted in other potential emigrants seeking loans and sponsorship from the women who had settled in Italy. This scenario turned traffickers to sexually exploit fellow Nigerian women. An increasing arrival of Nigerian women arrived in Italy and Spain between 2015 and 2017 (Frontex, 2018) and the impact, perceived as overwhelming, on the European territory, drew the attention of stakeholders and policymakers and pushed for more restrictive policies.

According to the latest US State Department Report (2020), over the past five years, human traffickers have been exploiting domestic and foreign people also in Nigeria. Internal trafficking largely involved recruitment in rural areas, particularly in southern regions, for sexual exploitation and for exploitation in domestic work, in cities such as Lagos, Aboekuta, Ibadan, Kano, Kaduna, Calabar and Port Harcourt. While women and girls are usually exploited in domestic services and commercial sex, boys are exploited in forced labour associated with street vending, begging, domestic services, mining, stone quarrying, agriculture, textile manufacturing. Traffickers also operate "baby factories". Particularly in Lagos, infants can be made available to street beggars to increase their profits. In more recent times, Nigerian girls have been rescued also from neighboring African countries, such as Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Ghana, just to mention a few a countries. Nigerian traffickers take women and children to other West and Central African countries too - including Mali, Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire, and Cabo Verde - and to South Africa, where they are exploited in forced labour and sex trafficking.

The ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) has had a common migration policy in place for Member States which grants free movement of persons, joint migration data management and the MIDWA (Migration Dialogue for West Africa), a platform where migration issues are discussed (IOM, 2019). This arguably points to the very different approach to migration with respect to the EU. Yet, flow Monitoring Points (FMP) were established in the Nigerian borders of Sokoto and Kano, to monitor the movement of persons in and out of the Niger republic, as a result of an externalised EU border control policy. In May 2020, an average of 691 individuals were observed crossing the borders, on a daily basis, a 2% cent decrease compared to the previous month, most likely as a result of Covid-19 movement restrictions imposed by the Federal Government (IOM, 2020). Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon were the main countries of departure and intended destination for individuals passing through FMPs. In addition, the flows were associated with the following declared motivations: short-term local movements (44%); economic migration of more than six months (34%); seasonal migration (18%); and tourism (3%).

In May 2019, the average of individuals passing through corresponded to 1,466, more than double the number compared to the following year. The countries of departure and intended destinations were the same. The intentions of these movements were similarly mostly linked to short-term local movements and economic migration of more than six months (respectively 45% and 36%), while seasonal migration scored 13% (compared to 18% in the following year) and tourism 6% (double with respect to the following year (IOM, 2019).

Nigerian women and children are also recruited and transported to North Africa, the Middle East - including Saudi Arabia, Oman, and United Arab Emirates - and Central Asia. Another evident dynamic regards women from West African countries who transit Nigeria en route to Russia, the Middle East and Europe, including France, Italy, Spain, Austria, to be sexually exploited.

Italy was a primary destination for Nigerian victims, but more recently trafficking networks have been expanding to other destinations, such as France and Spain, and are operating in more and more strongly organised forms throughout Europe. The majority of Nigerian trafficking victims in Europe have come from Edo State, via Libya, but French authorities reported an increasing number of Nigerian trafficking victims originating from northern states, with recruitment in IDP camps.

Concerning movements, particularly towards Europe, it is not to be forgotten that Nigerians have been mostly using the Central Mediterranean route that, since 2014, has been recording more deaths than any other migration route in the world (table 11). Additionally, in line with previous reports, 97% of Nigerian migrants reported to have transited through Niger to reach Libya in 2020. The remaining migrants (3%) reported having used various routes through Chad and Algeria, amongst other countries. Most of them (70%) reported having crossed unofficial points of entry. Data is unclear on how many have been stranded between Niger and Libya.

Finally, consideration should be given to data regarding returns, as data is very fragmented and interpretation is fraught with difficulties, starting with the fact that returns can be classified under the category of assisted and voluntary returns, forced returns, spontaneous returns, etc., as will be further explained. However, according to the most recent estimates, in January 2021, UNHCR Nigeria counted

2,6 million of IDPs (most of whom in the North-east), 1,7 million returnees (cumulative since 2015), 68,000 refugees and asylum seekers registered in Nigeria²⁵.

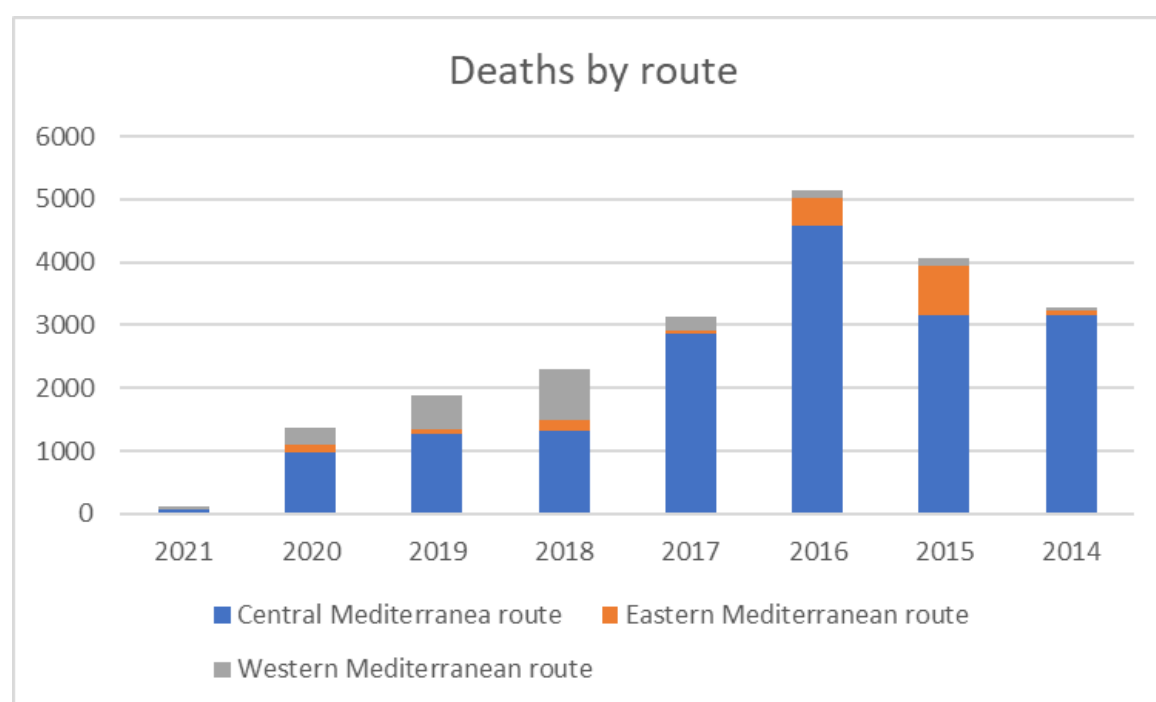


TABLE 11: DEATHS OF MIGRANTS BY ROUTE (SOURCE: MISSING MIGRANTS-IOM. AVAILABLE: [HTTPS://MISSINGMIGRANTS.IOM.INT/REGION/MEDITERRANEAN?MIGRANT_ROUTE%5B%5D=1376&MIGRANT_ROUTE%5B%5D=1377&MIGRANT_ROUTE%5B%5D=1378](https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean?migrant_route%5B%5D=1376&migrant_route%5B%5D=1377&migrant_route%5B%5D=1378) LAST ACCESS: 28/01/2021)

Received and referred cases of trafficking in Nigeria

The following data draws from the most recent report by NAPTIP, the 2020 second-quarter report and from the 2019 report. Comparable data relating to the second reporting period of 2019 and preceding years is not available, hence data cannot be compared. Consideration must be given also to the fact that 2020 was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic that caused considerable delays and difficulties in the collection of data, as NAPTIP officials explained during interviews with the INSigHT researchers.

Received, investigated and referred cases

In the second-quarter of 2020, the agency received 134 cases. The highest number of reported cases (27) was on the procurement of persons for sexual exploitation and the lowest on exportation of persons for prostitution. The likelihood must be stressed that the on-going pandemic and the related lockdown policies and restrictions have impacted on the recording of data. Only 17 cases were fully investigated - out of the 134 cases reported - considerably less, in proportional terms, to 2019 (203). Only 3 out of the 27 cases of procurement of persons for sexual exploitation were fully investigated

²⁵ Available: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/84813> Last access: 02/02/2021.

(table 12) – with respect to 19 in 2019, when the majority of investigated cases (46) concerned foreign travel which promotes prostitution and child abuse (36) (table 13).

Only one referral was made and it was made to the Ministry of Justice.

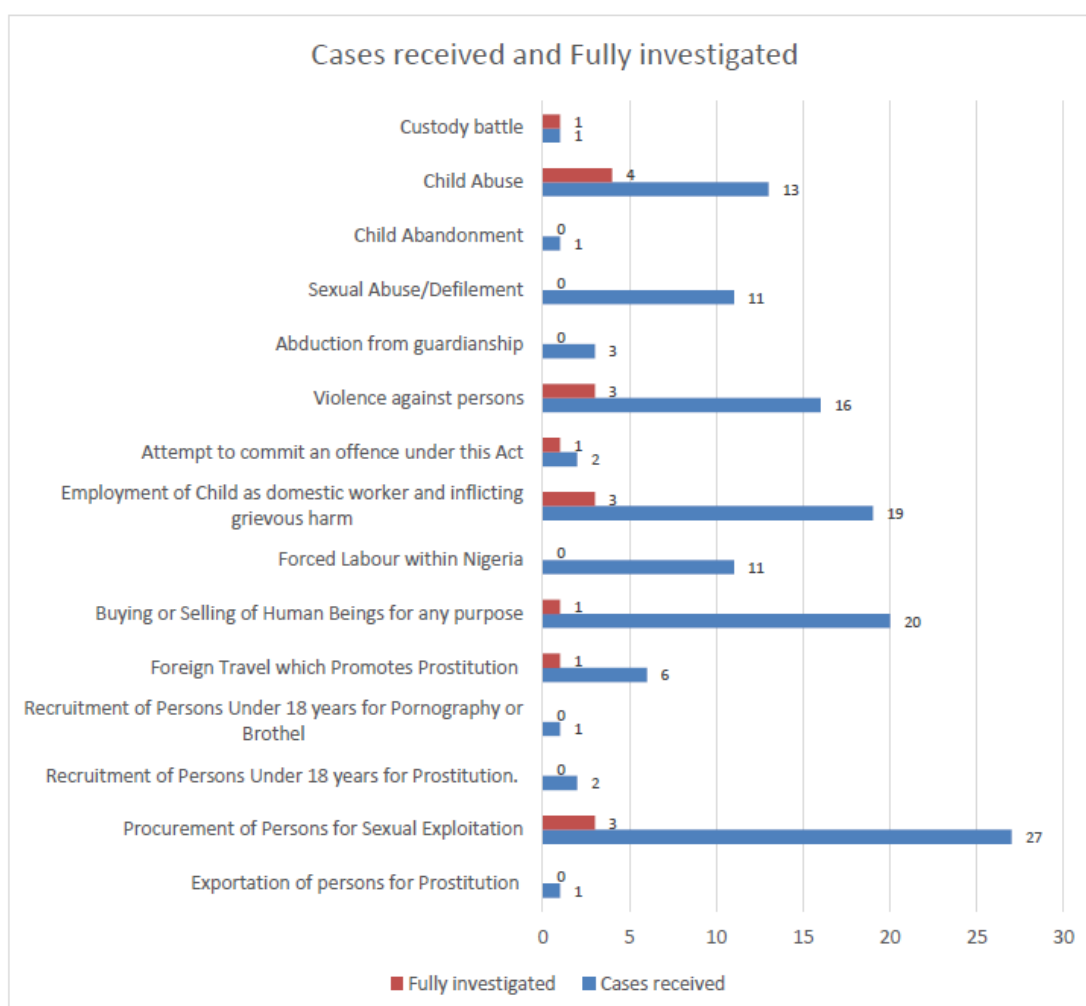


TABLE12: CASES RECEIVED AND FULLY INVESTIGATED (SOURCE: NAPTIP 2020 SECOND-QUARTER REPORT, P. 4)

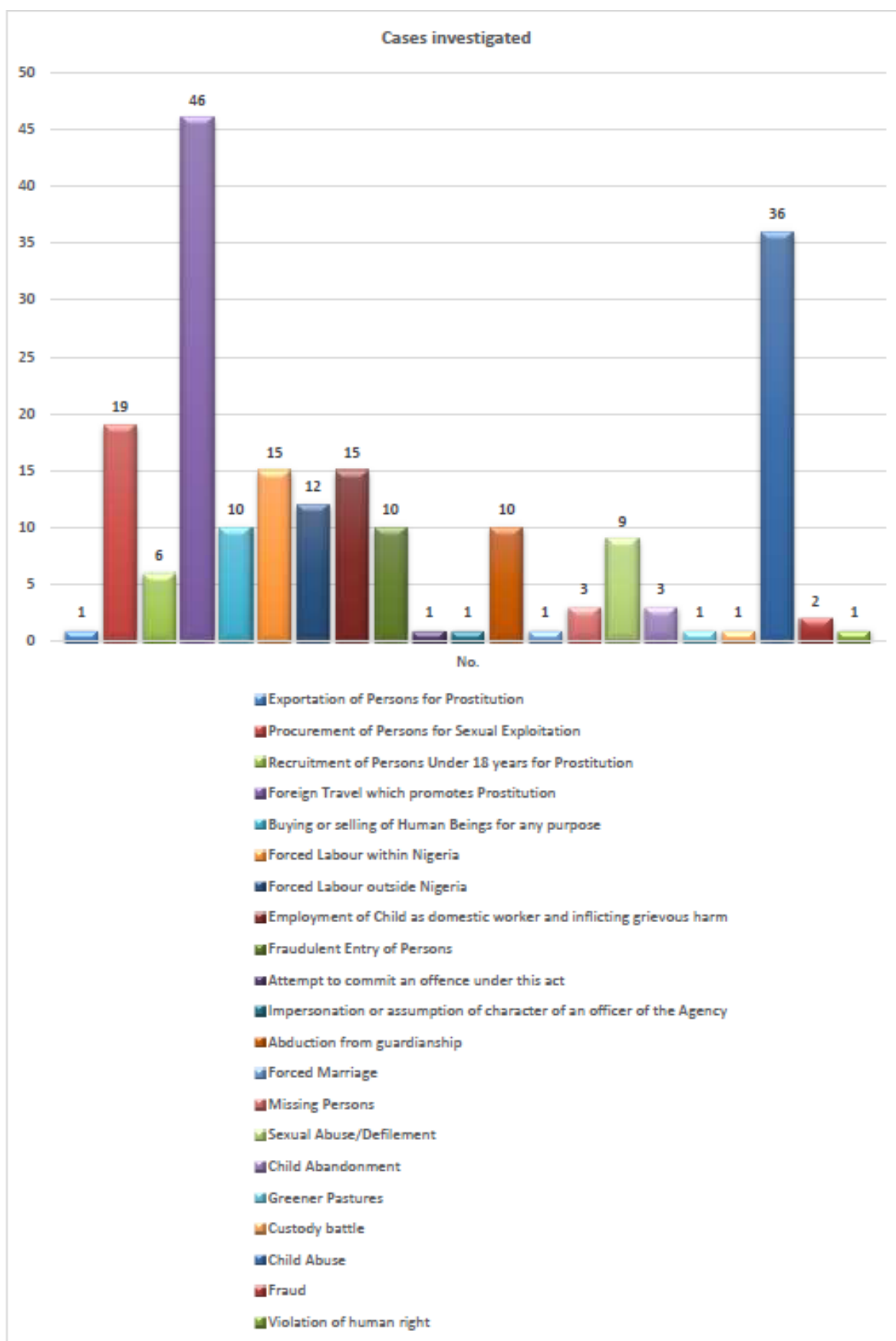


Table 13: CASES INVESTIGATED (SOURCE: NAPTIP 2019 REPORT, P. 3)

Arrests of suspected traffickers and prosecutions

A total of 101 suspected traffickers were arrested – against a much higher total of 701 in 2019. The highest number was associated with the exploitation of children as domestic workers (22), procurement of persons for sexual exploitation (21) and buying and selling of human beings for any purpose (20).

The Investigation and Monitoring Department of NAPTIP submitted a total of 28 cases to the Legal and Prosecution Department. Only 17 cases were charged to court – including 12 cases of procurement of persons for sexual exploitations (out of 15) and two of exportation of persons for prostitution was charged to court (tables 14 and 15).

Five was the total number of traffickers - one female and four males - convicted for different cases – with respect to 25 in 2019. Four (4) of the convicted traffickers are male, and one (1) female.

S/N	Categories of offences	Cases received	Cases charged to court
1	Exportation of persons for prostitution	2	2
2	Procurement of Persons for Sexual Exploitation	15	12
3	Recruitment of Persons Under 18 years for Prostitution	0	1
4	Buying or Selling of Human Beings for any purpose	4	0
5	Forced Labour within Nigeria	2	1
6	Obstruction of the Agency or its authorized Officer	1	0
7	Child Abuse	1	0
8	Abduction from Guardianship	1	1
9	Abuse of power	2	0
	Total	28	17

TABLE 14: CASE RECEIVED AND CHARGED TO COURT (SOURCE: NAPTIP 2020 SECOND-QUARTER REPORT, P. 6)

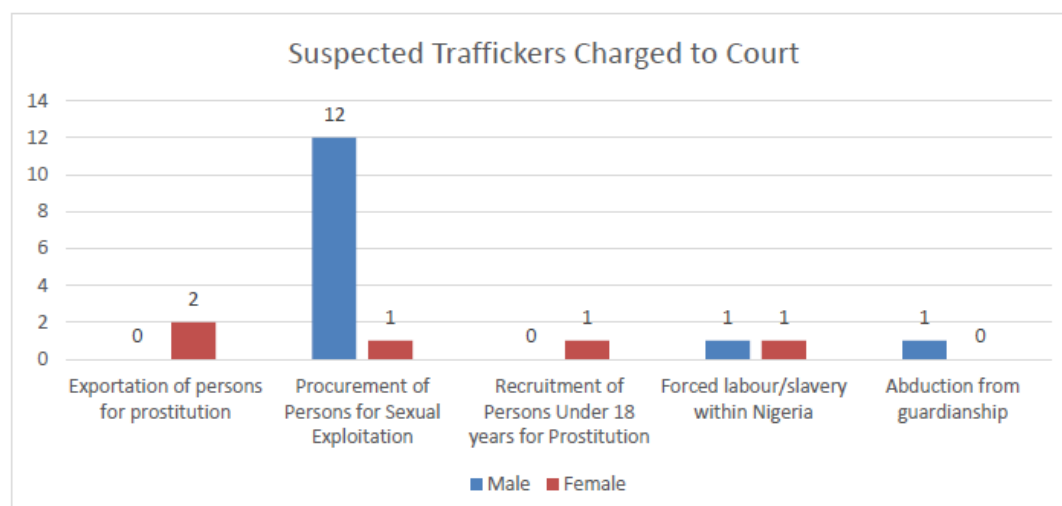


Table 15: SUSPECTED TRAFFICKERS CHARGED TO COURT (SOURCE: NAPTIP 2020 SECOND-QUARTER REPORT, P. 8)

Comparison with progress in prosecutions and convictions in Europe

In face of the continuous challenges posed in the fight of trafficking, some progress can be recorded in the prosecution and conviction of traffickers, although data should be considered with caution, as ambiguity was evident in data reported by some countries. The Member States reporting the highest number of prosecutions were France (2,907), Belgium (986), Romania (850), Austria (294) and Bulgaria (156), similarly, but with a slight improvement, compared to the period 2015-2016, as far as France and Romania are concerned (2,396 and 817 respectively). No data were reported on prosecutions in Italy in either period. Comparisons in the sense strict can be hardly made, because of differences in the methods used for data collection and differences in the functioning of the systems in Nigeria and in European Member States. However, the total number of (reported) cases charged to court, for the same period - 2017/2018 – is low and yet similar to the total reported by Bulgaria (145 versus 156), that was the 5th country in the list of the top-five in the EU. As for convictions, NAPTIP (2017, 2018) reported a total of 76 people convicted in the period 2017-2018, similarly to the total reported by the Czech Republic (83) that ranked 5th in the list of the top-five, following Germany (319), Romania (2019), Italy (2018), the Netherlands (96).

Rescued people victims of trafficking

A total of 114 victims were rescued in Nigeria, most of whom under the procurement for sexual exploitation or internal prostitution (34), all of whom were females. 31 child abuse victims were rescued - only one of whom from external sexual exploitation - in the Ivory Coast (table 16); while in 2019 countries eight states/countries were counted: Mali, Niger, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Libya were in the top five list.

Many believed that during the global pandemic and the first lockdown, traffickers' activity would slow down. In fact, a report by the NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command shows that internal trafficking has been fluctuating. According to data by the NAPTIP Lagos Command, a total of 197 survivors were rescued

between January to July 2020. The month of March, when Nigeria and Lagos were in lockdown, had the highest month of interceptions, showing that the trafficker played on the back of the lockdown to keep recruiting (table 17). Earlier 2019 data reported a total of 1152 rescued victims, the majority of whom (18.4%) from procurement of foreign travel which promotes prostitution, that probably slowed down with the spread of the pandemic, leading traffickers to identify other strategies that are, to date, not known.

The majority of victims (44) were aged 18 and above; 30 of whom 0-12 and 40 of whom 13-17 (table 18). In 2019, up to 49.8% were aged 0-17. Out of the 114 victims rescued, 102 were females and 12 males – against 80.6% females in 2019. Young girls remain most vulnerable with respect to boys, as far as sexual exploitation and trafficking are concerned (table 19).

NAPTIP has relied upon the support of other stakeholders to rescue people victims of trafficking, including nine agencies. NPF, CC and IOM rescued the majority of victims, following NAPTIP – respectively 28, 19, nine versus 44 (table 20). In 2019, NAPTIP relied on 16 agencies. NIS, IOM, Nigerian embassies, NPF rescued the majority of victims, following NAPTIP – respectively 227, 112, 106, 103 (table 21).

All the victims rescued were Nigerians. The states recording the highest number of victims were the following: Akwa Ibom (28), Benue (16) and Abia and Sokoto (eight each), Enugu (6); only one in Edo State and none in Lagos, more traditionally associated with the trafficking of girls of women to Europe (table 22). In 2019, the states with the highest number of victims included: Edo State (99), followed by Imo (88), Delta (76), Anambra (74).

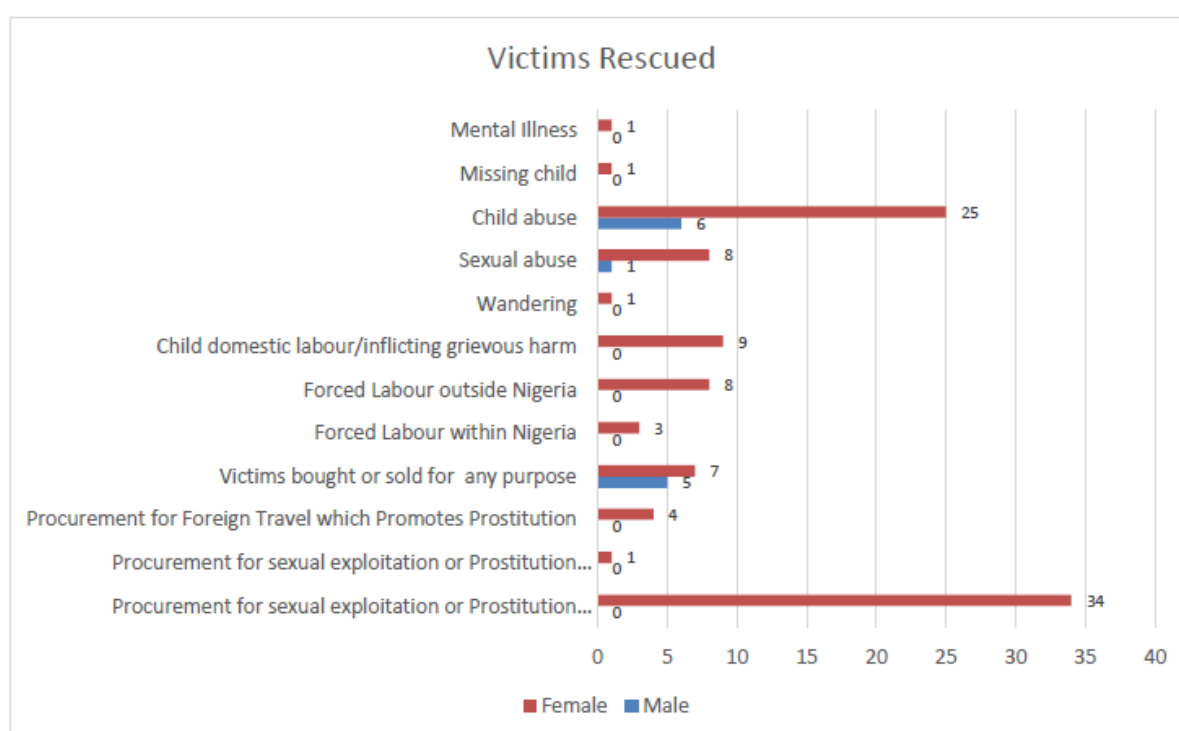


Table 16: VICTIMS RESCUED (SOURCE: NAPTIP 2020 SECOND-QUARTER REPORT, P. 10)

MONTH	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE	BELOW 18 YEARS	ABOVE 18 YEARS
JANUARY	48	12	36	12	36
February	40	02	38	08	32
March	71	-	71	07	64
April	01	-	01	-	01
May	24	-	24	03	21
June	11	01	10	03	08
July	02	-	02	-	02
Total	197	15	182	33	164

TABLE 17: DATA ON SURVIVORS RESCUED (JANUARY – JULY 2020) (SOURCE: NAPTIP LAGOS COMMAND)

Age	Male	Female	Total
0 - 12 years	10	20	30
13 - 17 years	2	38	40
18 and above	0	44	44
Total	12	102	114

TABLE 18: AGE OF VICTIMS RESCUED, DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER (SOURCE: NAPTIP 2020 SECOND-QUARTER REPORT, P. 11)

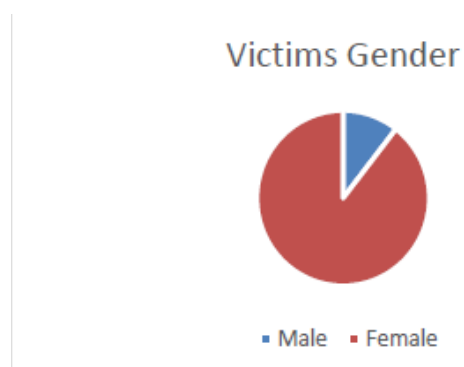


TABLE 19: GENDER OF RESCUED VICTIMS (SOURCE: NAPTIP 2020 SECOND-QUARTER REPORT, P. 11)

Rescue Agencies	total of victims rescued	%
<i>NAPTIP</i>	44	38.6
Nigeria Police Force (NPF)	28	24.6
Concerned Citizens (CC)	19	16.7
International Organisation for Migration (IOM)	9	7.9
Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC)	4	3.5
Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC)	3	2.6
Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS)	2	1.8
Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA)	2	1.8
National Human Right Commission (NHRC)	2	1.8
State Government	1	0.9
	114	100

TABLE 20: RESCUE AGENCIES (SOURCE: NAPTIP 2020 SECOND-QUARTER REPORT, P. 12)

S/N	Rescue Agencies	No.	Percentage (%)
1	NAPTIP	357	31.0
2	Nigeria Immigration Service	227	19.7
3	Nigerian Army	1	0.1
4	Nigeria Police Force	103	8.9
5	Department of State Services	25	2.2
6	Nigerian Custom Service	4	0.3
7	Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps	28	2.4
8	Non-Governmental Organisations	12	1.0
9	Good Citizens	94	8.1
10	Fed./State Min. of Women Affairs	3	0.3
11	International Organisation for Migration	112	9.7
12	Foreign Police	26	2.3
13	State Govt.	16	1.4
14	NDLEA	4	0.3
15	National Human Right Commission	21	1.8
16	Nigerian Embassies	106	9.2
17	ICPC	13	1.1
	Total	1,152	100.0

TABLE 21: RESCUE AGENCIES (SOURCE: NAPTIP 2019, P. 12)

	Male	Female	Total
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	State	nr.	%	nr.	%	nr.	%
1	Abia	5	41.7	3	2.9	8	7.0
2	Adamawa	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
3	Akwa Ibom	2	16.7	26	25.5	28	24.6
4	Anambra	1	8.3	1	1.0	2	1.8
5	Bauchi	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
6	Bayelsa	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
7	Benue	1	8.3	15	14.7	16	14.0
8	Borno	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
9	Cross River	0	0.0	6	5.9	6	5.3
10	Delta	0	0.0	3	2.9	3	2.6
11	Ebonyi	0	0.0	3	2.9	3	2.6
12	Edo	0	0.0	1	1.0	1	0.9
13	Ekiti	0	0.0	1	1.0	1	0.9
14	Enugu	0	0.0	6	5.9	6	5.3
15	FCT	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
16	Gombe	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
17	Imo	0	0.0	1	1.0	1	0.9
18	Jigawa	0	0.0	1	1.0	1	0.9
19	Kaduna	0	0.0	5	4.9	5	4.4
20	Kano	0	0.0	2	2.0	2	1.8
21	Katsina	0	0.0	4	3.9	4	3.5
22	Kebbi	0	0.0	1	1.0	1	0.9
23	Kogi	0	0.0	1	1.0	1	0.9
24	Kwara	0	0.0	2	2.0	2	1.8
25	Lagos	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
26	Nasarawa	0	0.0	2	2.0	2	1.8
27	Niger	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
28	Ogun	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
29	Ondo	0	0.0	2	2.0	2	1.8
30	Osun	1	8.3	4	3.9	5	4.4
31	Oyo	0	0.0	2	2.0	2	1.8
32	Plateau	0	0.0	3	2.9	3	2.6
33	Rivers	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
34	Sokoto	2	16.7	6	5.9	8	7.0
35	Taraba	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
36	Yobe	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

TABLE 22: DISTRIBUTION OF RESCUED VICTIMS (SOURCE: NAPTIP 2020 SECOND-QUARTER REPORT, P. 12-13)

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

According to World Bank estimates, the Covid-19 pandemic was going to push 49 million people into extreme poverty, in 2020, with Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo among the countries with the largest change in the number of poor²⁶.

As reported by Save the Children (2020), the experience of Ebola outbreaks in Africa showed that lockdowns and movement restrictions highly disrupt everyday activities and strongly contribute to the increasing risk of hunger and malnutrition, particularly in children. This is also linked to decreasing job opportunities, particularly in African countries, whereby the informal sector employs far more than half of the labor force – the informal sector represents nearly 55% of the cumulative gross domestic product of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Considerable concern has been expressed that many children would not return to school after the lockdown and more generally the course of the pandemic, particularly those belonging to the most vulnerable groups and those living in countries that have been suffering from humanitarian crises, like Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Nigeria, Mali, Mozambique (Save the Children, 2020).

This situation is clearly likely to further encourage migration movements, under conditions of exploitation. Whereby families experience increasing poverty and legal channels for migration are not granted, human trafficking is likely to continue offering a viable acceptable alternative for many individuals, in spite of its negative implications on people's lives.

Push and pull factors of migration

After having provided a statistical overview of migration and human trafficking movements from and within Nigeria, we should recall the main push and pull factors to inform the following sections on returns.

Human trafficking in Nigeria occurs both internally and externally and has gained global attention for its role as a source, transit and destination country. The internal trafficking has to do with domestic servitude, street hawking, forced labor and sexual exploitation, that comes in the form of the under-explored theme of baby factories - where young girls are kidnapped and molested in a hideout for the delivery of babies in high demand for purchase - while the external trafficking is largely about trafficking for the scope of sexual exploitation and domestic servitude (Emanemua, 2016; Makinde, 2016). The modern day slavery has been governed by corrupt practices and the universal acceptance of exploitation accords victims special protections (Agbu, 2003; Nunn and Wantchekon, 2009; Brysk, 2011; Orme and Ross-sheriff, 2015). Job creation and skills and acquisition have been amplified as a panacea for irregular migration and human trafficking. However, job creation would have little impact on an adventurous and determined migrant. One major reason for re-trafficking has been linked to business disconnection and empowerment dissatisfaction in trainings and business models provided to returnees as a reintegration tool (Eghafona, 2018).

²⁶ Mahler D. G., Lakner, C., Castaneda Aguilar R. A., Wu H. (2020) The impact of COVID-19 on global poverty: why Sub-Saharan Africa might be the region hardest hit. Available: https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/impact-covid-19-coronavirus-global-poverty-why-sub-saharan-africa-might-be-region-hardest?cid=dec tt data en_ext?cid=SHR BlogSiteShare EN_EXT Last access: 20/02/2021.

Generally speaking, it has become more and more evident, that the complexity of the phenomenon of trafficking in the Nigerian context can only be understood with a combination of push and pull variables (to cite a few authors and sources: Enaikele and Olutayo, 2011; Ikuteyijo, 2020; Pathfinders Justice Initiative, 2020).

A major drive by Nigerian youth crossing the Sea has been attributed to the socio-economic imbalance between the global south and the global north (Ellis and Akpala, 2011; Oluniyi, 2012). However, many reports have highlighted that, in Edo State – data is missing, to our knowledge, with reference to other states –, some families facilitate human trafficking (ETAHT, 2019: pag. 71). Gender variables certainly play out as crucial structural elements of the household (and of the wider community). Several authors remind us that women continue to occupy an unequal position, often with limited access to education and employment opportunities, but also with asymmetrical positions in the family structure, with little decision-making power (Ogonor and Osunde, 2007; Osezua, 2013; 2016; Hynes et al., 2018). Girls often take the role of “sacrificial lambs”: their decisions to leave is seen as a determinant factor for the success or failure of the entire family (Shatsari, 2010; Caretta, 2015; Ikuteyijo, 2020). Edo state is internationally recognised as the hub of human trafficking (DIS, 2008; Stoyanova, 2011; Finnish Immigration Service, 2015). A recent research by ETAHT (2019) reported that seven out of every 10 persons in Edo state desire to travel abroad to improve their socio-economic condition. Little research is available on other states though.

Religion is also mentioned as a critical variable, although we believe this aspect should also be further explored. It is mentioned in association with the strong influence that traditional juju rituals and oath taking can have on victims of trafficking in terms of coercion and constant threat (among others: Baarda, 2016; Ikeora, 2016; IFRA, 2019), but they have also been used to support victims of trafficking in their rehabilitation (Nwogu, 2014), apparently with positive outcomes. Nigeria is very much a religious country and the African traditional religions, as well as Christianity have impacted considerably on the social life of the people. Traditional rituals have been used to recruit people for trafficking and in the same way it is reasonable to think that religion could help enhance reintegration (Osezua, 2013a). We strongly believe that more attention should be paid to these factors that, to date, have not been taken seriously enough.

There is generalised consensus that poverty is a primary factor responsible for migration and trafficking (among the most recent reports see the findings on Oredo LGA in Edo State by PJI, 2020). As reported by Ikuteyijo (2020), in the third quarter of 2016, the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics revealed that the overall unemployment rate rose to 13.9 % and youth unemployment to 25%. In this sense, we should also note that lack of employment opportunities (and educational ones) tend to be mentioned in general terms only, with little clarity on the extent to which and how they represent an element of vulnerability to trafficking (Hynes et al., 2018).

There are no evident cultural and historical reasons that encourage traveling abroad. The proliferation of human trafficking is connected to its perception as an avenue to create wealth, as described by fellow citizens who were previously trafficked. According to ETAHT (2019), trafficking can also be explained with the loss of moral values, but we have not collected any evidence (from secondary sources) in this sense.

We think that dealing with human trafficking will require a decision to convict traffickers, including traffickers who hid under the presence of running hotels (Dunbar, 1999). Considerable resources

have been committed to counter human trafficking from and in Nigeria and reintegrate survivors (see Semprebon, 2020). Some authors stress that political will is necessary to improve cooperation among stakeholders, not only within Nigeria but also beyond its borders, as human trafficking takes place mostly on a transnational level and it needs addressing in this dynamic nature (Kreidenweis and Hudson, 2015; Dottridge, 2014).

Other factors include incessant conflicts and insecurity (Ingwe, 2014; Caretta, 2015), a weak legal system with porous borders (see also Sawadogo, 2012), corrupt government officials (see for example Agbu, 2003), weak commitment on the part of immigration and law enforcement agencies, inadequate legislations for the conviction of traffickers, entrusting vulnerable children into the hands of foster parents, illiteracy (Abdulraheem and Oladipo, 2010; Adepelumi, 2015; Olufunke, 2016; Emanemua, 2016).

Kari et al. (2018), on their side, highlight that pull factors are associated with exposure to the living conditions of destination countries (labour demand, economic opportunities, document regularisation) (see also: Ellis and Akpala, 2011; Ingwe, 2014) and the capacity of traffickers and smugglers to leverage the asylum system: traffickers are familiar with the programmes offered to victims – that often eventually leave them frustrated and cause their abandonment - and create networks “to support victims” throughout their journey. Emanemua (2016) further posits that the high demand for the sexual services of African girls in Europe is a causal element of human trafficking. Not to be underestimated is the role played by media (Ikuteyijo, 2020), nor the actual tactics by traffickers, on which more research is needed (IFRA, 2016; PJI, 2020), particularly as far as digital recruiting is concerned, as PJI (2020) stresses (on this see: the recent text by Antonopoulos et al., 2020).

Besides, migration policies have been ineffective in countering trafficking (Adedokun, 2016; Eghafona, 2018) and so have been the measures to reduce and contrast trafficking. Paradoxically they have encouraged individuals to take more complex, often less safe, routes (Ellis and Akpala, 2011). The militarisation of borders to prevent illegal entry into destination countries have in most cases increased irregular migration rather than serving as a control measure (IOM, 2015).

Section 3

The relevant anti-trafficking normative framework for Nigeria

While the exact timing of the emergence of human trafficking in Nigeria is still unclear, the foundation for its eradication can be traced back to the establishment of anti-trafficking NGOs and their commitment, specifically in Edo State, in the late 1990s, as explained above. Before their creation, human trafficking was not seen as an issue of national concern. According to Mrs. Morenikeji Omaiboje of WOCON, the impact of aggressive awareness-raising programmes by WOTCLEF and WOCON, addressing the exploitation of children and women, brought to light the need for a national agency to combat human trafficking (Interview, Director of Programmes, WOCON, 25/03/2020). Further pressure was made to domesticate the UN Trafficking Protocol that was ratified by the Nigerian government in 2001. The establishment of NAPTIP followed two years later, with the introduction of the **Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act**.

Nigeria had no specific law at that time to fight trafficking and protect victims and potential victims. If they were dealt at all, relevant cases were dealt based on the provision of the **Federal Government Constitution**, the **Criminal and Penal Codes**, besides international conventions and the **Conventions of the African Union**.

Next we will provide an overview of each of these pieces of legislation, thus presenting the Nigerian normative framework and, before that, the international and African one.

The International normative framework²⁷

The Palermo Protocol on trafficking, the **Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children**²⁸ is universally accepted as the international legal framework on human trafficking. It is among the most ratified protocols globally. Nigeria was among the first countries to ratify it, on June 28th 2001.

The protocol refers explicitly to transnational crime. In the view of Coontz and Griebel (2004), it promotes the criminalisation of traffickers over the human rights of victims, which arguably contributed to raising States' interest in ratifying it (Hathaway, 2008). The protocol includes also guidelines on protection, prevention and international cooperation. However, protection is substantially delegated to the willingness of States to intervene in appropriate cases: *"each State Party shall consider implementing measures to provide for the physical, psychological and social recovery of victims of trafficking in persons, including, in appropriate cases, in cooperation with non-governmental organisations, other relevant organisations and other elements of civil society"* (art. 6, paragraph 3).

Furthermore, the Protocol refers to the provision of *"appropriate housing", counselling and information, in particular as regards their legal rights"* (paragraph 3) and specifies that the age, gender

²⁷ The sections on the international and African normative frameworks have drawn from Ikeora (2018). For earlier accounts of legislation in Nigeria see also Olateru-Olagbegi (2007).

²⁸ Available: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/protocoltraffickinginpersons.aspx> Last access: 04/02/2021.

and special needs of victims of trafficking, in particular those of children, should be taken into consideration (paragraph 4), but the actual type of housing and support provisions remains vague. Similarly, only general provisions are given on the legal status of victims (art. 7) and their repatriation (art. 8).

The immigration issues that are clearly connected to trafficking were left to the discretionary migration and border management of national states. While their agenda is geared towards the identification and interception of traffickers, it is primarily concerned with the protection of national borders from irregular migrants. In this scenario, victims of trafficking are seen as (temporary) potential witnesses for the justice system rather than (permanent) holders of rights (Kneebone, 2010) and States are generally reluctant in granting them a residence permit.

The EU normative framework appears to be more protective, with specific provisions made by the **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights** (2000)²⁹, the **Council of Europe Convention Against the Trafficking in Human Beings** (2008)³⁰ and the **EU Directive 2011/36 on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting its Victims** (2011)³¹. They all oblige States to ensure minimum standards of assistance, not necessarily based on cooperation with the justice system. However, such obligations regard Member States only.

EU Framework on Returns and Cooperation with Third-Countries

In March 2015, Nigeria and the EU signed the **Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility (CAMM)**, which established the prevention and fight of irregular migration and trafficking in human beings as one of four priority areas of bilateral collaboration on migration. The urgent need to address trafficking, as well as smuggling, was also emphasised in the **Valetta Summit Declaration and Action Plan**, adopted in November of the same year. Out of the five pillars, the European Union intervened in the area of return and reintegration in Nigeria, which demonstrates its priority.

In 2017, the European Commission presented its renewed **Action Plan on Return**, based on the first plan issued in 2015, with the aim to better enforce the **Return Directive 2008/115/EC**³², through increased operational cooperation with Frontex and the increased use of detention. At the end of 2018, the EU had 17 readmission agreements in force with countries of origin for the purposes of return, in addition to bilateral readmission agreements involving individual EU Member States.

Indeed, Nigeria has also been extending cooperation to other countries, such as Benin, Niger, Italy³³ and the UK (see Ikeora, 2018), through the signing of bilateral and multilateral agreements. Further cooperation between Italy and Nigeria has been promoted in the last two years, starting with the transfer of, and the subsequent actions undertaken by an Italian Police Officer of the Ministry of Interior, and a Nigerian Prosecutor. The former has been transferred to the Italian Embassy in Abuja, with the specific task to foster collaboration with Nigerian agencies engaged in anti-trafficking work;

²⁹ Available: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/IT/TXT/?uri=CELEX:12012P/TXT> Last access: 04/02/2021.

³⁰ Available: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/197> Last access: 04/02/2021.

³¹ Available: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32011L0036> Last access: 04/02/2021.

³² Available: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:348:0098:0107:en:PDF>
Last access: 02/02/2021.

³³ Accordo tra il governo della Repubblica italiana ed il governo della Repubblica Federale di Nigeria in materia migratoria (Agreement between the government of the Italian Republic and the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on migration), signed in Rome on September 12th 2000.

the latter has been transferred to Italy to collaborate with Italian prosecutors. It should be stressed that, in 2016, Italy signed three agreements with Nigeria on extradition, mutual assistance in penal proceedings, transfer of individuals prosecuted and charged with trafficking crimes, as explained in the recent law enforcement training organised by Equality ATI, as part of the INSigHT Action on January 27th 2020³⁴. While considerable efforts are clearly being made to foster the collaboration, the actual impacts remain to be seen.

The new Migration Pact

In 2020, the New Migration Pact³⁵ was put forward. Returns are dealt with as a cross-cutting theme in all the five legislative acts³⁶ and the two non-binding proposals for 2021³⁷.

Effective returns, alongside the fight of irregular migration, have been key in the pending reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), with returns considered as the preferred solution to deal with future “migration crisis”. Prioritizing returns has been gathering more consensus among Member States than the implementation of the international obligation for refugees protection. In line with this priority, the Pact aims to increase the returns of the so-called irregularly staying third-country nationals, by:

- introducing a mandatory, accelerated return border procedure – that is meant to become the “new ordinary procedure”;
- establishing an EU Return Coordinator to increase coordination for domestic returns;
- extending the integration between asylum and return policies;
- introducing return sponsorship as a form of solidarity cooperation among the Member States.

The last provision promises to increase solidarity among the Member States and to favor more effective returns in full respect of fundamental human rights - compared to the 2018 Recast Return Directive proposal³⁸. At the same time, the increasing integration between asylum and return policies, the introduction of a “new ordinary procedure” (extending the application of accelerated procedures) are posing evident threats to the right of asylum and the principle of *non-refoulement* (Moraru, 2021).

The Pact ensures the cross-referencing between the proposed acts, but this contributes to complicating the return legal framework which is already rather complex. Furthermore, the still deficient transposition of the Return Directive, with divergences on how returns should take place, complicates the framework further. The Pact itself identifies among the challenges the lack of harmonization across EU Member States, besides insufficient cooperation of third countries on readmission, inefficiencies in the return systems and procedural ambiguities. Finally, the Pact refers to Assisted Voluntary Return as the preferred mode of return. However, challenges for the principles of *non-refoulement* remain high, calling for adequate measures to ensure appropriate risk assessments are granted for returns (ibidem).

³⁴ Details are available here: <https://www.insightproject.net/exchange-of-experiences-between-law-enforcement-officers-and-anti-trafficking-operators-in-the-veneto-region/> Last access: 02/02/2021.

³⁵ Available: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1706 Last access: 02/02/2021.

³⁶ Available: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/migration-and-asylum-package-new-pact-migration-and-asylum-documents-adopted-23-september-2020> Last access: 02/02/2021.

³⁷ Available: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1601287338054&uri=COM%3A2020%3A609%3AFIN#document2> Last access: 02/02/2021.

³⁸ Available: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52018PC0634> Last access: 02/02/2021.

The African normative framework

The **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa** (2003)³⁹ posits that *"States Parties shall take appropriate and effective measures to (a) enact and enforce laws to prohibit all forms of violence against women including unwanted or forced sex, (b) adopt such other legislative, administrative, social and economic measures as may be necessary to ensure the prevention, punishment and eradication of all forms of violence against women, (c) identify the causes and consequences of violence, (e) punish the perpetrators of violence against women, (g) prevent and condemn trafficking in women, prosecute the perpetrators of such trafficking and protect those women most at risk"*. Although it acknowledges forms of violence and trafficking, the Protocol is clearly focused on women only and it frames trafficking based only on its representations in Africa (and largely outside Africa too), while also falling short of indicating specific implementation measures.

Sub-regional organisations have taken a more decisive stance on the phenomenon. These include ECOWAS, for the specific territory of West Africa, that adopted the **Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings Especially Women and Children**, known as the Ouagadougou Action Plan⁴⁰. It was signed by the Ministerial Conference on Migration and Development, in November 2006, and it requires Member States to implement international norms aimed at strengthening law provisions against trafficking and to foster cooperation to prevent and combat trafficking between the European and the African Unions. ECOWAS signed also the **Convention on Extradition** (1994)⁴¹ and the **Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters** (1992)⁴² to further favour cooperation. The former provides courts with an instrument to arrest criminals, the latter provides for States to assist in proceedings or investigations.

As far as cooperation is concerned, not to be underestimated are also the 2002 UN Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking, updated in 2010⁴³, an international tool, yet non-legal, hence, with the limit that it is not binding. Generally speaking, to date, coordinated action is still poor (Ikeora, 2018). Besides, dealing with trafficking within the ECOWAS has become increasingly challenging due to traffickers' abuse of the Protocol of Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment (1979)⁴⁴ (Sessay and Olayode, 2008), that grants liberty of movement within the territory.

³⁹ Available: https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/protocol_rights_women_africa_2003.pdf Last access: 04/02/2021.

⁴⁰ Available: https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/eu-policy/ouagadougou-action-plan-combat-trafficking-human-beings-especially-women-and-children_en Last access: 04/02/2021.

⁴¹ Available: <https://documentation.ecowas.int/legal-documents/protocols/> Last access: 04/02/2021.

⁴² Ibidem

⁴³ Available: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4d2eb7cf2.pdf> Last access: 04/02/2021.

⁴⁴ Available: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4d2eb7cf2.pdf> Last access: 04/02/2021.

The Nigerian normative framework

The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act

The **Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act** was signed in 2003⁴⁵, subsequently amended in 2005⁴⁶ and replaced in 2015⁴⁷. It is the first specific legislative act on trafficking that was passed in Nigeria.

Two years following its adoption, NAPTIP, the National Agency for the prohibition of traffic in persons, was established. It was entrusted with *“the responsibility to enforce laws against traffic in persons, investigate and prosecute persons suspected to be engaged in traffic in persons and to take charge and coordinate the rehabilitation and counselling of trafficked persons; and for related matters”*.

Section 4 defines its functions as follows:

- a) enforcing and administrating the Act;
- b) co-ordinating all laws on traffic in persons and related offences and the enforcement of those laws;
- c) adopting measures to increase the effectiveness in the eradication of traffic in persons;
- d) facilitating/encouraging the presence/availability of persons, including persons in custody, who consent to assist in investigations or participate in proceedings relating to traffic in persons and related offence;
- e) enhancing the effectiveness of law enforcement agents to suppress traffic in persons;
- f) establishing, maintaining and securing communication to facilitate the rapid exchange of information concerning offences; conduct research and improve international cooperation in the suppression of traffic in persons by road, sea and air;
- g) reinforcing and supplementing measures in bilateral and multilateral treaties and conventions on traffic in persons as may be adopted by Nigeria;
- h) taking such measures collaboration with other agencies/bodies that may ensure the elimination and prevention of the root causes of traffic in persons;
- i) strengthening and enhancing legal means for international cooperation in criminal matters for suppressing the international activities of traffic in persons;
- j) strengthening the co-operation between the office of the Attorney-General of the Federation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), the Nigeria Prisons Service (NPS), welfare officials and other law enforcement agencies in the eradication of traffic in person;
- k) taking charge, supervising, controlling and coordinating the rehabilitation of trafficked persons and participating in proceedings relating to traffic in persons; and all the responsibilities, functions and activities relating to current investigation and prosecution of all offences connected with or relating to traffic in persons in consultation with the Attorney-General of the Federation;

⁴⁵ Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain/opendocpdf.pdf?reldoc=y&docid=54f98a284> Last access: 27/01/2021.

⁴⁶ Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/54f989d24.pdf> Last access: 27/01/2021.

⁴⁷ Available at: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=101267&p_country=NGA&p_classification=04 Last access: 27/01/2021.

- l) carrying out such other activities as are necessary or expedient for the full discharge of all or any of the functions conferred on it under this Act.

The Act also entrusted NAPTIP with the power to cause investigations to be conducted, if any person commits an offence under it (section 5). Following the amendment Act, signed in 2005, the power of prosecution was also included.

It is the responsibility of the agency to nominate a Board and to set up Special Departments (section 8), with specific functions. As spelt out in section 9:

- the **Investigation Department** shall liaise with the police for the prevention and detection of offences in violation of the Act's provisions and shall collaborate with the relevant security agencies.
- The **Legal Department** shall be responsible for prosecuting offenders, supporting the Investigation Department with legal advice and assistance, acting as secretariat to the Board, conducting such proceedings as may be necessary towards the recovery of any asset/properties forfeited under the Act and performing other relevant legal duties.
- The **Public Enlightenment Department** shall, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture (FMIC), the National Orientation Agency (NOA), the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs (FMWA), the Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment (FMLE), the Federal Ministry of Education, be responsible for campaigns, seminars and workshops aimed at educating the public on the problem of trafficking, thereby stimulating interest in and awareness about the problem.
- the **Counselling and Rehabilitation Department** shall, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Employment and Labour, the Nigerian Police Force be responsible for counselling, after-care rehabilitation, social reintegration and education of trafficked persons.

The agency's mandate further includes the setting up of Technical Committees and Task Forces, to ensure adequate assistance in duties (section 8) and the power to initiate, advance, or improve on the training programmes for the agency's personnel on the following themes: methods of criminal detention, countermeasures against techniques and routes used by traffickers, monitoring of the movement of traffickers and victims, dissemination of information on laws related to trafficking (section 10). It was also established that the agency should present a report of its activities every year (section 57).

NAPTIP has adopted a multi-agency approach aimed at overseeing the partnership and coordination of relevant stakeholders in Nigeria. In this direction, it created a National Consultative Forum, in order to bring together stakeholders, including the Ministry of Women Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, other ministries, as well as the NIS, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), ECOWAS and international organisations such as ILO, IOM, UNODC, UNICEF (Ikeora, 2018). The forum was instrumental in developing and reviewing the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons, creating a network of partners and harmonising resources and programmes to avoid duplication, although its effectiveness is still to be determined.

The Act is the first legislative act in Nigeria that introduced a working definition of trafficking (section 64): *"all acts involved in the recruitment, transportation within or across Nigerian Borders, purchases, sale, transfer, receipt or harbouring of a person, involving the use of deception, coercion, or debt bondage for placing or holding the person whether or not involuntary servitude (domestic, sexual, or reproductive) in forced or bonded labour or slavery-like conditions"*.

This definition was limited in terms of means and purposes, with respect to that provided by the UN Palermo Protocols, signed in 2000⁴⁸, that recognised trafficking related actions can be achieved by means of deception, coercion or debt bondage, but also fraud and abuse of one own's power over the most vulnerable. Additionally, the definition failed to include, among the forms of slavery, the removal of organs.

The Act synthesised all previous law provision on trafficking and related offences, as indicated in the criminal and penal codes, but the status of the latter in the Act was not clearly indicated. Sections 11-28 of the 2003 Act, define offences related to human trafficking, including:

- exportation and importation of persons out and into Nigeria (to force or seduce them into prostitution) (11),
- procurement of persons (to force or seduce them into intercourse or gratify the passions of another person) (12),
- causing or encouraging the seduction or prostitution of any person under eighteen years (13),
- procurement of persons under eighteen years (14),
- procurement of any person for prostitution, pornography and use in armed conflict (15),
- foreign travels which promote prostitution (16),
- unlawful detention with intent to defile (17),
- procuring defilement of persons by threats, fraud or administering drugs (18), kidnapping from guardianship (19),
- kidnapping and abducting in order to commit culpable homicide (20),
- buying or selling a person for a purpose (21),
- unlawful forced labour (22),
- traffic in slaves (23),
- slave dealing (24).

The Act deals also with the effect of conviction abroad (25), with offences by aliens (26) as well as with offences by bodies corporate (28) and calls for the responsibility of commercial carriers, tour operators, travel agents and airlines (29, 30, 31).

Most sections specifically refer to people under the age of eighteen – age associated with the achievement of the majority age. Only five sections, namely 15, 16, 20, 23 and 24, refer more generally to people, including also adults.

In the subsequent sections, the Act focuses on sanctions, ranging from monetary fines (from 379 to 1,517 US\$), to imprisonment (with or without an option of fines), forfeiture of assets or passport by convicted offenders, deportation or repatriation, and liability for compensation to victims in civil proceedings. Established jail terms range from 12 months to two years to life imprisonment, depending on the seriousness of the offence.

As established in section 81, protection is granted for rescued victims with the possibility to stay in a transit shelter. The shelters are to be managed and supervised by the agency, with the aim to provide

⁴⁸ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (art. 3). Available: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/protocoltraffickinginpersons.aspx> Last access: 29/01/2021.

assistance, counselling, rehabilitation and training (section 64). Trafficked victims are also provided with the right to institute civil actions against traffickers irrespective of their immigration status (section 52).

The 2005 Act revised and introduced some administrative elements, connected to the Agency's board, introduced the Victims of Trafficking Trust Fund, funded through assets retrieved from traffickers and provided for the prohibition of forced labour and related punishments. In 2015, the 2003 and the 2005 acts were repealed and a new Act was passed.

The 2015 Act made several new provisions and extended provisions regarding the right to information (section 63), protection (sections 32, 46, 47, 64), the establishment of transit shelters and the protection of victims upon return (section 64). It did not explicitly imply the facilitation of returns, although the Palermo Protocol obliges States to do so (art. 8).

Stiffer penalties for offenders were introduced, but the new Act still gives the chance for richer offenders to resolve their position merely with the payment of a fine. A positive aspect resides in the extension of the crime of trafficking to give, receive or benefit to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (section 13). This element is crucial in the measure it recognises the possible role of family members in human trafficking, an aspect that remains underexplored in its complexity to date. A second crucial element concerns the acknowledgement that trafficking regards also adults. The new Act refers to people more generally, rather than children, when addressing importation and exportation for the scope of prostitution (section 14, part IV), although, similarly to the previous Act, it still largely focuses on children (under 18 years of age) for the remaining forms of trafficking.

The National Plan of Action on Trafficking in Persons

The **Nigerian National Plan of Action against Human Trafficking** was developed in 2006 with the support of UNODC. The project was aimed to build the capacity of NAPTIP, and other national agencies, through the definition of a training strategy and programme, focusing on the law enforcement and the judicial systems. It also provided experts and information material to conduct awareness-raising campaigns in priority states⁴⁹. At the end of 2020, further support was provided by UNODC, with funding by the Government of Switzerland, to develop a new National Plan of Action, following up on the previous one, that expired in 2012, with a focus on strengthening the policy framework⁵⁰.

Almost in coincidence with the establishment of NAPTIP, NACTAL (Network against Child Trafficking, Abuse and Labour) was created, in 2014, with the support of UNICEF. The network currently counts over 50 members and it provides a forum for the coordination of NGOs engaged in anti-trafficking projects, while also promoting an integrated approach to child trafficking, child labour and child abuse.

Two years later, in 2008, the Federal Executive Council approved the **National Policy on Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons in Nigeria**⁵¹, which eventually culminated in the production of **Guidelines for the National Referral Mechanism for Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons in**

⁴⁹ Available: <https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/s84traffickingip.html> Last access: 04/02/2021.

⁵⁰ Available: <https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/press/naptip-kick-off-process-to-develop-a-new-national-action-plan-against-human-trafficking.html> Last access: 04/02/2021.

⁵¹ Not available

Nigeria (NRM)⁵². These guidelines aim at organising service providers in geographical and service clusters to improve protection and assistance services to Trafficked Persons (TPs) by adoption a human right-based approach.

The establishment of the Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking

The Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking (ETATH) was created in 2017 by the Edo State government to prevent, protect and rehabilitate people victims of human trafficking in Edo state (Interview, Assistant Secretary, ETAHT, 08/06/2020). The following year, the **Edo State Anti-Trafficking Law**⁵³ was approved by the Edo State House of Assembly, following the pronouncement by the Oba of Benin to renounce all curses placed on victims of human trafficking by native doctors in the state.

The Task Force has the following objectives: to eradicate the trafficking of Edo men and women to other countries, to combat modern-day slavery of Edo persons, to be a focal point of assistance for returnees to Edo State, aiding their successful reintegration, to work in collaboration with relevant agencies and bodies in addressing the problem of trafficking and irregular migration in the State. The objectives stand on four pillars: assisted voluntary return, rehabilitation, and reintegration, awareness and sensitisation, investigation and persecution, research and data analysis (Interview, Assistant Secretary, ETAHT, 08/06/2020; ETAHT, 2018).

The ETAHT offers the following services:

- airport welcome, transportation and welcoming to Edo State and first aid administration,
- provision of medical diagnosis and assistance and handling out of welcome packs,
- counseling,
- profiling and interviews,
- investigation/protections,
- collection of biometric data and identification,
- contacting of and reunion with family members,
- provision of temporal shelter/accommodation (maximum 3 days),
- provision of vocational training and empowerment,
- monitoring and evaluation,
- payment of stipends for three months (ETAHT, 2018)⁵⁴.

⁵²Guidelines on the National Referral Mechanism for Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons in Nigeria, EU, UNODC, NAPTIP, 2015. Available: https://www.unodc.org/documents/nigeria/NRM_Guideline_final_2015.pdf
Last access: 22/02/2021.

⁵³ Document not available.

⁵⁴ Lump-sum stipends were introduced in 2017 and were initially paid to all Edo assisted voluntary returnees from Libya. They included 20,000 Naira to returnees generally and 25,000 and 10,000 Naira to pregnant women and children respectively. Because of the large unsustainable amount of funding required, the stipends could no longer be granted after 2018 (Interview, Assistant Secretary, ETAHT, 08/05/2020).

Earlier relevant norms

The Criminal Code Act

The **Criminal Code Act**⁵⁵, signed in 1916, was silent about the concept and definition of human trafficking, but, before the 2003 Trafficking in persons Act, it was used to criminalize human trafficking-related offences, largely interpreted as moral offences, as evident from sections 223 and 224. The moral element was eventually deleted in the revised version of the Criminal Code passed in 1990⁵⁶.

Section 223 provides that: *“any person who - (1) procures a girl or woman who is under the age of eighteen years and is not a common prostitute or of known immoral character to have an unlawful carnal connection with any other person or persons, either in Nigeria or elsewhere; or (2) procures a woman or girl to become a common prostitute, either in Nigeria, or elsewhere; or (3) procures a woman or girl to leave Nigeria with the intent that she may become an inmate of a brothel elsewhere; or (4) procures a woman or girl to leave her usual place of abode in Nigeria, with the intent that she may, for prostitution, become an inmate of a brothel, either in Nigeria or elsewhere; is guilty of a misdemeanour, and is liable to imprisonment for two years. A person cannot be convicted of any of the offences defined in this section of this Code upon the uncorroborated testimony of one witness. The offender may be arrested without warrant.”*

Section 224 of the Criminal Code also provides that: *“any person who - (1) by threats or intimidation of any kind procures a woman or girl to have unlawful carnal connection with a man, either in Nigeria or elsewhere; or (2) by any pretence procures or girl who is not a common prostitute or of known immoral character to have an unlawful carnal connection with a man, either in Nigeria or elsewhere; or (3) administers to a woman or girl, or causes a woman or girl to take, any drug or other thing with intent to stupefy or overpower her to enable any man, whether a particular man or not, to have unlawful carnal knowledge of her is guilty of a misdemeanour and is liable to imprisonment for two years is guilty of a misdemeanour and is liable to imprisonment for two years.*

With the Criminal Code, the State attempted to speed up prosecutions and contribute to curbing trafficking, by enabling offenders to be arrested without a warrant, both with the aim to deter potential traffickers and to ensure law enforcement agencies could proceed with fast prosecutions. At the same time, however, the code relies on the testimony of a witness to imprison offenders and this has been a major problem for victims. Little convictions have been made as a result.

⁵⁵ Available: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=104156 Last access: 02/02/2021.

⁵⁶ Available: <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/ng/ng025en.pdf> Last access: 02/02/2021.

The Penal Code Act

Kigbu and Hassan (2015) highlighted the limited applicability of the **Penal Code Act**⁵⁷, signed in 1960, as it is restricted to the Federal Capital Territory of Abuja (and partly to the Northern states of Nigeria). They further stressed its provisions are similar to those of the Criminal Code Act. Yet, while the latter considers relevant offences as misdemeanours, that is to say minor criminal acts, that can be punished with two (up to seven) years of imprisonment, the Penal Code Act regards all human trafficking-related offences as felonies and introduced stiffer penalties.

Section 275 provides that *“whoever by any means whatsoever induces a girl under the age of eighteen years to go from any place or to do an act with the intent that the girl maybe or knowing, that it is likely that she will be forced or seduced to illicit intercourse with another person shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to ten years shall be liable to a fine.”*

Section 278 provides that *“any person who buys, sells, hires, lets to hire or otherwise obtains possession or disposes of any person below 18 years with the intent that the person will be or is likely to be employed or used for prostitution or other unlawful or immoral purposes is guilty of an offence punishable with imprisonment up to ten years and liable to pay a fine also.”*

Before the introduction of the Trafficking in Persons Act, in 2003, the Penal Code was the only piece of legislation that explicitly mentioned trafficking.

Section 279, states that *“whoever imports, exports, removes, buys, sells, disposes, traffics or deals in a person as a slave, or accepts, receives or detains against his will a person as a slave, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to fourteen years and shall also be liable to fine.”* Section 280, takes also into account the plight of forced labour.

One fundamental weakness inherent in both the Criminal and the Penal Code Acts is that they do not provide for the establishment of a body corporate, with the right to sue and be sued, to monitor and administer the Act - as it is provided in the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act. Furthermore, both largely refer to girls and children, under the age of 18, coming from Nigeria.

⁵⁷ Available: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=52880&p_country=NGA&p_count=253
Last access: 04/02/2021.

Other relevant norms

The Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution (1990)

Trafficking in persons violates the provisions of sections 18 and 33 of the **Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution** (1990), as amended in 1999⁵⁸. Specifically, section 18 states that (1) *the State social order is founded on ideals of Freedom, Equality and Justice. (2) In furtherance of the social order: (a) every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations and opportunities before the law; (b) the sanctity of the human person shall be recognised and human dignity shall be maintained and enhanced; (c) exploitation of human or natural resources in any form whatsoever for reasons other than the good of the community shall be prevented; (d) the independence, impartiality and integrity of courts of law, and easy accessibility thereto shall be secured and maintained. (3) The State shall direct its policy towards ensuring that (a) all citizens without discrimination on any ground whatsoever have the opportunity for securing adequate means of livelihood as well as adequate opportunities to secure suitable employment; (f) children, young persons, the aged, and the disabled are protected against any exploitation whatsoever, and against moral and material neglect.*

Section 33 indicates that (1) *every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person, and accordingly (a) no person shall be subjected to any form of torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment; (b) no person shall be held in slavery or servitude; and (c) no person shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.*

What must be underlined is that due to the federal presidential system of the Nigerian government, individual states have to adopt these laws in order to enforce them in their respective jurisdictions.

The Immigration Act and the National Commission for Refugees (Establishment) Act

The **Immigration Act** was first signed in 1963 and it was repeatedly amended until 2015⁵⁹. The Act established the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) that is saddled with the responsibilities of migration management in Nigeria.

The agency's role involves dealing with migration management and issuing travel documents and residence permits to foreigners. As a law enforcement agency, it monitors and manages the borders of the Nigerian states and it is also responsible for handling cases of forced returns, although it does not own shelters but partners with NCFRMI for it - as stated in the Act. On its side IOM concentrates on voluntary ones. In most critical cases, based on the circumstances of the returnees, synergies can be created among the law enforcement agencies. However, NIS does not own a shelter, but partners with NCFRMI to offer related services.

On migration matters, NIS collaborates with other sister agencies such as NCFRMI, NPF, NAPTIP. On drugs related-matters and the smuggling of prohibited goods across the country's borders, the agency

⁵⁸ Available: https://publicofficialsfinancialdisclosure.worldbank.org/sites/fdl/files/assets/law-library-files/Nigeria_Constitution_1999_en.pdf Last access: 02/02/2021.

⁵⁹ Available at: http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=104155&p_count=3&p_classification=17 Last access: 02/02/2021.

collaborates with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS).

In the wake of cross-border migration in and out of Nigeria, as well as the increasing challenges confronting the Service in the face of rising violations of migration provisions and the consequent need for more control and monitoring of migratory movements, the mandate of the agency was expanded to ensure an effective and efficient border management. In this context, smuggling was criminalised with the 2015 Act, in line with international conventions.

Following the introduction of new Immigration Regulations, in 2017⁶⁰, the NIS was restructured into eight Directorates - in turn organised into internal divisions⁶¹:

- Human Resources Management Directorate,
- Finance and Accounts Directorate,
- Planning, Research and Statistics Directorate,
- Passport and Other Travel Documents Directorate,
- Investigation and Compliance Directorate,
- Border Management Directorate,
- Visa and Residency Directorate,
- Migration Directorate.

As far as trafficking related offences are concerned, the Act spells out that some individuals are deemed a prohibited immigrant and liable to be refused admission or be deported from Nigeria. These included also people trafficking and smuggling migrants as well as brothel keepers and persons permitting the defilement or seduction of a child or young person on his premises or on other premises under his control (part VII). As other Acts, the Immigration Act does not protect people over the age of 18, thus leaving a large group of victims and potential victims unprotected.

Upon the introduction of the 2015 Migration Act, the role of coordinating agency for migration was bestowed on the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants and IDPs (NCFRMI). It is rooted in the 1989 **National Commission for Refugees (Establishment) Act**, that was passed to safeguard persons seeking political asylum in Nigeria⁶².

NCFRMI was mandated to coordinate the national action for the protection and assistance of refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, stateless persons, internally displaced persons, migrants⁶³. Initially, the Commission was established in view of the influx of Sierra Leonean and Liberian asylum seekers in Nigeria. In 2002, it further focused on IDPs from natural disasters; in 2009, its management role expanded to assist also migrants and returnees and ensure their rights are upheld, with reference to legal protection (right to entry/remain, identity documents), livelihood issues (basic necessities, shelter, health and empowerment).

The Commission has also been involved in facilitating the voluntary returns of Nigerians and has been coordinating state and non-state actors to this end. Furthermore, the Commission plays an advisory role to the government on migration and refugee policy and coordinates initiatives, such as the

⁶⁰ Available: <https://nigerialii.org/system/files/gazettes/Immigration%20Regulation-2017.pdf> Last access: 04/02/2021.

⁶¹ Available: <https://immigration.gov.ng/nis-structure/> Last access: 04/02/2021.

⁶² Available: <https://www.refworld.org/pd/3ae6b522e.pdf> Last access: 04/02/2021.

⁶³ See the Commission website: <https://ncfrmi.gov.ng/the-commission/> Last access: 04/02/2021.

Standing Committee on Diaspora Matters, under the leadership of the Nigeria National Volunteer Services (NNVS); the Working Group on Labour Migration, initiated by the Federal Ministry of Labour (FMLE); the Working Group on Migration Data Management, managed by the National Population Commission (NPC); and the Stakeholders Forum on Border Management, under the leadership of the NIS.

The headquarters of NCFRMI are in Abuja; six Zonal Offices in Kebbi, Kwara, Lagos, Borno, Enugu and Cross River; four Field Offices in Kaduna, Osun, Taraba and Kano; two Reception Centres in Lagos and Abuja. (NCFRMI, 2017).

Child Right Act

The politics of child trafficking in Nigeria extends beyond the normative framework described so far. Yet discourse and policy are still hampered by the conceptual, institutional and political structures (Howard, 2012). The rise of baby factory has impacted on infant trafficking and abuse of human right thus calling for government involvement (Garba and Mahmood, 2015; Makinde, 2016).

The **Child Rights Act** was enacted, in 2003, thus giving legal consent to both the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**⁶⁴ and the **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child**⁶⁵ (Mbaebie, 2018). Kigbu and Hassan (2015) opine that before 2003, Nigeria had no comprehensive special law protecting the rights of children. Provisions were made only in the Constitution and, to some extent, in the Criminal and Penal Codes.

This piece of legislation made a very wide provision for some children's rights, relating to children's justice and families. It also states that parents or a legal guardian are obliged to ensure children basic protection, although it does not include specific indications on how. Additionally, the Act was passed by the National Assembly, which does not have the power to make these laws binding for states. In fact, the Act was adopted by the Federal Capital Territory and a few Nigerian States only so far (Kigbu and Hassan, 2015).

On child trafficking, forced labour, and other harmful practices to children, the Act listed various offences and provided for related punishments. Sections 21-23 prohibit child marriage - and yet especially in the Northern part of Nigeria, early child marriage has been rampant. Section 30 sets forth the prohibition of buying, selling, hiring children for the purpose of hawking or begging for alms, prostitution, domestic or sexual labour, or for any unlawful or immoral purposes, or as a slave or practices similar to slavery, such as trafficking, debt bondage or serfdom and forced or compulsory labour. It also states that a child shall not be procured or offered for prostitution or the production of pornography or pornographic performances or procured/ offered for any activity in the production of trafficking or illegal drugs. Sections 31, 32, 33 make further provision on unlawful sexual intercourse with a child, forms of sexual abuse and exploitation and other forms of exploitation.

Overall, while Nigeria was the first African country to pass a specific law on trafficking and had already made legal provision to address trafficking related phenomena through various sets of legislations, large

⁶⁴ Available: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx> Last access: 04/02/2021.

⁶⁵ Available: https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/afr_charter_rights_welfare_child_africa_1990.pdf Last access: 08/02/2021.

part of the its relevant normative framework focuses on females and on sexual exploitation and prostitution, thus limiting the scope of interventions. Additionally, the same definition of trafficking, whereby it is provided, is limited in scope. Most importantly, while punishments for trafficking related offenses have been made stiffer, with the amendments and repeal of the 2003 Trafficking Act and the Criminal Code Act, before it, the doubt can be raised on their capacity of such penalties to effectively deter traffickers from continuing pursuing their criminal goals.

Section 4

Nigerian women returnees: arrival, reception, reintegration

The main stakeholders involved in return, rehabilitation and reintegration

As explained in the INSigHT Gap-analysis report (Semprebon, 2020), most rehabilitation and reintegration projects took off rather recently, in 2017 and 2018. The multiplication of stakeholders engaging on rehabilitation suggests the need for integrated work and collaboration, that has been one of the objectives of the INSigHT Action in Nigeria. At the same time, with the increase of AVR (Assisted Voluntary Returns) from countries such as Libya, the Nigerian system of protection for people victims of trafficking has been put under stress and IOM has had difficulties in implementing AVR programmes (US State Department Report, 2020).

A total of 13 stakeholders was sampled during the research carried out by the INSigHT Team (see table 23). Two, namely NCFRMI and NAPTIP, are federal agencies and are present in multiple locations across the country. NAPTIP runs its own shelters, where its zonal commands are located (Abuja, Akwa-Ibom, Lagos, Osun, Benin, Kano, Makurdi) but also partners with NGOs, when places are insufficient and viceversa. NCFRMI manages two shelters in Lagos and Abuja and has a partnership with the NGO Web of Heart Foundation.

IOM is the only inter-governmental organisation and partners with various NGOs. ETAHT is an Edo State agency and Ipaja Transit Home a Lagos State organisation. ETAHT has a shelter under construction and has so far worked in partnership with PJI (Pathfinders Justice Initiative) and COSUDOW to ensure shelters to beneficiaries. Ipaja Transit Homes manages its own shelter. Generally speaking, Nigerian institutions are engaging to a limited extent as donors, suggesting that investment in rehabilitation is not a top priority in the country yet (Semprebon, 2020).

Eight were the NGOs sampled, including the following: SOWOGIDI, BAKHITA, PJI, Idia Renaissance, WOHF, GPI, PCI, WOCON. These are all non-faith based organisations, except BAKHITA. 6 are based in Lagos (SOWOGIDI, PCI, WOCON, BAKHITA, WOHF, Idia Renaissance, PJI), 3 have offices also in Benin (GPI, PJI, Idia Renaissance). Besides WOCON has an office in Ogun, GPI in Calabar, Uyo, Asaba, Bayelsa, Abuja and PJI in Abuja.

NAME OF ORGANISATION	TYPE OF ORGANISATION	LOCATION (States)	SERVICES PROVIDED	SHELTER provided
NAPTIP	Federal Government	Edo, Abuja, Akwa-Ibom, Lagos, Osun, Benin, Kano, Makurdi	Return, shelters, medical, psycho-social support, rehabilitation and reintegration programme	directly
NCFRMI	Federal Government	Lagos, Abuja	Return, rehabilitation and reintegration programme	in partnership
ETAHT	Edo State Government	Edo	Return, shelters (in construction), rehabilitation and reintegration programme	in partnership
IPAJA TRANSIT HOME	Lagos State Government	Lagos	Shelters, rehabilitation and reintegration programme	directly
IOM	Inter-governmental	Lagos, Edo	Return, rehabilitation and reintegration programme	in partnership
WOCON	NGO	Lagos, Ogun	Return, psychological and first aid support, counselling, family tracing, rehabilitation and reintegration programme	in partnership
PCI	NGO	Lagos	Legal, counselling and psycho-social support, rehabilitation and reintegration programme	in partnership
WOHF	NGO	Lagos	Return, rehabilitation and reintegration programme	directly
SOWOGIDI	NGO	Lagos	Psycho-social support	in partnership

BAKHITA	NGO	Lagos	Rehabilitation and reintegration programme	directly
GPI	NGO	Edo	Return, rehabilitation and reintegration programme	in partnership
IDIA RENNAISSANCE	NGO	Edo	Return, rehabilitation and reintegration programme	in partnership
PJI	NGO	Edo	Return, rehabilitation and reintegration programme	directly

TABLE 23: LIST OF REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS (WITH LOCATION AND SERVICES)

Typologies of return and assistance provided upon arrival in Nigeria

As explained in the glossary of this publication, **return**, in the context of migration policy, connotes the movement of a person going from a host country back to a country of origin, in a voluntary or forced manner, assisted or not, spontaneously or not. Specifically, **assisted voluntary return (AVR)** refers to the voluntary return or departure of a person, supported by logistical, financial and/or other material assistance. **Forced return**, in the global context, refers to the compulsory return of an individual to the country of origin, transit or third country, on the basis of an administrative or judicial act. The IOM Glossary (2019) further defines the **spontaneous return** as voluntary, independent return of a migrant or a group of migrants to their country of origin, usually without the support of the States or other international or national assistance.

Recalling the meaning of the term return and its various declinations is crucial, as the process of return to Nigeria, and the stakeholders involved, are strictly determined by the specific type of return, whether voluntary or forced, assisted or not, as will be described next.

Assisted Voluntary Return

According to interviewees, most recently, the majority of assisted voluntary returns have been operated from Libya to Lagos airport⁶⁶.

Assisted voluntary returns (AVR) are managed by IOM, in collaboration with State and non-state actors. NCFRMI has a mandate to facilitate returns, readmission and reintegration of AVR returnees. As explained by the Head of the Migration Unit, NCFRMI notifies stakeholders about planned returns. It is its responsibility to inform all relevant federal agencies, including NAPTIP, ETAHT, NIS and the National Emergency Management Authority (NEMA). NGOs, such as Web of Heart Foundation, WOCON, GPI and

⁶⁶ See for example interview, Alex Oturu, NCFRMI, Head of Migration Unit, South-West, 07/04/2020.

PJI are also sometimes invited to provide assistance to returnees. Furthermore, IOM has developed an active collaboration with FMWA to facilitate reception at the airport and help coordinate stakeholders.

Collaborations with sending countries/agencies are also crucial, in order to ensure returns are organised in the most adequate of ways and the process of rehabilitation and reintegration is prepared well. However, information, both on the actual return and on the profile of returnees, are only shared on a case by case approach, depending on the extent to which a partnership has been built between the sending and receiving agencies. Paucity information and late notification of arrivals to NCFRMI, particularly when planes arrive at odd hours at night, have a direct implication on the involvement of stakeholders and the quality of services rendered, thus making it more challenging to ensure the safe reception of returnees⁶⁷. For example, when returnees arrive at night, they are transferred to a local hotel to rest until the morning and the risk of exposure to traffickers is higher.

Because details on returnees are rarely given, information are collected upon arrivals through a profiling form, as it is called, that is compiled by NCFRMI staff in the presence of returnees. This is a normal routine for AVR returns; it is not for other forms of return, as will be explained. Through an interview, returnees are asked about their age, gender, family history and contacts, medical state, educational level⁶⁸ so that their profile can be compiled, including, in principles, potential indicators of trafficking and any form of vulnerability.

Profiling has proved important not only to assist returnees but also to identify traffickers who disguised as voluntary assisted returnees, often with the assistance of returnees themselves, as the Head NCFRMI Migration Unit underlined (see also interview with WOCON, 25/03/2020). Details where not provided on how traffickers were disguised nor on the procedure used to verify whether returnees' profile display any element potentially associated with trafficking.

According to information reported in the US State Department 2020 report, the agency, in collaboration with other stakeholders, has been systematically screening all returnees from Libya for trafficking indicators and has been referring them to NAPTIP to offer them assistance in sheltered facilities run by NAPTIP itself or Lagos NGOs.

All returnees, including all indigenes of Edo State, who are willing to return to their state of origin are referred to ETHAT for prompt transportation. Survivors of trafficking are referred to the NAPTIP Benin Zonal Command to activate rehabilitation and reintegration services but also investigations.

While the AVR process is organised to ensure assistance and protection to returnees, particularly those in vulnerable conditions, the need for improvement is clear. An evident critical issue is represented by the lack of clarity in the procedures involved in the assisted and voluntary returns. IOM guidelines (2018) only generally refer to the need to carry out a risk assessment with all returnees. In this respect, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants asked for a transparent and accountable monitoring of the programmes⁶⁹ that, to our knowledge, is lacking to date.

⁶⁷ Ibidem.

⁶⁸ Ibidem.

⁶⁹ UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants during a session of the UN Human Rights Council. 18th June – 6th July 2018. Available: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/G1812517.pdf> Last access: 02/02/2021.

Furthermore, more investigation is recommended on the experience of returnees and the actual voluntary nature of their return⁷⁰. Formally, the AVR involves a special package to aid returnees' reintegration process, with specific attention given to pregnant women, lone mothers with children, people with special medical needs, as well as survivors of trafficking, but we could not obtain more detailed information in this regard.

Forced return

Forced returns are mostly associated with returns from European countries and are operated by Frontex⁷¹. The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) works in connection with the agency. As also reported by EASO (2015), in January 2012, the Nigeria Immigration Service and Frontex signed a working agreement on the exchange of information and collaboration on border management, that also extends to NAPTIP.

As indicated in the actual agreement⁷², the document is part of the dialog on migration between Nigeria and the European Union within the framework of art. 13 of the **Cotonou Agreement**⁷³ with African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, adopted in 2000 to replace the 1975 **Lomé Convention**. Its main aim is to *"counter illegal/irregular migration and related cross-border crime by means of border control as well as strengthen security at the borders between EU Member States and the Federal Republic of Nigeria"*.

In the working agreement, it is specified that exchanges of information should be activated in accordance with their respective legislations, although with restrictions justified by legal or operational reasons. Frontex, on its side, agreed to provide the competent authorities of the Federal Republic of Nigeria with relevant analytical products, where possible and only based on a case-by-case basis. NCFRMI, that has been also involved in forced returns, reports that hardly any information has been shared so far⁷⁴.

It was further reported that strict procedures are in place for returnees from Europe and that independent observers monitor the process. No more details are known in this regard, apart from the fact, as learnt through direct contacts with returnees, that forced returns involve up to 50 people at a time, with the same ratio of EU law enforcement agents and returnees (i.e. 25 law enforcement agents and 25 returnees). In other words, the actual transfer to Nigeria is described as highly safe. Less safety is evident upon arrival, starting with the fact that the actual dates and times are normally not communicated and that no provision was made in the working agreement on any specific assistance to be provided to returnees.

⁷⁰ See for example the note by Borlizzi F. (2020) Nigeria: rischio di re-trafficking e (in)voluntary return delle vittime di tratta (Nigeria: risk of re-trafficking and involuntary return of victims of trafficking). ASGI (Italian Association for Juridical Studies on Migration). 20/12/2020. Progetto Sciabcka & Oruka (on strategic litigation in collaboration with African civil society as far as the violation of human rights and the externalisation of border control is concerned). Available: <https://sciabacaoruka.asgi.it/retrafficking-nigeria-rimpatri-volontari/> Last access: 12/02/2021.

⁷¹ Interview, Alex Oturu, NCFRMI, Head of Migration Unit, South-West, 07/04/2020.

⁷² Available: https://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Key_Documents/Working_Arrangements/WA_with_Nigeria.pdf Last access: 12/02/2021.

⁷³ Available: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/cotonou-agreement/> Last access: 12/02/2021.

⁷⁴ Interview, Alex Oturu, NCFRMI, Head of Migration Unit, South-West, 07/04/2020.

IOM and NAPTIP are supposed to provide protection and assistance, as suggested by our interviewees, but we could not collect any evidence of specific services. On the contrary, generally speaking, the Joint Return Programmes (JRP) operated by Frontex has been faulted by Nigerian stakeholders for “dumping” returnees at the airport without any prior notice for preparation. Needless to say, this is likely to affect the actual return and its safety - that is problematic also for AVR although they are planned and organised -, let alone the activation of any rehabilitation and reintegration assistance.

Based on her study, Plambeck (2014) explained that JRP returnees are generally taken to a detention centre in Nigeria, without being offered any assistance. This is the case because the sending institutions identify them as undocumented migrants and rarely is any attention put to indicators of trafficking. Even when they do put attention and identify them as victims of trafficking, by “certifying it on paper”, does the certified document suffice to provide migrants with any right upon arrival in Nigeria. Many of the informants in Skilbrei and Tveit’s earlier study (2007) similarly recalled of women returnees who had been arrested upon their arrival, to then be released in exchange for bribes paid by their family. IOM, on its side, had noted that the detention of Nigerian women at the airport and corruption by airport police forces (to release them) were common (EASO, 2015).

Insufficient protection for returnees by sending European institutions has also been lamented by NCFRMI. The agency has recently dealt with specific situations of Nigerian mothers who had been forced to leave their children behind, in Germany. In similar cases, a referral can be made to the Diaspora Commission or to the Nigerian Ministry of Justice, in the hope they can liaise with the government of the sending country, but with no guarantee of positive reunion for the family⁷⁵. Narrative evidence by German colleagues of the INSigHT Research Team similarly suggest of evident violations of human rights, contrary to European norms. Examples include lone mothers with children being forced to return to Nigeria without any consideration for the vulnerable conditions (fieldwork note, 21/01/2021).

Generally speaking, the process of forced return is non-transparent. While the 2012 working agreement between Frontex and the Republic of Nigeria clearly states that the exchange of information is limited, this poses an evident critical issue: it fails to address the protection of vulnerable migrants thus calling for the definition of procedural guidelines to ensure an effective exchange of information for the specific scope of protecting returnees, ensuring their vulnerabilities are identified and consequently addressed.

Further analysis would be needed of other relevant agreements with Nigerian authorities, such as the agreement signed between the Italian Government and the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 2000. Contrary to the above cited 2012 working agreement signed by Frontex, provision was made for the exchange of information on the returnees and of details on the returning flight, at least five days before. Yet, this is still not sufficient to ensure effective protection, particularly whereby insufficient attention is given to the vulnerability of returnees. A clear example in this sense is provided by the forced return of a group of about 69 Nigerian women from Italy, in 2015. They were transferred to a detention centre for permanence and repatriation soon after arriving in Italy, with insufficient support to ensure adequate attention to their vulnerability and their access to the rights they were entitled to. Difficulties

⁷⁵ Ibidem.

were experienced even by two women of the group who were pregnant – and were later transferred to hospitals, not without delays, in spite of the activation of the local social services⁷⁶.

Returns facilitated by NGOs

A third pattern of return was reported by our interviewees, including returns facilitated directly by non-state actors. Specifically, this type of return occurs where a Nigerian NGOs collaborates directly with a NGO in another country to assist migrants in their return to Nigeria. A number of NGOs have facilitated the return of survivors of trafficking, sometimes in collaboration with NAPTIP, as the SOWOLDI Country Manager explained, with reference to returns from Dubai⁷⁷. Collaboration with NAPTIP does not always apply though, as PJI and NWA testify, based on their own direct experience. WOCON and GPI, on their side, have assisted women returnees through the West African Network (WAN). WOCON works with girls of different nationalities, including girls from the West African region; while GPI operates from Benin and covers the south-south area of Nigeria. In a similar vein, collaborations are also on-going with Europe ECPAT International, a global network of child right organisations⁷⁸. Additionally, the US State Department 2020 Report, states that several Nigerian embassies, particularly within West Africa, have been provided funding or in-kind support to repatriate Nigerian trafficking victims exploited abroad, but none of our interviewees mentioned it.

Corroborating the information that NAPTIP is not always involved in facilitated returns, an officer (that remains anonymous as expressly required) confirmed that not all human trafficking cases are brought to the notice of NAPTIP, but was positive in anticipating that a new regulation is under definition, with the support of NACTAL⁷⁹, with the aim to monitor stakeholders' activities and promote joint collaboration in returns.

As regards NGOs, communication lines activated prior to the transfer, as to prepare the return and inform the returnee of the steps that lie ahead. Afterwards, NGOs provide support upon arrival and support returnees in accessing a reintegration programme that they normally offer themselves.

Reception upon arrival

The return pattern for survivors in Nigeria is rather uncoordinated as explained above. Reception follows a similar critical pattern. It generally entails meeting the returnees at the airport and proposing a welcome package to them, to then (sometimes) proceed with a profiling interview and eventually transfer them to a shelter.

In AVR, NCFRM coordinates the reception upon notification from IOM. NAPTIP and ETATH are also notified⁸⁰ of the date and time in which groups of returnees are arriving. They are on the ground to support returnees. As NCFRM can count on limited resources to organise reception autonomously,

⁷⁶ See Commissione Straordinaria per la tutela e la promozione dei diritti umani "Rapporto sui Centri di permanenza per il rimpatrio". December 2017. (Extraordinary Commission for the protection and the promotion of human rights. Report on Detention Centres for permanence and repatriation. December 2017). Available: https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/resources_rapporto_cie_cpr.pdf Last access: 12/02/2021.

⁷⁷ Interview, 28/07/2020.

⁷⁸ Interview, Morenike Omaiboje, Director of Programme, WOCON, 25/03/2020.

⁷⁹ Fieldwork note, 30/11/2020.

⁸⁰ Interview, Assistant Secretary, ETAHT, 08/05/2020.

material support is received from IOM as well as volunteers and NGOs. NAPTIP is always present to ensure victims of trafficking (if identified) are taken care of. This also allows NAPTIP to start with investigations that, in other types of returns, are aborted instead, with a higher risk that phenomena of re-trafficking may occur. In principles, whereby NAPTIP is present, it should also ensure an improved coordination and monitoring of rehabilitation services, as provided by the 2015 Act.

Reception for AVR begins at the airport. Survivors of trafficking are offered some light refreshment, a medical team is generally on the ground to attend to persons with health needs and a brief profiling interview follows. Theoretically, this interview should be a continuation of a process started in the sending country and should provide with sufficient information to assist returnees effectively.

ETAHT is present whenever returnees from Edo State (or who left from Edo States) arrive, to ensure their transportation back to the state, by bus. While for the AVR programme, the airport serves as an identification centre for NAPTIP, ETAHT does its own reception and profiling at a local hotel where returnees are first lodged before being transferred back to Edo State⁸¹.

No reception is organised for forced returnees, nor is any information given upon arrival by NCFRMI or ETATH⁸². No profiling is done either. When forced returnees approach the airport reception office, they may be attended individually but it is a discretionary practice. NCFRMI, if present and aware of any arriving returnees, may provide accomodation support if needed, in partnership with the Web of Heart Foundation⁸³. Whereby returnees are known to have criminal records - it is unclear how authorities may find out since forced returns do not generally involve any sharing of information - they are handled with by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).

Reception is also common among non-state actors that facilitate returns. NGOs seem to be better organised in terms of sharing information with sending countries and receiving notifications of arrival. For instance, PJI has been sharing information with the NGO Help For Nigerians in Russia before setting up tranfers. According to the Executive Director of PJI⁸⁴, they receive a notification a week or two weeks before a return is planned. Some partner NGOs have sufficient funds to purchase the ticket, others don't. In the second case, PJI gets in contact with survivors to validate the information provided, understand what type of support is needed and to propose a personalised reintegration service. In some cases, partners from sending countries provide returnees with a lump-sum stipend before leaving. PJI meets survivors at Lagos airport and provide support for the transfer back to Edo State. What seems most important in the operational procedures by PJI is that there is unbreakable connection with sending institutions and PJI has the chance to familiarize with returnees from the onset, before their arrival, so that they can be promptly informed of the process and the return can be properly planned. Similarly, WOCON and GPI also have a strong communication link with ECPAT International with similar operational procedures in place.

While it is clear that returns facilitated by NGOs are very limited in absolute numbers, it is also clear that the model of intervention is more adequate to ensure support is provided to returnees. We suggest that NCFRMI should learn from it to implement a similar model for AVR, by strenghtening

⁸¹ Ibidem.

⁸² Interviews 07/04/2020 and 08/05/2020.

⁸³ Interview, Head of Migration, NCFRMI, 07/04/2020.

⁸⁴ Interview, 11/08/2020.

communication lines and perhaps developing a dedicated memorandum of understanding with the sending institutions⁸⁵. Needless to say, a similar suggestion can be made to Frontex too.

Depending on the specific situation of returnees, reception may simply entail transferring women back to their families, if this is the specific support they ask for, particularly if they have already undertaken a rehabilitation project before returning, as it often happens⁸⁶.

Profiling is never undertaken for facilitated returns. According to a Helpdesk Officer of NWA in Lagos, NWA have given assistance to Nigerian women who returned from Italy and this was made possible because of NWA volunteers active in Italy and Nigeria who followed up the entire return process⁸⁷. This granted not only a personalised approach but also a safe return and an effective assistance.

Generally speaking, our fieldwork has suggested that multiple “return labels” (on labels see Zetter, 1991) have been produced by the current return framework. In turn, these have produced a dichotomy in the services provided. Returnees can arrive in Nigeria through an assisted and voluntary return programme, operated by IOM, or through a facilitated return procedure, with the direct involvement of a Nigerian NGO or through a forced return, operated by Frontex. Access to reintegration is more likely in the first two cases. Forced returns can even result in returnees being transferred to jail because they are perceived as criminals, having violated migration laws. In none of these programmes or procedures are all returnees granted access to reintegration opportunities, with severe risks in terms of their exposure to re-trafficking.

Psychological impact on returnees upon arrival

As Plambech (2014) argued, while migrants under the AVR programme may be regarded as victims, returnees under the JPR process are often stigmatised as irregular undocumented migrants hence people who violated migration laws in the destination countries. Another aspect adds to the conditions of arrivals of returnees: the fact, as explained, that different types of returns come with or without a reception and reintegration programme, with or without profiling, hence their specific needs are not always identified nor addressed, nor are they communicated by sending countries to relevant agencies or organisations in Nigeria. This is why the specific type of return is likely to have a long-lasting effect on returnees and their chances to access a reintegration programme and/or carry on with their lives safely.

Eghafona (2018) undertook a long study of survivors’ experiences in the period 2003-2017. Her findings revealed that a common experience among returns who were victims of trafficking includes physical abuse, health and psychological needs, unresolved socio-economic difficulties.

On their side, returnees display different reactions when they land in Lagos: some bow down in appreciation of their safe return because of the horrible experience they went through in Libya (or other countries), some feel bad because their migratory project (particularly in Europe) failed⁸⁸, some

⁸⁵ In this sense it is worth citing that the Honourable Federal Commissioner hosted a delegation from the German Embassy in Nigeria and GIZ experts, in 2017, to adopt strategies for effective stakeholder collaboration in relation to the facilitation of the safe, orderly and dignified returns and reintegration of Nigerians from Germany, as indicated in the NCFRMI 2017 Annual Report (2017), although details are missing.

⁸⁶ Interview, Programme Director, WOCON, 25/03/2020.

⁸⁷ Interview, Helpdesk Officer, NWA, 08/07/2020.

⁸⁸ Interview, Assistant Secretary, ETAHT, 08/05/2020.

can be very hostile because of the inhumane treatment received and the fact they were not prepared for return hence do not know what to expect⁸⁹.

Another disappointment often emerges when returnees arrive: sometimes sending countries state that returnees are entitled to special protection, but upon arrival they can discover they have access to no such right (see also Plambech, 2017). Some returnees expect to receive some form of economic support, for example and the victims' trust fund, set up through the 2005 NAPTIP Act, could represent a source. However, no interviewees mentioned it. According to the US State Department report (2020), while it has been available, the federal government has not explained how and to what extent funds have been allocated.

In order to fully understand the conditions of returnees' arrival, consideration must be given also to the perception of rehabilitation officers. Our interviews did not provide hints in this sense, but some authors stress that the recruitment and engagement of Nigerian girls in prostitution in Europe, for example, is perceived by officers not only as a violation of international migration laws, but as a form of moral decadence affecting the reputation of Nigeria negatively (Chai, 2018; Plambech, 2017), thus arguably making officers ill-disposed towards women returnees, as they are not considered as "deserving of help", but rather the contrary.

Women who worked as sex workers are also faced with the perceptions, expectations and judgement of their own relatives. According to Osezua (2013), whenever family members were the direct recipients of the money earned by the women, they hold them in high regard, with respect to the high socio-economic status achieved and the money sent from overseas. As a result, less educated women may still perceive trafficking as an opportunity for empowerment - more than any other opportunity available in Nigeria -, even after having experienced it in person. This clearly explains one of the reasons why there are evident risks of re-trafficking for returnees.

Shelters, services and targets

Unlike access to government owned shelters that comes with no cost, access to some private ones (e.g. BAKHITA and COSUDOW) involves a payment, by the stakeholder that requires it. Most stakeholders do not have the financial strength to own nor run their own shelter and the management itself requires substantial funding to address the welfare and safety needs of occupants. When asked to interviewees, no precise estimates could be provided of the necessary funding though.

As anticipated, NAPTIP owns and runs its own shelters in all its zonal offices and it is the only federal government agency that does so. NCFRMI partners with the Web of Heart Foundation to run its shelter. PJI, BAKHITA, COSUDOW and Idia Renaissance are the few non-state actors that own a shelter. The Ipajia Transit Homes is owned by the Ministry of Women Affairs but managed by the NGO Women's Helping Hands Initiative.

All stakeholders engaged in reintegration strategically positioned their shelters in Lagos and Benin, as both State have been hubs and gateways of trafficking and have best served as reception points for returnees. Several reports have highlighted primarily Edo State as the hub of human trafficking and

⁸⁹ Interview, Alex Oturu, NCFRMI, Head of Migration Unit, South-West, 07/04/2020.

stressed that considerable numbers of returns have been to this state. In spite of this, the Edo State government still does not have a sheltered facility of its own.

Admission to reintegration programmes

Admission to the shelters takes place at the shelters directly. It consists in a process of registering beneficiaries into a programme, through series of stages, after profiling is completed. According to Lilian Garuba⁹⁰, in the first reintegration programmes, a few years ago, a lump-sum stipend was given to returnees, but the practice was interrupted in 2018, as it proved financially unsustainable. Apparently, minors (of less than 18 years of age) used to receive a special packages from IOM, during the profiling interview at Lagos airport and were then transferred to dedicated shelters. We have not managed to collect further details in this sense.

Generally speaking, admission into reintegration programmes are not automatic. Besides, interviewees did not report specific criteria for determining whether trafficking survivors should be eligible. A similar comment was made by Human Rights Watch (2019), specifically for NAPTIP shelters. Notwithstanding, admission requires the consent of the referral organisation/s. Additionally, not all returnees can access shelters. Normally it is only AVR. According to the Executive Director of the Web of Heart Foundation⁹¹, admission into reintegration programmes are done only after referral organisations, namely IOM or NAPTIP, confirm the reason for return and the actual status of returnees. As explained, NCFRMI does not assist returnees with criminal records. Hence, if they approach a shelter, they will not be admitted⁹². What must be pointed out in this regard is that returnees with criminal records may also include victims of trafficking that were forced to engage in criminal activities, such as drug transportation. Unless in-depth referrals are organised, including in-depth interviews with people, it is unlikely that their conditions emerge. For this reason, all relevant stakeholders should be aware that no classification of returnees should prevent them from receiving at least initial assistance in the form of an adequate profiling, in order to ensure each individual is adequately protected from the risk of further exploitation.

The shelters: organisation and length of permanence

Nigerian victims of trafficking hosted in Lagos shelters are mostly rescued from African countries, such as the Benin Republic, Togo, Libya and Mali. An increasing number of people victims of labour exploitation has been returned from the Middle East, specifically Egypt, Oman, Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates. Boys are mostly recruited as drivers, while girls as domestic assistants. People of non-Nigerian nationality have also been hosted in the shelters, including for example Indians - eight were hosted in the last quarter of 2019, after having been trafficked into Nigeria for labour exploitation. Most victims hosted in NAPTIP Edo shelters are victims of trafficking for the scope of sexual exploitation. They are mostly rescued in Benin city or outside Nigeria (especially Mali and Burkina Faso). In most cases, girls and women rescued abroad are registered in a Lagos shelter, before transfer to Benin city⁹³.

⁹⁰ Interview, ETAHT, Assistant Secretary, 08/05/2020.

⁹¹ Interview, 20/06/2020.

⁹² Ibidem.

⁹³ Interview, Head Rehabilitation Department, NAPTIP Lagos, 25/08/2020.

On average, shelters have 20 to 40 places available. As it emerged during a visit to Osita Osemene, some shelters are not entirely for survivors of trafficking, but are more like orphanages (e.g. Web of Heart Foundation and COSUDOW)⁹⁴.

Most shelters host both males and female, questioning their capacity to ensure a women and children-sensitive approach as well as due attention to the specific needs of each target group. Other shelters, such as the Ipaja Transit Home welcome only females (and children), but hosts multiple typologies of targets, including victims of domestic violence or child abuse, pregnant teenagers and children in custody that need special attention. Together with NAPTIP, Ipaja is the only shelter open to mothers with children. More recently, there has been a call by stakeholders to invest more on this specific target that has been growing considerably and clearly require specific assistance⁹⁵. Primarily state actors have been asked to active dedicated projects, particularly in Lagos, Edo State and Abuja. Similarly, limited places are available for children, either because places are not available for this specific target or because of the specific rules of the shelter: NAPTIP for example often refers school-aged victims to foster care because it operates a closed shelter – Web of Heart Foundation also does – and this would prevent children from attending school.

Scarcity of shelter options for children had already been pointed out by Mbakogu (2015), who also recommended anti-trafficking stakeholders should listen to children's experiences in shelters to reflect on how they feel about it and why they may choose to terminate their programme (and re-engage in trafficking). She further recommended social workers should assist stakeholders in identifying the individual needs of children, with reference to emotional, psychological, economic, cultural and social issues.

Going back to the closed shelter policy, it should be specified what such policy involves. In general, it involves stricter rules to protect occupants and prevent the infiltration of traffickers. As NAPTIP explained, this policy is also applied because victims of trafficking often have pending cases in court and cases were often lost when family members established contacts to try and convince them not to show up in the court – because of pressure from traffickers. In closed shelters, external visits (including anyone living outside the shelters) and the use of telephones are prohibited and occupants are not permitted to leave without a chaperone. This clearly limits people's freedom of movement but also potential educational and work opportunities, with the risk of disempowerment (see also US State Department 2020 report). Vanderhurst (2017) criticised the closed shelter policy, positing that these shelters portray features that can be associated to detentions centers, where victims' rights, such as that of connecting with family members, are suspended. At the same time, depriving victims of this right often results in their distrust towards shelter consellers, as they are perceived as law enforcement agents rather than care givers, thus making their reintegration process less effective. Similar criticism has been raised by Human Rights Watch (2019) but also by stakeholders in Italy for sheltered facilities in the Italian peninsula. While the scope of protection is evident in shelters in both countries, it remains doubtful whether prohibiting the use of mobile phones and restricting movements in and out of the centre can effectively prevent the infiltration of traffickers. Furthermore, we believe that such measure should be temporary by definition, as taking away a mobile phone from a person who has been away

⁹⁴ See for example fieldwork note, 14/01/2020.

⁹⁵ fieldwork note, GIZ, 10/12/2019.

from her/his family means further disconnecting her/him from any support (see Semprebon et al., 2021).

As regards the length of stay, NAPTIP shelters normally offer six weeks of initial care (as spelt out in the National Referral Mechanism guidelines⁹⁶). The same average time applies to other shelters, although the length of permanence, in most situation, is not rigid. People, particularly victims of trafficking, are not always willing to return home because they are likely to face stigmatisation (Webber, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2019; Alpes 2020) – an aspect that is also stressed by anti-trafficking professionals in Europe and relevant to returnees from other countries too (see Brunovskis and Surtees, 2012). This does not mean that families are always unwelcoming. Human Rights Watch (2019), following interviews with survivors, reported that in fact many confirmed they could count on a supportive family environment. Not to be underestimated is the fact they may still be exposed to the risk of re-trafficking, because of the continuous influence of exploiters and the fact that push factors are still present.¹ However, if people are willing to stay longer than the mandated six weeks, they would be generally advised to relocate to another shelter owned by a partner organisation. The extension of permanence can be decided in relation to pending investigations or criminal proceedings: delays in the judicial system has often causes victims of trafficking to remain in shelters for up to six years. Taking up on Brunovskis' and Surtees' suggestion (2012), we believe that more attention should still be paid to understanding the extent and type of social support that families can provide whereby returnees return home.

The services provided in the shelters

Reintegration stakeholders provide assistance and services either inside and outside of the shelters, depending on the ownership and management arrangements. The NRM guidelines provide that shelters should ensure: accommodation/sheltering, health care, counselling, social inquiry, family tracing, empowerment, the activation of guardianship - if the person is unable to return to his/he family. All listed shelters (see table 24) provide reception, counselling and psycho-social support, medicals care, skill acquisitions training. The majority of stakeholders claim they do family tracing. NAPTIP also provides legal assistance and has signed agreements with some hospitals and clinics to provide additional medical treatment for victims, where needed.

The NRM guidelines indicate that victims of trafficking have the right to receive a personalized care plan, designed with their consent. With the exception of PJI and NWA, however, we have not found examples of personalized plans, but only some examples of personalized training – as we will see with the trainings carried out by the Nigeria-German Centre and MRC.

Regarding, psycho-social support and counselling, SOWOLDI partners with NCFRMI, NAPTIP, NGC, IOM, COSUDOW and BAKHITA to render services to victims. Some stakeholders are specialised in some services, owing to certifications acquired and trainings and work experiences undertaken. For instance SOWOLDI claims to render professional psycho-social services⁹⁷. WOCON offers a psychological first aid

⁹⁶ Guidelines on the National Referral Mechanism for Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons in Nigeria, EU, UNODC, NAPTIP, 2015. Available: https://www.unodc.org/documents/nigeria/NRM_Guideline_final_2015.pdf
Last access: 22/02/2021.

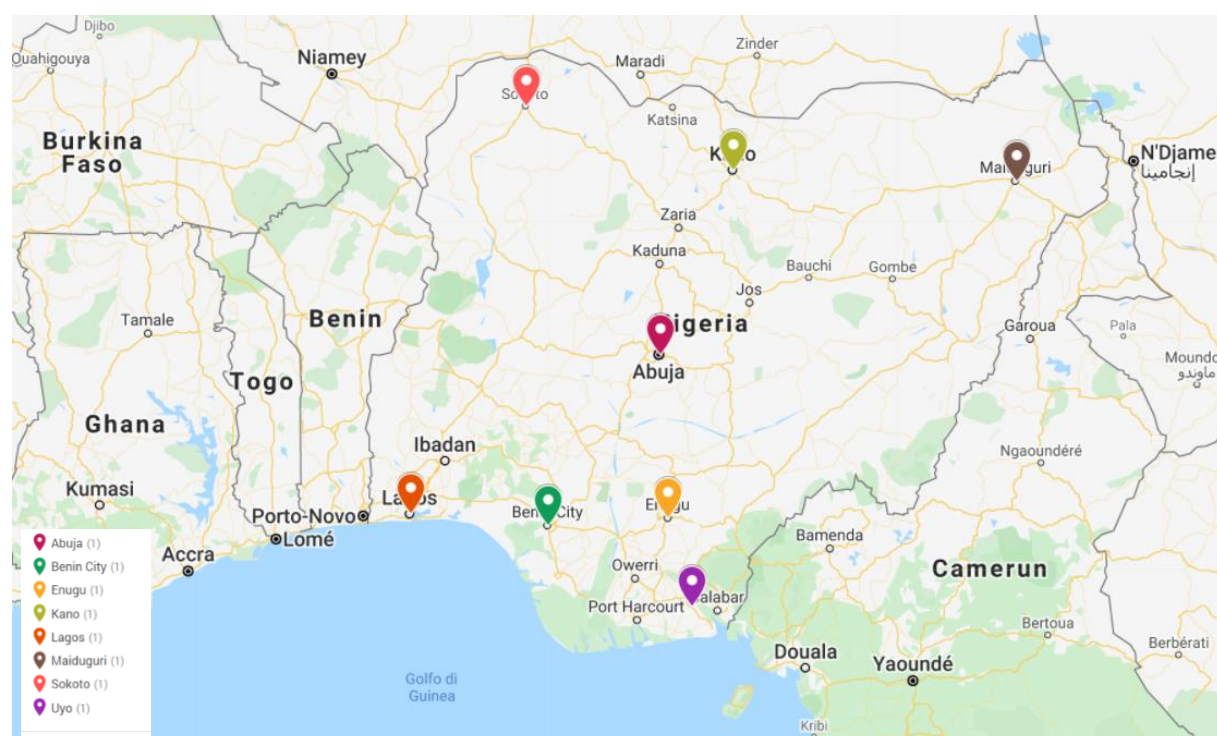
⁹⁷ Interview, Country Manager, SOWOLDI, 28/07/2020.

support, including a short profiling interview, family tracing and a brief counselling interview, to then accompany beneficiaries to the identified shelter to continue their programme⁹⁸.

According to the US State Department report (2020), there are still significant gaps regarding specialised services available to adult male victims⁹⁹. The work by Diagboya (2017) on the Federal Capital Territory highlights, from a wider perspective, that very little research has been undertaken on the actual experience of trafficked men in the first place.

As stated above, stakeholders do provide services either or outside the shelters, meaning they sometimes require collaboration to provide part of the services. We suggest that NACTAL, as the coalition of non-government organisations that operate in the field of human trafficking, should encourage partnership, for example by clustering stakeholders by state, area of specialisation, services and contact details. Furthermore, it could help define a common timeline for rehabilitation, to help monitor the progress of beneficiaries and it should facilitate access to information regarding organisations and services they offer.

Shelters are located across Nigeria, but particularly in the southern regions (map 1).



MAP 1: MAP OF THE TERRITORIES IN WHICH THE SHELTERS ARE LOCATED

⁹⁸ Interview, Programme Director, WOCON, 25/03/2020.

⁹⁹ This also emerged, as testified by ETAHT, at the INSigHT Gap-analysis seminar organised by PJI in Benin city on 10th and 11th June 2019. Details are available here: <https://www.insightproject.net/hello-world/> Minutes are available here: <https://www.insightproject.net/project/events-and-documents/> Last access: 01/02/2021.

Shelter owner	Service provider	number of occupants	gender of occupants	average length of stay	type of occupants	services offered	location
NAPTIP	NAPTIP Lagos Command	60	mixed	6 weeks	victims of trafficking	reception, counselling, medical assistance, skill acquisition and reintegration	Lagos,
NAPTIP	NAPTIP Abuja Command	38	mixed	6 weeks	victims of trafficking	reception, counselling, medical assistance, skill acquisition and reintegration	Abuja
NAPTIP	NAPTIP Benin Command	40	mixed	6 weeks	victims of trafficking	reception, counselling, medical assistance, skill acquisition and reintegration	Benin
NAPTIP	NAPTIP Uyo Command	45	mixed	6 weeks	victims of trafficking	reception, counselling, medical assistance, skill acquisition and reintegration	Uyo
NAPTIP	NAPTIP Enugu Command	30	mixed	6 weeks	victims of trafficking	reception, counselling, medical assistance, skill acquisition and reintegration	Enugu
NAPTIP	NAPTIP Kano Command	30	mixed	6 weeks	victims of trafficking	reception, counselling, medical assistance, skill acquisition and reintegration	Kano
NAPTIP	NAPTIP Sokoto Command	30	mixed	6 weeks	victims of trafficking	reception, counselling, medical assistance, skill acquisition and reintegration	Sokoto
NAPTIP	NAPTIP Maiduguri Command	20	mixed	6 weeks	victims of trafficking	reception, counselling, medical assistance, skill acquisition and reintegration	Maiduguri
Pathfinders Justice Initiative	PJI	20	girls		victims of trafficking	return, counselling, psycho-social support (with trained professionals) medical assistance,	Benin City, Edo State

						legal services, educational skills training, start up capitals, educational scholarship, primary screening for sexually transmitted infections. HIV, pregnancy, genotype	
Web of Heart Foundation	WOHF	60	mixed		returnees (including also IDPs) and victims of trafficking	reception, counselling, medical assistance, skill acquisition and reintegration	Lagos
Sister of St. Louis (name of shelter: BAKHITA)	St. Ferdinand	20	girls		victims of trafficking	reception, counselling, medical assistance, skills acquisition and reintegration	Lagos
Ipaja Transit Home	Women's Helping Hand Initiative	48	girls (boys below 8 years old with their mother)	6 weeks	victims of trafficking, domestic violence, child, physical and sexual abuse, religious activities, pregnant teenagers, custody, women with children	reception, counselling, medical assistance, skill acquisitions and reintegration	Lagos
COSUDOW	open for all	30	girls		returnees and victims of trafficking	reception, counselling, medical assistance, skill acquisitions and reintegration	Edo

TABLE 24: LIST OF SHELTERS

Counselling and psychological support

As stressed by various authors, survivors have generally gone through both physical and emotional maltreatments, and have often been re-victimised multiple times (Baye, 2012), thus requiring substantial attention and care. This is all the more true for survivors that also go through the experience of forced return (Ratia and Notermans, 2012; Paasche et al., 2018) and the many survivors who have to deal with rejection by family members and the fear of repercussions concerning oath taking (Eghafona, 2018; IFRA, 2019).

All the above factors are likely to cause substantial hindrances to effective reintegration and call for specific psychological support. Human Rights Watch (2019) reported that the majority of the survivors interviewed suffered from long-term mental and physical health problems and many lamented struggling to access services. Psychological and counselling support emerged as limited also in our interviews, as testified particularly by ETAHT and by various stakeholders at the INSigHT Gap-analysis seminar organised in Benin city, in June 2019¹⁰⁰.

According to the NRM guidelines, counselling for people victims of trafficking must be carried out by trained professionals and shall include the following minimum services: information on available assistance programmes (legal, medical and empowerment related), psycho-social services and trauma counselling, cultural and spiritual counselling.

Stakeholders normally refer to counselling services as having similar features as psycho-social support. In fact, counselling generally translates in a generalised professional support to survivors on making decisions on their trajectory. It rarely comprises an ad hoc support by professionals that fits the individual needs of survivors, as an adequate healing process would require¹⁰¹, with the exception – as stated in interviews – of NAPTIP, MRC, Web of Heart Foundation and SOWOLDI. The most crucial task assigned to counsellors seems to be that of “raising a red flag” if forms of traumatisation emerge that require attention. Yet, it is not clear to what extent an actual support may follow. At the same time, identifying indicators requires specific professional skills¹⁰² that derive from training but also experience.

All reintegration stakeholders are non-faith based organisations and yet they often use religious terms to talk about reintegration. They often refer to the virtues of patience, the importance of having faith in God and hope for the future (see also counsellors (Vanderhurst, 2017). As Plambech (2017) suggested, spiritual counselling techniques are believed to represent a panacea for rehabilitation and desperation to migrate (or re-migrate) to Europe.

Nigeria is very religious country and the African traditional religions, as well as Christianity have impacted considerably on the social life of Nigerians. Traditional rituals have been used to recruit people for trafficking and, as explained above, religion could similarly be useful in enhancing reintegration (Osezua, 2013a). The belief in the juju, that has been long used by traffickers to keep girls in perpetual bondage, has been contested by some counsellors to demystify the powers attached to native doctors. At the same time, many rehabilitation officers have implored faith in God as a counter-narrative for being re-trafficked. On their side, returnees seek spiritual and material help from churches upon return¹⁰³. The church through some organisations (i.e. the Nigeria Conference of Women Religious and the Catholic Bishops of Nigeria) embark on enlightenment campaign in schools and communities to prevent trafficking and provide spiritual assistance, as Theophilus (2018) reports. Far less evidence is available, to our knowledge, on the role and support provided by the church in

¹⁰⁰ See Gap-analysis seminar organised by PJI in Benin city on 10th and 11th June 2019. Details are available here: <https://www.insightproject.net/hello-world/> Minutes are available here: <https://www.insightproject.net/project/events-and-documents/> Last access: 01/02/2021.

¹⁰¹ Interview, Head of Rehabilitation Department, NAPTIP Lagos Command, 25/08/2020.

¹⁰² Interview, Assistance Secretary, ETAHT, 08/0/2020.

¹⁰³ Interview, Assistant Secretary, ETAHT, 08/0/2020.

destination countries of trafficking, such as Italy¹⁰⁴ and it would be worth exploring, as it is likely to be a relevant factor in the experience of returnees before returning to Nigeria.

It was also reported that in situations whereby victims of trafficking fear any repercussions, NAPTIP staff have located shrines and asked herbalists to revoke the curses before the victims. This strategy has proven effective because herbalists and juju priests are normally scared of being held by law enforcement officers and would easily agree to revoke the curse. In turn, many victims have felt liberated¹⁰⁵.

From our interviews, the perception remains strong that reintegration programmes are largely characterised by a moralist approach. This becomes most evident in the use of the term “rehabilitation” that recalls, on the one side, rehabilitation from a physical problem, on the other rehabilitation from an immoral way of living, often associated with the sex work victims of trafficking are often forced to do. The strong risk inherent in such an attitude is of course that of re-victimising, if not criminalising, victims.

Medical Services

Returnees often need timely medical assistance. Specific medical ailment could be discovered through information provided by sending institutions but more often it comes up during the profiling interview and/or medical tests. ETAHT hands over patients with minor issues to doctors partaking in reception activities, while people with chronic conditions are transferred to the Central Hospital in Benin, where specialised medical practitioners can attend to them¹⁰⁶. NAPTIP also refers to hospitals for chronic issues, that are quite frequent and normally relate to STD, HIV, Hepatitis B. Two nurses operate in the Lagos shelter, covering also the night shift. According to the Head of the Rehabilitation Department, the Zonal Command does not have the necessary medical facilities but can only count on the availability of drugs for minor sicknesses, such as minor headaches¹⁰⁷. Moreover, apart from the test conducted by IOM during the reception at the airport, there is no evidence of other medical test/visits conducted at NAPTIP’s shelter before admission to the programme. Whereby any beneficiary is found to have HIV, she/he will be transferred to a separate room but will still participate to all activities with all other occupants, though utensils will not be shared¹⁰⁸. As testified by the two survivors we managed to interview, self-medication is most frequent among occupants, as NAPTIP is not committed to cover medical bills and the medical support provided is very limited, as the agency itself explains.

As far as other shelters are concerned, the staff always refers to hospitals for medical care, with the exception of Ipaja Transit Home that owns its own ambulance and can count on dedicated medical staff. As explained in the table, it is a “Home”, not a shelter, that hosts a mix of beneficiaries (victims of domestic violence, sexually abused people, victims of sex trafficking, etc.). The NRM guidelines do require shelters to have minimum in-house health care packages and provide access to screening and treatment of identified health conditions, but most stakeholders are not in the conditions to comply with these requirements.

¹⁰⁴ See for example Cabras (2015).

¹⁰⁵ Interview, Rehabilitation and Counselling Unit, NAPTIP Benin Command, 19/08/2020.

¹⁰⁶ Interview, Assistant Secretary, ETAHT, 08/05/2020.

¹⁰⁷ Interview, Rehabilitation and Counselling Unit, NAPTIP Lagos Command, 28/08/2020.

¹⁰⁸ Ibidem.

Employment

In principles, it is the FMLE (Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment) that should be entrusted with the provision of training, but the Ministry does not have sufficient funding to fulfil this role. NCFMRI, as a government agency, deals, to some extent, with it, and so does SMEDAN, a governing agency whose mandate is to work in contact with other institutions in both the public and private sector to create a good enabling environment¹⁰⁹. An important stakeholder with regard to training for returnees has been the Nigeria-German Centre (NGC), partner of the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC), in the National Electronic Labour Exchange Programme (NELEX) that opens up a variety of career paths for participants, ranging from opportunities in the Information Technology field, Data Science, Agriculture, etc.¹¹⁰

The MRC has also acted as “checkpoint” for job recruiters, with the aim to identify human traffickers under the pretence of finding people jobs outside of Nigeria. To cope with this phenomenon, the MRC issues a certified license to job recruiters and organises departure seminars to inform prospective migrants on the working conditions in the country of destination¹¹¹. No details have been provided of how the identification of potential traffickers is done.

Unfortunately, the MRC and its services are not known to the majority of Nigerians. The agency is increasingly known by stakeholders, but with no clear mandate – it has rather an overlap of mandates with respect to other organisations. The MRC meets regularly with NCFMRI and NAPTIP, under the auspices of IOM¹¹², but so far, no joint programme has been completed¹¹³.

Both the NGC and IOM are major transnational bodies involved in the development and empowerment of survivors through training and job placement, but they have adopted a different operational approach.

IOM offers special packages for returnees that comprise:

- **the Individual Reintegration Programme:** is arranged for survivors and, in some cases, for returnees (that however are unlikely to receive the same “package as victims of trafficking). A document and identity card are issued in the sending country (Niger or Libya), that identify a person as a victim of trafficking and it is collected upon arrival at the airport, by a IOM official. The person, after completing the training, is given about one million naira by IOM and 1.6 million naira worth of good to be supplied by vendors (UK AID funding).
- **the Collective Reintegration Programme:** is arranged for 3 persons of the same community with a common business idea. The group benefits from dedicated training and proposes the establishment of a joint business. IOM monitors the business site, which in most cases is a shop, and pays a vendor to supply goods worth 1.1 million Naira.
- **the Community Reintegration Programme:** is arranged for a larger number (above 20) of returnees who reside in a given geographical area. The business model for this category of recipients is more of a factory-business type, including for example pineapple and cassava processing factories.

¹⁰⁹ See the dedicated website: <https://smedan.gov.ng/what-is-spx/> Last access: 15/02/2021.

¹¹⁰ Fieldwork note, 29-30/08/2020.

¹¹¹ Interview, Head of Department, MRC, 30/04/2020.

¹¹² Interview, Alex Oturu, NCFMRI, Head of Migration Unit, South-West, 07/04/2020.

¹¹³ Interview, Head of Department, MRC, 30/04/2020.

Returnees under this package earn salaries every month, as the rationale of the programme is to support the activation of a business that should become self-sustainable over time.

- **the Co-operative Business:** is a system whereby returnees elect executives to manage soft loans (with low or no interests) – deriving from the proceeds of organised businesses. The recently constructed Fish farm in Ikorodu and Yobe states is an example¹¹⁴.

Individuals belonging to specific targets can receive dedicated funding. For example, in the case of single parents, the mother (or father) receives 900,000 naira and each child 400,000.

What about returnees who arrive at Lagos airport without any document identifying them as survivors? Will they be entitled to this package? It was not explained during interviews. Nor was it explained why only about 7,000 out of 12,000 returnees, who arrived in the period 2017-2019, have gone through the IOM training. Apparently, IOM collects punctual data of returnees and the programmes delivered to them under the AVR programme, but such data could not be accessed nor is it shared with other stakeholders such as MRC¹¹⁵.

The inability for stakeholders to access IOM data has some implications. First, it gives returnees the chance to benefit from similar projects from different stakeholders that provide similar services, because there is no track record, without any specific employment plan hence in a fragmented disorganised manner. This may result in a waste of resources that cannot be accounted for because of the absence of a monitoring mechanism. While the MRC should ideally continue the training with returnees upon the completion of their project with the IOM, it must normally re-start, precisely because of the lack of coordination.

Some non-state actors operate an in-house training centre or workshop. PJI, WOHF, Ipaja Transit Home organise trainings within the premises of their shelters. Other NGOs leverage on the training centres of partner stakeholders, as it happens for NAPTIP Lagos Command, that sometimes calls for collaboration to organise hairdressing workshops¹¹⁶. Similarly, whenever stakeholders need the support of partners to train survivors, they transfer them to partners' shelters for the period of the training or else accompany the survivors to the training and return them to the shelter by the evening¹¹⁷. ETAHT claims it has assisted about 500 returnees (out of a total of over 5,000 who arrived in the period August 2017 to January 2020) with Starter Programmes, by providing financial and material commitment for the completion of a vocational training, while 1,000 trainees were transferred to partner stakeholders¹¹⁸. There are also cases in which NGOs seek grants for businesses.

Some stakeholders leverage on the skills and training that victims may have received before travelling out of Nigeria, in view of continuing in the same line of business or opt-in for alternatives, if any is open, but no example was provided in this sense. Differently, there is hardly any continuity with trainings undertaken outside Nigeria. According to the Programme Director of WOCON, none of the returnees nor of the relevant stakeholders in rescuing countries has ever given an account on this¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁴ Interview, IOM, Lead Consultant Trainer, IOM, 12/08/2020.

¹¹⁵ Ibidem and interview, Head of Department, MRC, 30/04/2020.

¹¹⁶ Interview, Unit Head, Counselling and Rehabilitation, 25/08/2020.

¹¹⁷ Interview, Chief Executive Officer, Web of Heart Foundation, 20/06/2020.

¹¹⁸ Interview, Assistance Secretary, ETAHT, 08/05/2020.

¹¹⁹ Interview, Programme Director, WOCON, 25/03/2020.

Most stakeholders present business and training opportunities based on what they can offer, while returnees wishes are hardly taken into consideration. We recommend that any decision to enter into any programme should not be at the levity of care givers, but should rather be accompanied and guided, which means first of all informing people of all the available options. Increasing collaboration should also be developed among stakeholders to ensure survivors have access to programmes that respond to their needs. As it emerged also during the Rehabilitation Workshop¹²⁰, in January 2021, stakeholders rush through the identification of the services and trainings to offer. Admitting returnees to a training they are not interested in and motivated for has shown to be ineffective in the medium-long term. Arguably, it is also likely to increase the risk of re-trafficking, while the contrary is likely to deter it: PJI (2019) states that none of the over 100 returnees assisted were re-trafficked and stresses the importance of their customised personalised action to a healing rehabilitation plan. We do however share Eghafona's view (2018) who recommends that people should be encouraged to take advantage of and engage in sectors, such as agriculture, that the government indicates as underexplored by Nigerian youth.

Any training without a sufficient financial and material support to venture into the business is likely render the essence of the whole training useless. The INSigHT partners, and in particular NWA, have repeatedly stressed, from their own experience, that even whereby a IOM package is offered, involving substantial economic support, they have seen businesses failing because they were not supported for a sufficiently long period of time.

Training is a crucial part of reintegration and it can determine, to a large extent, whether returnees eventually choose to remain in the country or to migrate as they see no better alternatives. While monitoring data on the trajectories of returnees is not available, the data given by ETAH and IOM of the limited number of returnees that access trainings, makes us question the capacity of these stakeholders to address the needs of a sufficiently ample segment of the target group and leaves questions open regarding the reasons why all other returnees have not had the same opportunity or have refused it. A specific research project would be crucial to monitor this aspect in details.

Beneficiaries Experience of reintegration programmes

As we explained, due to the pandemic mobility restrictions, we have not been authorised to carry out interviews with beneficiaries of reintegration programmes, with the exception of two girls who were hosted at NAPTIP shelters. Next, we will report the feedback they provided on reintegration and rehabilitation services, as they experienced themselves. We will add the experience reported by a girl during the Rehabilitation Workshop organised by Pathfinders Justice Initiative on January 14th and 15th 2021.

¹²⁰ Rehabilitation Workshop organised by Pathfinders Justice Initiative on January 14th and 15th 2021. Available: <https://www.insightproject.net/pathfinders-rehabilitation-workshop-january-14-15-2021/> Last access: 22/02/2021.



Gladys is 27 years old. She was recruited in her neighborhood in Benin city, as most girls who fell victims of trafficking in Edo state. She was told of a job opportunity in Dubai and upon arrival at the destination she was introduced to prostitution. Initially, she refused to accept. She was beaten by her Madam's boyfriend. After suffering several forms of maltreatment, Gladys eventually fled. She opted to return to Nigeria and could do so thanks to the assistance of a person who facilitated her safe return by contacting SOWOLDI. When she arrived in Lagos, she was assisted by NAPTIP and admitted into one of its shelters. Later she was transferred to the Benin Command since she resides in Benin city. Her exploiters are still in Benin. Gladys decided to return to her family and not to stay at the shelter, while investigations were under way. When asked why she lamented the bad state of the shelter: she claimed she got a skin infection because of the bade state of the bed and that the staff had not taken good care of her nor granted medical treatment. This is why she did not agree to collaborate in investigations. She felt that NAPTIP was more concerned with punishing the traffickers than protecting her. Gladys still occasionally uses some psycho-active substances and would still need medical as well as psychological support.



Victoria is 18 years old. She was rescued in Nigeria, at the age of 16. She was trafficked from the Benin Republic to Nigeria to work as a domestic helper. Victoria was abused by her madam's husband and husband's father several times. She received help from a neighbour who had realised she was being maltreated and reported the case to the police. Upon admission to the shelter, Victoria was tested for pregnancy and was found pregnant. She delivered a baby boy. She has been living in the shelter for over two years as her case is still in court. When asked if she wants justice, she replied she rather wants the agency to drop the case. The Head of the Counselling and Research Department explained that she is still in the shelter as it would not be safe to leave. The accused family is very influential in the neighbourhood and this could put Victoria in danger. At the same time she is still at the shelter as NAPTIP is seeking financial support (250,000 naira) to conduct a DNA test to determine the paternity of the child - the evidence the court demands for the case.



Ifemelu is 23 years old. She was trafficked from Nigeria to Malaysia in 2017 and returned in November 2019. Upon arrival at Lagos airport, IOM gave her 42,000 naira and lodged her in a nearby hotel in Lagos for two days. She moved autonomously back to Benin city. She attended an IOM business training for one week, which included lodging. She expressed the view that the IOM group business approach doesn't work and suggested that returnees understand from the beginning that programme won't work. They receive immediately the money and share it but it does not provide with sufficient resources for individual businesses. As a result, she asked further assistance from other NGOs, similarly to other returnees, but with little prospects ahead for the time being.

The cases presented provide some useful insights. First, good hygienic conditions and medical treatment should be granted in the shelters. Second, stakeholders, and specifically NAPTIP, seems to be mostly focused on prosecuting traffickers than ensuring effective protection and support to people. Paradoxically, this lack of attention to victims results in scarce collaboration in investigations on their side – that is difficult in the first place because of poor trust in security agencies, due to cases of corruption and collusion with traffickers (see for example Okeshola, 2018)¹²¹. Third, the location of shelter can expose them to exploiters and the risk of re-trafficking. The risk, in the case of Victoria, seems to be connected also to the fact that the traffickers' family is very influential. Fourth, no evidence was reported of any care being taken of Gladys' abuse of psycho-active substances and yet this clearly highlights a severe hazard for her health. Fifth, no evidence was reported either of sufficient care being taken for Victoria's condition as a mother and her specific needs in growing her child. For example, the length of permanence in a place that can hardly grant sufficient intimacy for the mother and her child seems to clash with ensuring the protection of both. It should be considered that length of stay is often not dependant on the needs of the beneficiaries, but rather bureaucratic and organisational issues, including a rather slow judiciary process for conviction (see for example Hanafi, 2013). Insufficient assistance to victims was highlighted also by Human Rights Watch (2019), with reference to the period 2017-2018, particularly with respect to medical assistance, psychological support, economic support, skill acquisition.

Looking at the experience of Ifemelu, criticism was clearly expressed with reference to the IOM group business approach, highlighting the challenges of group projects. It questions the effectiveness of delivering stipends and calls for an approach that involves tutoring support for the definition of a sustainable business plan and the management of economic resources. It is also evident that returnees prefer individual rather than collective programmes, as it helps them focus on individual skills and their own empowerment path.

Funding for reintegration programmes

In the previous sections, we highlighted that funding is generally indicated as a critical issue by various stakeholders. Both state and non-state actors working in the field of anti-trafficking depend largely on external funding by international actors and sponsors to achieve their mission (see also Semprebón, 2020).

ETHAT lamented that funding by IOM and UNHCR is still mainly granted for awareness-raising initiatives¹²². NAPTIP's criticism was similar. ETHAH explained that funding is also received by Embassies, such as the American Embassy, and EU Member States governments. However, investigations and prosecutions seem to be the priority concern of EU Member States, while reintegration is not considered at all. The example was provided of specific funding by the Italian government to favour collaborations in investigations.

¹²¹ During the Rehabilitation Workshop organised by Pathfinders Justice Initiative on January 14th and 15th, the case was reported of a returnee who was willing to collaborate with NAPTIP to prosecute her traffickers, to later find out that her trafficker was colluded with the prosecution team. See: <https://www.insightproject.net/pathfinders-rehabilitation-workshop-january-14-15-2021/> Last access: 22/02/2021.

¹²² Interview. Assistant Secretary, ETHAT, 08/05/2020.

Another aspect raised by NAPTIP is the actual process of fundraising. It is the headquarter in Abuja that should approach embassies and other potential sponsors. The zonal commands are restricted from seeking funds from partners, except in specific cases where it is sponsors advancing proposals¹²³, and yet they may have a more operative vision of what is needed on the field to manage shelters and improve reintegration programmes.

A few NGOs such as PJI, WOHP, GPI have developed considerable expertise in fundraising, developing partnerships with international partners and donors. Funding is crucial for their sustainability and it has proven more and more important for NGOs to prove professional and credible in the eyes of sponsors, thus also contributing to shaping positive narratives on Nigeria¹²⁴.

Some stakeholders leverage on local actors for project. According to the Chief Executive Officer of Web of Heart Foundation, banks (i.e. Access bank, Sterling bank) have been providing financial support¹²⁵. Their involvement in reintegration programmes is not common, but they can procure equipment (i.e. sewing machines for trainings), sponsor events, as part of their mission to fulfil their corporate social responsibilities.

In face of a precarious funding scenario, NGOs must build annual plans and a budgeting system that are very flexible, considering that funding relies on projects' approval and that projects cover short periods of time and cannot grant the continuity of projects. In line with the importance that religion is accorded to many aspects of life in Nigeria, faith in God has been also at the basis of fundraising efforts PJI and WOHP. Planning and budgeting and efforts to enlarge the scope and the volume of sponsorship are carried out with strong faith in prayer¹²⁶.

Criticism by NGOs has been expressed regarding the thematic focus of funding, particularly from European institutions, that seems mostly concerned with preventing migration from Nigeria and encouraging returns¹²⁷, while given less consideration to support reintegration and follow up beneficiaries' trajectories.

Monitoring and evaluation of reintegration programmes

Monitoring and Evaluation is not a common practice among Nigerian stakeholders working in the field of anti-trafficking. State actors rarely evaluate, and have the resources to evaluate, the impacts of their activities on thematic areas, such as awareness-raising, capacity building and reintegration. Little evaluation is similarly undertaken by IOM, according to GPI and ETATH ¹²⁸. MRC also argues that funds are disbursed to returnees without punctual follow up and that training activities are hardly evaluated¹²⁹.

The NGOs representatives that we interviewed claimed they try and keep in contact with reintegration beneficiaries after the completion of their project, in order to monitor their state of health and the

¹²³ Interview, Research & Programme Development Officer, NAPTIP Lagos, 25/08/2020.

¹²⁴ Interview, Executive Director, PJI, 11/08/2020.

¹²⁵ Interview, 20/06/2020.

¹²⁶ Interview, Executive Director, PJI, 11/08/2020 and Chief Executive Officer, Web of Heart Foundation, 20/06/2020.

¹²⁷ Interview, Executive Director, PJI, 11/08/2020.

¹²⁸ Interview, Facilitator, GPI, 12/05/2020 and Assistant Secretary, ETAHT, 08/05/2020.

¹²⁹ Interview, Head of Department, MRC, 30/04/2020.

progress of their business activities, but no systematic data is collected to allow for an in-depth evaluation¹³⁰, although survivors often keep in touch and participate in activities organised by NGOs¹³¹.

Depending on the decision of beneficiaries, upon terminating the programme they may decide to return to their families or start a new life elsewhere. In this case NGOs normally assist them in looking for an adequate accommodation and possibly employment. NAPTIP cannot count on sufficient funds to provide this support. NAPTIP does not have sufficient funds neither to empower victims by sustaining their access to employment.

Little monitoring is carried out even during the actual reintegration programmes. Yet, the NRM guidelines indicate that all service providers should complete a self-assessment and carry out quality assurance on individual care plans on a monthly basis. We have not been reported of any form of assessment. Stakeholders themselves suggested that monitoring activities should be carried out on a monthly basis with each programme beneficiary, to ensure steps are being made in reintegration and that effective support is being provided¹³², but insufficient resources are available.

The Risk of re-trafficking

Monitoring stands out as a very critical issue of reintegration, as only through monitoring it is possible to verify to what extent programmes have been useful to support returnees. Monitoring is essential also to improve understanding of the risks of re-trafficking and they can be addressed.

WOCON and NCFRMI posits that re-trafficking is more common among people who arrived in Nigeria following a forced return, although the same risk has been highlighted for returnees of AVR programmes¹³³. Generally speaking, whereby survivors perceive they are not offered any improved opportunity to remain, they form a mindset to migrate again although this means putting themselves again into the hands of exploiters. The changing attitude of returnees during the reintegration programme can raise a “red flag”: some become resistant in providing their phone number or show increasing lack of interest in the programme itself, as suggested by WOCON¹³⁴. We strongly believe that much more engagement is needed to ensure that beneficiaries can actively plan their reintegration programme with the support of a supervisor that in face of their wishes can help them consider the actual opportunities that can be available for them in the job market.

When presenting reintegration programmes to returnees more attention must be paid to their expectations too, based on previous experiences. As it emerged during a joint meeting of returnees and stakeholders organised by NGC and GIZ, returnees, especially returnees arriving from Germany, insisted they had the right to enter a reintegration programme, as they had the right to reception in Europe and frustrations were expressed as they experienced this right was not automatically addressed. Similar

¹³⁰ Interview, Zonal Coordinator, Idia Renaissance, 15/07/2020 and Executive Director, PJI, 11/08/2020.

¹³¹ Interview, Executive Director, PJI, 11/08/2020.

¹³² As suggested during the Rehabilitation Workshop organised by Pathfinders Justice Initiative on January 14th and 15th 2021. Available: <https://www.insightproject.net/pathfinders-rehabilitation-workshop-january-14-15-2021/> Last access: 22/02/2021.

¹³³ This is for example the position expressed by ASGI (Italian Association on Juridical Studies for Migration), in the context of its on-going project on the externalisation of borders in Niger and Nigeria, Sciabaca&Ouruka. See: Borlizzi F. Nigeria: rischio di re-trafficking e (in)voluntary return delle vittime di tratta (Nigeria: risk of re-trafficking and (in)voluntary return of victims of trafficking. Available: <https://sciabacaoruka.asgi.it/retrafficking-nigeria-rimpatri-volontari/> Last access: 22/02/2021.

¹³⁴ Interview, Programme Director, WOCON, 25/03/2020.

frustrations impact negatively on their engagement in reintegration and heighten the risk of re-trafficking. Returnees from Libya, who had no previous experience of reception, seemed more prone to engage in the proposed IOM trainings because they hardly had any expectation¹³⁵. An in-depth monitoring would be needed to evaluate how motivation and engagement vary with the evolving of programmes.

Awareness-raising as a preventive measure to re-trafficking

There was an evident increase in the number of awareness-raising projects between 2014 and 2017, with considerable support by EU institutions and Member States, but also by international organisations such as UNODC and IOM. Many projects were carried out in the following years too (for an update see the Gap-analysis report prepared by the INSigHT Team (Semprebon, 2020). The geographical areas of awareness-raising initiatives have mostly included the Edo state territory, with little attention to other states. However, recent trends have shown that Lagos State has increasingly become part of the route used by traffickers, thus calling for more awareness-raising locally¹³⁶, particularly directly in poor neighbourhoods, with focus on the target of girls below the age of 18¹³⁷ and with the support of community members¹³⁸. The relevance of community outreach work focusing on providing alternatives to livelihood and addressing on-going poverty cannot be emphasised enough. All communities should be reached out, particularly those in more remote rural areas.

Our interviewees reported of regular weekly awareness-raising activities by the National Youths Service Corp (NYSC), in collaboration with the NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command. The involvement of the Corp members as awareness-raising agents is crucial to the agency, since they operate with and within the community and are very close to people. They also feed information back on how activities can be improved¹³⁹. Community work counts mostly on CDS (Community Development Service) groups, that are formed within the NYSC, each with attention to a specific issue. In Lagos there is a specific CDS on trafficking that represents NAPTIP in awareness-raising activities. Unfortunately, insufficient staff is available to cover all states.

Effective awareness-raising certainly requires adequate materials, sufficient financial commitment and flexibility. According to WOCON Programme Director, funds received from donors are in most cases specific for a given area and a specific target, hence whereby the need emerges during the project to enlarge the target or the geographical scope of the activity it is hardly possible¹⁴⁰. Similarly, the NAPTIP Enlightenment Officer interviewed lauded the efforts of the agency to deliver a clear message to communities, but lamented the absence of modern methods (including not only materials, but also speakers, dedicated vehicles for on-the-road awareness-raising to reach out to all communities)¹⁴¹ (see also the interview with ETAHT Assistant Secretary, 08/05/2020).

The involvement of survivors has been unpopular in raising awareness. PJI seems to be an exception in this sense. As explained by the Executive Director, PJI's programme is centred on survivors to be the

¹³⁵ Fieldwork note, NGC/GIZ, 10/12/2020.

¹³⁶ Interview, Mnena Ajeseni, Public Enlightenment Unit, NAPTIP 25/08/2020.

¹³⁷ Interview, Uwangue Laura, Facilitator for GPI, 12/05/2020 and Programme Director, WOCON 25/03/2020.

¹³⁸ Interview, Bose Aggrey, Chief Executive Officer, WOHF, 20/06/2020.

¹³⁹ Interview, Nosa Mamman-Odey, Head of Public Enlightenment Unit, NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command, 25/08/2020.

¹⁴⁰ Interview, Morenike Omaiboje, Programme Director WOCON, 25/03/2020.

¹⁴¹ Interview, Nosa Mamman-Odey, Head of Public and Enlightenment Unit, NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command, 28/08/2020.

tellers of their own stories. Through its Programme, “The Voices”, survivors and local communities are supported to design and communicate the ills of human trafficking in their neighbourhoods and this strategy has demonstrated to be effective in raising people’s attention¹⁴². The same view is held by the Chief Executive Officer of Patriotic Citizen Initiative who posited that when survivors speak, they can give first-hand information and communicate the message most effectively¹⁴³. A similar strategy has been replicated by the Counselling Unit of NAPTIP Benin Zonal Command, in a peer-to-peer logic, whereby survivors become ambassadors¹⁴⁴ (Obi, 2018). While the importance of engaging survivors as messengers is certainly interesting, we do however suggest that stakeholders should always ensure they are guided and supported in their role through dedicated capacity building to avoid any re-victimisation and the re-creation of stereotypes that only give space to their identity as victims and not as human beings.

Generally speaking, prevention has been long recognised as a crucial to avert the risk of trafficking. However, as suggested by Nwogu (2014), awareness-raising will not deter young people from migrating nor will their families stop giving their children away to traffickers whereby they continue experiencing poor economic conditions. It is important to remember that trafficking is generally accepted as a way of generating income and as an important source of socio-economic capital for families (see research on Edo State: Ogonor and Osunde, 2007; Osezua, 2013; Hynes et al., 2018; Ikuteyijo, 2020).

Awareness-raising has so far been focused on preventing trafficking, but forms of re-trafficking have become more and more evident too (Jobe, 2010; Eghafona, 2018) and yet the ground causes for both are still the same. Survivors are likely to face similar conditions to those they faced before leaving Nigeria, thus they are likely to be exposed to the risk of re-trafficking too. Adding to this, they also face the risk of retaliation, as well as forms of stigmatisation and rejection by family members and communities (Stoyanova, 2011; Iziengbe, 2017; Eghafona, 2018). For this reason, awareness-raising interventions should be targeted to survivors’ families and communities, but this aspect has so far been undermined by both state and non-state actors. Similarly the involvement of communities and families in reintegration programmes has been scarcely considered. Families and communities are not unaware of trafficking, on the contrary. Awareness has improved particularly on sex trafficking, but campaigns have been less effective in explaining the associated risks and the actual implications (ie. duration of exploitation, amount of debt, treatment by traffickers and madams) (most recently: Eghafona, 2018; De Masi and Coresi, 2019; PJI, 2020). Most importantly they have failed to provide any sustainable alternative to trafficking that ultimately still mean looking for alternative opportunities outside of Nigeria. It is not clear for example why development agencies and resource centres that carry out skill acquisition programmes, such as the monthly career path run by the Nigerian-German Centre and the Migrant Resource Centre¹⁴⁵, are not promoted to the general public. Moreover, many interviewees stressed that more efforts should be put on awareness-raising among stakeholders concerning the

¹⁴² Interview, Evon Ruth Benson Idahosa, Founder and Executive Director of PJI, 11/08/2020.

¹⁴³ Fieldwork note taken during a courtesy visit to Patriotic Citizen Initiative, 14/01/2020. The Chief Officer is also the Public Relations Officer of NACTAL and a lead consultant of IOM, besides being a former Libya returnee.

¹⁴⁴ Interview, Stephen Selowo, Head of Counselling and Rehabilitation Unit, NAPTIP Benin Zonal Command, 18/08/2020.

¹⁴⁵ Fieldwork note taken during a participant observation of a monthly Career Path organised by the Nigerian-German Centre and the Migrant Resource Centre at Holy Ghost Christian Centre, Yaba (Lagos), 29-30/08/2019.

available programmes for reintegration. NACTAL could have a crucial role in coordinating NGOs in their work and in facilitating the circulation of information¹⁴⁶.

Considerable knowledge gaps have emerged on the side of relevant actors, during the awareness-raising activities carried out by Nigerian Women Association (NWA), as part of the INSigHT Action, that hardly allow for an effective awareness-raising, let alone the activation of the referral system. Parliamentarians have only a general idea about human trafficking and are mostly committed to punish offenders, community leaders are closer to the grassroots level but do not know how to identify a potential victim or proceed with a referral and tend to call law enforcement agents when in doubt, law enforcement agents, particularly the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corp (NSCDC), entrusted with ensuring security in public secondary schools, prefer handling cases themselves, rather than referring to NAPTIP¹⁴⁷.

Gaps emerged also during the Teachers Awareness-Raising Programme organised by NWA for guardian and counselling teachers¹⁴⁸ in Ikeja Local Government, under the auspices of State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB): teachers are not prepared to identify potential victims of trafficking, neither do they know how they should refer to NAPTIP and would rather refer to the police (NPF). They are not trained on the dynamics of human trafficking nor are they trained to use materials, such as videos, that can be most effective in raising the attention of young students¹⁴⁹. Concerning students, the Awareness-Raising Outreach Programme organised by NWA for secondary school students in Ikeja, Lagos, highlighted they are not familiar with human trafficking but only (to a very limited extent) with child labour - that they associate with labour below the age of five only. Additionally, they are not aware of NAPTIP engagement, showing the agency is still little known to potential victims and that the system of referral has not been effectively implemented to date¹⁵⁰.

Identification and referral as a potential and yet weak tool for protection and prevention

The protection of returnees, as well as survivors, begins with their identification and referral. As explained above, a National Referral Mechanism was established in Nigeria in 2015. According to the related guidelines¹⁵¹, it is the responsibility of all stakeholders to refer returnees and survivors to NAPTIP and to service providers for access to specialized services, while NAPTIP should have a coordinating role. The launch of the NRM and the publication of guidelines must be welcome as a very positive forward, but critical issues are evident concerning implementation.

¹⁴⁶ This was highlighted also during the Rehabilitation Workshop organised by Pathfinders Justice Initiative on January 14th and 15th 2021. Available: <https://www.insightproject.net/pathfinders-rehabilitation-workshop-january-14-15-2021/> Last access: 22/02/2021.

¹⁴⁷ Fieldwork note taken during the World's day against Human Trafficking and particularly the event organised by NWA in Kosofe Local Government in Lagos State, involving parliamentarians, community leaders, law Enforcement agencies, CSOs. 30/07/2019.

¹⁴⁸ These are teachers employed both as legal guardian and counsellor. They handle cases pertaining to the welfare of children or any psychological issue associated with rape, child molestation, child abuses and all forms of exploitation. They are the core channel to teaching students on the narrative of human trafficking.

¹⁴⁹ Fieldwork note taken during the Inauguration of the NWA Helpdesk and the Teachers Training organised in Ikeja, Lagos.

¹⁵⁰ Fieldwork notes taken during The Awareness-Raising event organised by NWA at the Helpdesk in Ikeja, Lagos. 11/03/2020.

¹⁵¹ Guidelines on the National Referral Mechanism for Protection and Assistance to Trafficked Persons in Nigeria, EU, UNODC, NAPTIP, 2015. Available: https://www.unodc.org/documents/nigeria/NRM_Guideline_final_2015.pdf Last access: 22/02/2021.

First, awareness, knowledge and use of the NRM guidelines are limited, as it also emerged during the INSigHT Gap-analysis seminar in Benin city¹⁵². The guidelines spell out the specific roles of all stakeholders but there is some confusion regarding procedures. According to the NAPTIP Rehabilitation Officer that we interviewed, referrals are often made by communities, following awareness raising activities, or by law enforcement officers¹⁵³, but the reporting lines are not well-understood by either actors. Communities, for example, often call the NPF for cases of child labour (domestic servitude) or with reference to baby factories. 85% of persons contacted during a research study in Oredo Local Government claim not to know the appropriate agencies to refer to and report cases of human trafficking¹⁵⁴. Some interviewees suggested that in order to encourage a good reporting line, compensations should be made for “whistle-blowers”. NAPTIP's responsibility in combatting human trafficking is still hardly known to many and more work is needed in this sense. At the same time, operative procedures should be put in place to ensure that the referral of cases is effective. If often occurs that cases are reported but the information is underused, unmanaged, or neglected, thus exposing the community to potential dangers. As reported by an anonymous interviewee, the proliferation of anti-human trafficking desks activated by law enforcement agencies has caused a lot of confusion, to the detriment of the prevention and protection of survivors. While some cases are reported to the helpdesks and referrals are made directly to NAPTIP, other cases are dealt with by law enforcement officers themselves, who are often short of minimum skills for identification and referral, as they want to demonstrate to communities that they are active. It should also be stressed that distrust among agencies has been making cooperation even more difficult, thus calling for further training on the specific aspect of inter-agency collaboration (see also Semprebon, 2020).

Second, the NMR comprises instruments, such as a directory of available services, a tracking form, a referral form and a consent form. All these instruments must be used by stakeholders in all circumstances, but our interviewees did not mention any of them. The guidelines also provide for a bi-annual monitoring of the implementation of the NRM at all levels, to ensure adherence to the provision, but again none of our interviewees mentioned it.

Third, referral requires identification that in turn requires adequate training. Examples were given of good “Samaritans” within neighbourhoods referring to the police¹⁵⁵ and of border patrol and law enforcement officers referring to NAPTIP. Yet, capacity gaps are evident. As at August 2018, the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons expressed concern for the fact that less than half of the AVR returnees were identified as survivors, thus casting doubts on the effectiveness of the referral and identification mechanism¹⁵⁶. Stakeholders also expressed concern that identification may not be effective because of the lack of an adequate gender and age-sensitive approach¹⁵⁷.

¹⁵² Gap-analysis seminar organised by PJI in Benin city on 10th and 11th June 2019. Details are available here: <https://www.insightproject.net/hello-world/>. Minutes are available here: <https://www.insightproject.net/project/events-and-documents/>. Last access: 01/02/2021.

¹⁵³ Interview, Stephen Selowo, Head of Counselling and Rehabilitation Unit, NAPTIP, 19/08/2020.

¹⁵⁴ See PJI (2020) Pathway to Prevention, A Research Report on Recruiters of Sex Trafficking in Oredo, Local Government Area, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.

¹⁵⁵ Interview, Bose Jimoh, Head of Counselling and Rehabilitation Unit, NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command, 25/08/2020.

¹⁵⁶ UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children during a session of the Human Rights Council. 24 June – 12 July 2019. Available: https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2010691/a_hrc_41_46_add.1_E.pdf Last access: 02/02/2021.

¹⁵⁷ See note 155.

Section 5

Conclusions

It is unarguable that Nigerian government agencies have been doing many efforts to curb human trafficking. First of all, a specific normative framework has been constructed and reinforced over the last two decades. Even earlier, Nigeria was one of the first countries to ratify the Palermo Protocol and some of the Nigerian states passed the Child Rights Act to domesticate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2003, the Nigerian Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act was passed - with subsequent amendments. More recently, in 2017, a National Referral Mechanism was introduced and specific guidelines published to ensure its implementation.

Considerable efforts have been made also by various NGOs with their engagement in anti-trafficking activities first and in return, rehabilitation and reintegration in the more recent years, often leveraging on partnerships and funding by international organisations, embassies, the EU and EU Member States. Our interviews have highlighted that more funding is needed and should be prioritised on reintegration programmes, while EU institutions and EU Member States seem to be prioritising returns and the fight against trafficking in a transnational dimension, with less attention on trafficking internal to Nigeria, that is increasingly relevant in quantitative terms.

Our fieldwork in Nigeria aimed to provide an overview of the reintegration and rehabilitation programmes, by collecting the experience of relevant stakeholders, but also by visiting shelters and interviewing returnees. The possibility to meet returnees was severely constrained by the pandemic restrictions. We only managed to meet two young girls and therefore decided to integrate their point of view with references from secondary literature. More work is certainly needed to explore the experiences of returnees in order to continue giving them voice and ensuring their full involvement in the definition of policies and programmes, which, in our view, is the only way forward towards customised services.

Regarding reintegration programmes, our research highlighted a series of critical issues. First, the capacity of shelters is insufficient. NAPTIP has shelters in different states but cannot cover many areas of the federal territory. The capacity of NGOs is even lower. Second, various reports suggest that shelters are poorly managed, provide scarce facilities, are run by staff who is not adequately trained, particularly as far as the specific needs of women and children are concerned. Specific criticism has been advanced regarding the closed shelter policy operated by NAPTIP, as it severely limits the liberty of movement of people, similarly to detention centres, while not necessarily contributing to protect them from external dangers. Third, our interviews pointed to the scarcity of adequate psycho-social and counselling support, although both are crucial for many returnees who are suffer from severe traumas. Medical services are often delegated to hospitals - with the exception of NAPTIP shelters - and only a few shelters provide minimal medical assistance in-house. Family tracking is another service that is missing. Fourth, critical issues have been identified in training programmes and yet they should be the very core of reintegration programmes, in the measure they can offer returnees with resources and skill development opportunities that can help them find a sustainable employment or engage in a business project. To cite a few, returnees are rarely informed of all the available opportunities for training and are rarely asked about their wishes and plans. Listening to returnees would not only

contribute to strengthening their motivation and favouring their engagement, but also to building trainings that are more customised to their needs hence more likely to produce positive outcomes. Whereby stipends are provided, for example, they seem hardly useful, if not counterproductive, unless they are integrated with tutoring support to prepare a business plan. In this sense, forms of tutoring by former returnees or survivors has also been suggested as important, as it can foster returnees' confidence, provide positive role models and prevent returnees from casting hope on unrealistic business expectations. Fifth, the average length of stay in the shelters is of six weeks, but this is rarely sufficient to allow an effective reintegration. For this reason, cases are not rare in which the period of stay is extended. In some cases, returnees are transferred to a different shelter, upon completion of their programme, but the risk is evident of fragmentation, as collaboration among stakeholders is still limited, to the detriment of returnees and their reintegration.

We recommend a monitoring mechanism should be put in place to ensure: homogenous standards of admission to shelters and programmes; minimum standards of reception and regular self-assessment of services (as indicated in the NRM guidelines); sharing of information among shelters and stakeholders to avoid duplication of programmes and inadequate support to beneficiaries, with an increasingly effective coordination by NACTAL - ideally coordination should be encouraged also with stakeholders in the countries of migration, where returnees may have undertaken training; implementation of a follow-up after beneficiaries leave the shelters (as also indicated in the NRM guidelines); sharing of good practices among stakeholders at national but also transnational level, with the full involvement of returnees who can best provide feedback on their experiences in shelters. We further recommend the nomination of an independent Ombudsperson, to whom returnees and survivors could report complaints and address critical issues, and the funding, by EU institutions, of longitudinal studies aimed to evaluate reintegration programmes to and explore the perception and experiences of returnees with respect to such programmes and the evolution of their life trajectories upon completion of the same. Data is not regularly collected, nor analysed and it was challenging during our fieldwork to collect information on procedures and services. Research should be promoted on the conditions of return too. They have a crucial role in reintegration and comprise the following: the extent to which adequate risk assessment and identification procedures are carried out upon returnees' arrival, the extent to which returnees are offered opportunities for reintegration and have access to it, the extent to which and how family, community and environmental factors – beyond the geographical context of Edo State - influence the more or less positive outcomes of reintegration.

We think that return and reintegration programmes should be planned and managed with the involvement of dedicated trained social workers. Their professional role offers them a unique privileged position for the adoption of an integrated approach and to push towards improved coordination among all relevant reintegration actors (i.e. welfare, health, psycho-social stakeholders), as stressed by various authors (Palmer, 2001; Okech et al., 2017; Amadasun, 2020). Social workers are especially trained to identify clients' needs and resources and to favour their empowerment. Not least, social workers have a tradition of engaging with communities and community leaders and to press for relevant social matters and clients' rights to be addressed by policymakers. Social workers can arguably promote a holistic multi-dimensional approach to reintegration, by considering returnees' experience in the countries of migration, their self-identification and sense of belonging with the countries of origin, destination, transit and return, their social networks and the limits of integration programmes, including also scarce consideration for returnees' aspirations and expectations. While some may experience return as the failure of their migratory project and suffer from stigmatisation from their

family and community, for some it may represent (also) an escape from debt bondage (Peano, 2010). In other words, return can be experienced in multiple and even ambiguous ways that can be liberating and/or constraining. Failing to take returnees' experiences and expectations into consideration is not likely to favour reintegration.

We have been repeatedly struck by the increasingly common use of the term "rehabilitation" to refer to reintegration programmes – term that is more and more used in Europe too. Outside of the anti-trafficking field, rehabilitation is normally associated with medical treatment and therapy. Rehabilitation suggests something (a limb) needs readjusting, recovering, restoring to enhance abilities following an accident or a disrupting event. While medical rehabilitation is normally considered as the last (generally) positive step of a process, reintegration may not be the last step of migration and it can be experienced in ambiguous ways as we have just explained. Hence we further stress the need for a holistic approach to it that moves beyond a moralistic attitude that is often encountered especially when returnees experienced sexual exploitation.

Continuous awareness-raising efforts with families and communities must be carried out. Improved awareness is evident regarding trafficking, particularly sex trafficking, but the implications of trafficking and re-trafficking are still not fully known across communities. Most importantly, trafficking is still considered as an acceptable source of income by families in dire poverty. Insufficient attention has been paid by scholars and policymakers on the root causes of trafficking, that are arguably the same causes of re-trafficking too. The result is that awareness-raising with communities and returnees and survivors has mostly focused on the ills of irregular migration. We strongly believe that awareness raising activities should focus on realistic alternative survival options and legal channels for migration, by means of more effective communication tools, targeted to specific audiences. We also believe that continuous support to awareness raising campaigns focusing on the dangers of trafficking only, with the aim to discourage people from travelling, would probably result in a waste of resources and it would fail to protect people from the risk of re-trafficking. Paradoxically, it would probably encourage them to travel again in search for opportunities they cannot find in Nigeria, while hoping in God's help.

For the same reason we think that the strong focus of the Migration Pact on returns is misleading, not only in relation to trafficking but also smuggling and more generally migration movements. More specifically, the proposed provisions by the Pact open up a series of issues that we recommend EU institutions should reconsider. First, the Pact's focus on returns is in contrast with the migration policies promoted in the ECOWAS region that have been clearly favouring the liberty of movement, although, following the externalisation of border controls by European institutions, such liberty has been constrained. Second, the Pact proposes a more complex framework for returns, compared to the existing one, thus making the principle of non-refoulement very challenging to implement. It proposes a standardised faster procedure that does not involve an adequate system of risk assessment and referral, thus exposing returnees to a high risk of re-trafficking. Not to be underestimated is also the fact that an adequate system of risk assessment and referral is often missing in sending countries too, hence returnees are not granted protection in the first phase of the return procedure either. In general, it is evident that return procedures need monitoring and more transparency, particularly as far as forced returns are concerned. Besides, more sharing of information is essential between sending and receiving countries to ensure an effective risk assessment is carried out and that a punctual referral eventually results in returnees entering a reintegration programme.

As explained, a National Referral Mechanism was put in place in Nigeria too, a few years ago. It is now time to review its effectiveness. From our fieldwork, it emerges that the mechanism is still largely unknown to stakeholders, nor to mention returnees and survivors. Even whereby stakeholders are aware of the mechanism, they are not very knowledgeable about the actual procedure, thus implementation is poor. Yet, protection is likely to start precisely from referral. NAPTIP has not yet developed sufficient capacity to carry out an effective coordination role in this sense and more work should be done to ensure its visibility and improved clarity in communication lines, so that returnees can be granted access to protection and reintegration.

Our fieldwork has shown that returns have been characterised by multiple “return labels”. Multiple labels have been produced by the current return framework and have in turn produced a dichotomy in the services provided. As we explained, returnees can arrive in Nigeria through an assisted and voluntary return programme, operated by IOM, or through a facilitated return procedure, with the direct involvement of a Nigerian NGO or through a forced return, operated by Frontex. Access to reintegration is more likely in the first two cases. Forced returns can even result in returnees being transferred to jail because they are perceived as criminals, having violated migration laws. More generally, in none of these programmes or procedures are all returnees granted access to reintegration opportunities, with severe risks in terms of their exposure to re-trafficking.

It should not be forgotten that an effective referral is important not only to achieve the primary goal of protecting people but also to secure more convictions. Reluctance to collaborate, on the side of returnees and survivors, is often linked to pressure by parents and relatives, to fear of retaliation (particularly where traffickers belong to influential families), but also to long unassisted extensions of their permanence in shelters because of slow judiciary procedures and of feelings of disregard by anti-trafficking stakeholders.

Last but not least, improvements in the protection of survivors and returnees and in the fight against trafficking require more research on the evolving dynamics of the phenomenon, including the (poorly explored) consequences of the Oba of Benin’s pronouncement, evolving forms of recruiting, such as digital recruiting, the potential effects of the #EndSARS protests, that have been encouraging many Nigerians to plan migrating outside of the country, with attention on the interlinkages between trafficking, both internal and transnational, and the root causes of migration.

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Appendices

List of direct visits to stakeholders and their centres

1. Mienye Mimi Badejo and Adenusi Adebayo, FMLE/MRC, Lagos, 27/08/2019;
2. Sister Bridget of Bakhita, St. Louis Empowerment Network, Lagos, 15/09/2019;
3. Maite Vermeulen, Lagos, 12/09/2019;
4. Alexander Oturu, NCRMI, Lagos;
5. Olayinka Elizabeth Adekunle, NGC, Lagos;
6. Lilian Garuba, ETAHT, Benin, 7-11/10/2019;
7. Kejer Wintan, IOM, Benin, 11/11/2019;
8. Morenike Omaiboje, Ogunbayo Atinuke, Adegbemila Oluwatosin, WOCON, Lagos, 12/12/2019;
9. Osita Osemene, PCI, Lagos, 14/01/2020;
10. Patience Ifeajuna and Bolaji Akamo, Women Helping Hands Initiative and Ipaja Transit Home, Lagos, 17/06/2020;
11. Daniel Atakolo, NAPTIP, Lagos, 25/08/2020.

Table of interviews with stakeholders

Name and surname, organisation	Date, time, place
Morenike Omaiboje (female) WOCON, Women consortium of Nigeria, Director of Programme	25/03/2020 9 – 11 am Lagos
Alex Oturu (male) NCFRMI, Head of Migration Unit, South-West	07/04/2020 12:30 – 2 pm Zoom
Mienye Mimi Badejo (female) Federal Ministry of Labour and Employment, Head of Department	30/04/2020 1:30 – 4:30 pm Zoom
Osita Esemene (male) Lead Trainer and Consultant of IOM and Chief Executive Officer of PCI	06/05/2020 4 – 6 pm Zoom (1 st interview) 07.05.2020 4 – 6 pm WhatsApp Video Call (2 nd interview)
Lilian Garuba (female) ETAHT, Assistant Secretary	08/05/2020 1:30– 4 pm WhatsApp Video Call

Uwangue Laura (female) GPI, Facilitator	12/05/2020 2:30 – 4 pm <i>WhatsApp Video Call</i>
Uchechi Chukwuma (female) Web of Heart Foundation, Psycho-social Support Officer	13/06/2020 2 – 4 pm <i>WhatsApp Video Call</i>
Roland Nwoha (male) Idia Renaissance, Zonal Coordinator	15/07/2020 2 – 3:30 pm <i>WhatsApp Video Call</i>
Patience Ifeajuna (female) Ipaja Transit Home, Administrator	06/07/20 2 – 4 pm Ipaja Transit Home, Lagos
Funmi Kogbe (female) SOWOLDI, Country Manager	28/07/2020 5 – 6 pm University of Lagos
Bose Aggrey (female) Web of Heart Foundation, Chief Executive Officer	20/06/2020 5 – 6:30 pm <i>WhatsApp Video Call</i>
Nwadinike Blessing (female) NWA, Help Desk Assistant	08/07/2020 11:45 am – 1:30 pm NWA Helpdesk, Lagos
Stephen Selowo (male) NAPTIP Benin Zonal Command, Head of Counselling and Rehabilitation Unit	19/08/20 11:30 am – 4 pm NAPTIP Benin Zonal Command
Abieyuwa Ikhidero (female) NAPTIP Benin Zonal Command, Head Research and Programme Development Unit	19/08/20 11: 35 am – 4 pm NAPTIP Benin Zonal Command
Evon Ruth Benson Idahosa (female) PJI, Chief Executive Officer	11/08/20 4 – 5 pm <i>Zoom</i>
Rachel Uzor (female) NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command, Head Research and Programme Development Unit	25/08/2020 2:30 – 3:30 pm NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command
Bose Jimoh (female) NAPTIP Lagos Command, Head of Counselling and Rehabilitation Unit	25/08/2020 1 – 2:30 pm NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command
Nosa Mamman-Odey (female)	25/08/2020

NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command, Head of Public Enlightenment Unit	12 – 1 pm NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command
Mnena Ajeseni (female)	25/08/2020
NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command, Staff of Public Enlightenment Unit	12 – 1 pm NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command
Gladys	19/08/20
Survivor (female)	11:35 am – 4 pm
27 years, trafficked at age?	NAPTIP Benin Zonal Command
Victoria	28/08/20
Survivor (female)	12 – 1 pm
18 years, trafficked at 16	NAPTIP Lagos Zonal Command



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