Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls: Slavery across Borders and Prejudices
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This report was prepared by Gema Fernández Rodríguez de Liévana and Paloma Soria Montañez, and elaborated by Gema Fernández Rodríguez de Liévana, Helena Maleno Garzón, Sarah Houlihan and Paloma Soria Montañez. It has been revised and edited by Evelyn Recinos Contreras, Gema Fernández Rodríguez de Liévana and Cristina Sánchez Velázquez.

Photos: Helena Maleno Garzón and Women’s Link Worldwide
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In 2009, Women’s Link Worldwide published *Migrant Women’s Rights: An Invisible Reality.*¹ This publication brought to light the human rights violations suffered by Sub-Saharan African migrant women and girls during their migration process. Of the 138 interviews conducted from 2005 to 2007 with Sub-Saharan African women and girls for our investigation, a total of 63 were conducted with Nigerian women and girls. Thirty-six of these individual interviews were conducted in Morocco and 18 in Spain, and three focus groups were held in Tangier and Rabat. Of the 36 Nigerian women we interviewed in Morocco, 28 were minors. One of the investigation’s most striking conclusions was that all of the Nigerian women and girls interviewed had been involved in prostitution and trafficking at some point.

In subsequent publications, we have documented multiple human rights violations that Nigerian women and girls face when they leave their country, most of them as victims of human trafficking networks. These violations include multiple forms of sexual violence as well as violations of their sexual and reproductive rights.² We have also documented the experiences of Nigerian women in custody in foreign detention centers who are facing deportation proceedings, even in cases where they have been identified as trafficking victims, placing their life and safety at risk.

We followed up on our documentation of the experiences of Nigerian women and girls with two site visits by a Women’s Link staff member and a consultant. Our visits to Nigeria have allowed us a closer look at the reality faced by these women and girls in their country of origin, where they lack options to build a decent life, and resources to guard against trafficking are scarce.
We were able to better understand the motivations and circumstances that lead them to emigrate, as well as the conditions in which they do so. And we got a broader picture of the difficulties they face when they are deported or expelled and sent back to their country, whether they are identified as trafficking victims or alleged trafficking victims in the country they are expelled from, or the deportation takes place without any identification procedure.

Women’s Link has also provided legal representation to women and girls who are victims or alleged victims of trafficking in domestic and international venues, which has given us a closer look at the obstacles to access to justice that they face, including the discrimination they suffer as black women and, in most cases, as undocumented immigrants.

This report presents what we have learned over several years of work with Nigerian women and girls who are victims or alleged victims of trafficking, as well as in our visits to Nigeria. It is our hope that it will become an effective tool for promoting understanding, advocacy, and the accompaniment of this population.
Goals

The goals of this report are the following:

- To follow up on our documentation of the status of trafficking of Nigerian women and girls, including a review of the situation and context of their country of origin.

- To understand the Nigerian context, with particular attention to the unique economic, societal, cultural, and institutional realities of Nigeria as a country of origin, in order to allow for more effective work, intervention, or accompaniment of trafficked women and girls, especially on the part of the authorities.

- To raise awareness of issues specific to working with Nigerian women and girls who are trafficking victims, based on the unique context of Nigeria.

- To document human rights violations suffered by Nigerian women and girls who emigrate, with particular attention to the situation in the countries of origin, transit, and destination. We will focus on the situation faced by women and girls who are deported to Nigeria and analyze their risk of re-trafficking as well as the ability of the state and authorities to offer them protection.

- To comprehensively analyze state obligations regarding victim protection, including the obligations of origin, transit, and destination countries.

- To facilitate and strengthen the work done with Nigerian women and girls by Women’s Link Worldwide, other organizations and the authorities.

- To identify viable legal strategies for the effective protection of Sub-Saharan migrant women and the application of international human rights standards to our work with Nigerian women and girls who are victims or alleged victims of human trafficking.
Much of the information in this report was gathered during Women’s Link’s work with Sub-Saharan migrant women, which started in 2005.

It also includes information gathered during two site visits conducted by Women’s Link. From February 19 to 25, 2011, we participated in a mission to Nigeria sponsored by the British organization ATLeP, which included two ATLeP member attorneys, a British psychologist and expert in working with trafficking victims, an Irish attorney and expert in issues related to trafficking, a Nigerian trafficking consultant, and an attorney from Women’s Link. The mission had the following goals:

- To analyze the phenomenon of trafficking between Nigeria and Europe.
- To achieve a better understanding of the work of Nigerian government agencies and non-governmental organizations on trafficking issues.
- To assess the effectiveness of current legal frameworks in Nigeria and the ability of government agencies and non-governmental organizations to prevent trafficking, identify and protect victims, and provide support and assistance for the reintegration of repatriated victims.
- To assess economic, cultural and societal barriers to repatriation and reintegration and the availability of mental health services for repatriated persons.
To assess whether the return to the country of origin is done in conditions of respect for human rights, safety and dignity as required by the European Convention on Human Rights and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

To gather information for a written report on the status of human trafficking in Nigeria for the use of professionals working on the issue in Europe.
The organizations involved in this mission began with a review and an analysis of existing documentation on human trafficking in Nigeria. This review allowed us to identify issues that had been documented previously and on which we could expand, and issues that had not yet been adequately documented. Interviews were then requested with several domestic and international agencies and non-governmental organizations. Interviews were conducted in the three cities visited by the mission, Lagos, Abuja and Benin City, using a detailed questionnaire as a guide.

In Nigeria, we met with staff members from NAPTIP offices in Lagos, Abuja and Benin City, then visited victim housing that NAPTIP maintains in these cities. In Lagos, we also conducted interviews with an official from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), staff of the non-governmental organization Women’s Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) and staff of the psychiatry and nursing department of Lagos State Hospital. In Benin City, we conducted interviews with the non-governmental organizations Baobab, Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW), International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group (IRRAAG), Girls’ Power Initiative (GPI), Catholic Counselling and Education Centre and Idia Renaissance. Finally, we met with a staff member from the Benin City Psychiatric Hospital. In Abuja, the mission met with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Airport Police Command, and the organization Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF).

After the mission, a Women’s Link consultant went to Nigeria to conduct interviews with organizations and human trafficking victims in Lagos and Benin City. In Lagos, we interviewed women who our organization had identified as trafficking victims when they were in Spain or Morocco and who were later deported to Nigeria. We also visited a shelter for trafficking victims, as well as locations where women and girls were captured for international as well as domestic trafficking.

Benin City was chosen as the site for the rest of our interviews because most of the Nigerian women that Women’s Link had worked with during previous investigations came from there, and most of these women were victims of a human trafficking network. In Benin City, we visited two shelters for trafficking victims. Access to these shelters and the one in Lagos was not officially granted, but obtained through former residents. This strategy was meant to help obtain information from the perspective of the victims residing in the shelters, not the organizations and agencies providing the service. We also interviewed organization leaders and community leaders who work with trafficking victims. These leaders asked that their identities be withheld because of security concerns.

Interviews were conducted with a total of 12 women, four families (three of which had daughters who were in Europe and one of which was in the process of sending their daughter to Europe) and two Protestant pastors. Our consultant was also able to attend two juju oath ceremonies, a traditional ritual in which a pact of obedience is sworn and a promise is made to pay the debt incurred for travel expenses.
It is important to note that we gathered information from women who were still under the control of trafficking networks and we worked in environments where the networks were active. The following premises therefore had to be observed:

- Victims were approached in a way that fostered trust, as our consultant had been doing for several years.
- If the victim was in a situation of control, we looked for clues and indicators beyond what she or the people around her said.
- We sought meeting places that offered a measure of privacy in order to minimize risk to the women.
- We used language victims were comfortable with and employed terminology that was familiar to them.
- We assessed security measures or lack thereof, always prioritizing safety over completion of an interview.

In some of our interviews with government agencies, we could tell that the authorities were already familiar with the questions they were asked, since several fact-finding missions by different European and international agencies have visited Nigeria to investigate human trafficking issues. This became clear when some of the answers we were given were obviously based on “what we wanted to hear” rather than the reality of the situation.

In addition, several international organizations were critical of this sort of mission. This affected the dynamics of some interviews, frustrating our efforts to find answers to certain questions.

Finally, the investigation included a trip to Paris in October 2012 to interview Foyer AFJ/Fondation Amaranta\textsuperscript{16} and the association Les Amis du Bus des Femmes\textsuperscript{17}.

Our first interviews were conducted with staff of Foyer AFJ/Fondation Amaranta, with a focus on their work with Nigerian trafficking victims and particularly their approach to and work with the issue of juju and its impact on their work with victims. Finally, we interviewed a member of the organization Les Amis du Bus des Femmes and asked again about their work with Nigerian trafficking victims, their assessment of the impact of juju on trafficking of women and girls from Nigeria, and their work on the issue.
NOTES

1 Available at: www.womenslinkworldwide.org/wlw/new.php?modo=detalle_proyectos&tipo=proyectos&dc=36.


3 ATLeP (Anti Trafficking Legal Project) is a network of solicitors, barristers and specialist practitioners who advise, represent, and support victims of trafficking and other vulnerable people. For more information, visit: www.atlep.org.uk/.


5 See the questionnaire in Appendix 1.

6 NAPTIP is the National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters, created August 26, 2003 by the Nigerian Government. For more information, visit: www.naptip.gov.ng/aboutus.html.

7 The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the only worldwide intergovernmental organization dedicated to migration issues. Its objectives are the promotion of humane and orderly migration as a benefit to all, and it provides services and advice to governments and migrants. For more information, visit: www.iom.int. For information on the IOM mission in Nigeria, visit: www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/where-we-work/africa-and-the-middle-east/central-and-west-africa/nigeria.html.

8 Women’s Consortium of Nigeria is a grassroots human rights organization working for women’s and girls’ rights in Nigeria. For more information, visit: www.womenconsortiumofnigeria.org/node/12.

9 Baobab for Women’s Human Rights is a not-for-profit, non-governmental women’s human rights organization. For more information, visit: www.baobabwomen.org/.

10 COSUDOW is a Catholic human rights organization that works to prevent human trafficking, protect and rehabilitate those who are already victims, and seek out and prosecute traffickers. For more information, visit: www.unodc.org/ngo/showSingleDetailed.do?req_org_uid=20922.

11 International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group is an international consortium of women researchers, activists and health providers. For more information, visit: www.arrow-org.my/?p=irrrag.

12 Girls’ Power Initiative (GPI) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization dedicated to addressing the challenges facing Nigerian girls from 10 to 18 years of age and providing them with information, skills and opportunities. For more information, visit: www.gpi nigeria.org/.

13 Idia Renaissance is a non-governmental, non-political, non-religious, non-profit organization working, through research and education, towards the restoration of the dignity of women, youth, and children in Nigeria. For more information, visit: www.idia-renaissance.org/.

14 The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) “is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime, in addition to being responsible for implementing the United Nations lead programme on terrorism. Established in 1997, UNODC has approximately 500 staff members worldwide. Its headquarters are in Vienna and it operates 20 field offices.” For more information, visit: www.unvienna.org/unog/es/unodc.html.

15 Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization that works towards the elimination of trafficking in persons, child labor, abuse of the rights of women and children, and the spread of HIV/AIDS, through advocacy, assistance for trafficked persons and vulnerable children, collaboration, capacity development, research, and monitoring the implementation of relevant legislation. For more information, visit: www.wotclefng.org/.

16 Foundation Amaranta is a private, non-profit, foundational organization founded by the Sisters of Adoration to coordinate their social actions. Its goal is to work for the personal integration and social assimilation of women and girls affected by prostitution and other situations of exclusion. They work to raise these women’s sense of dignity and end discrimination against them. For more information, visit: www.foyer-afj.fr. Interviews were conducted with social worker Magali Poirier, psychologist Céline Huard and director Cristina Ramos.

17 Les Amis du Bus de Femmes is an association founded in France with the objective of working with and for persons working in prostitution and combating human trafficking. For more information, visit: www.lesamisdubusdesfemmes.org/. We interviewed project leader Vanessa Simon.
1. SOCIOECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS

- What kind of education is provided by the state? Is it free? If free, is it accessible? Until what age?
- What barriers to accessing education exist for children?
- How is the general standard of living? Access to food, access to clean and safe drinking water, etc.
- What is the average wage? Is employment accessible?
- Are victims of trafficking stigmatized, marginalized or socially isolated? What about those suffering psychological problems?
- What are the common perceptions of trafficking victims? What national stereotypes are there? How are returnees from Europe regarded?

2. LEGISLATION

- What law enforcement policies, protocols, etc. are in place?
- Has the National Plan of Action on Human Trafficking and Forced Labour been adopted by the Federal Executive Council?

3. INVESTIGATING AND PROSECUTING CRIMINAL OFFENSES

- How many investigations have been opened?
- How many people have been prosecuted for trafficking offenses?
- How many people have been prosecuted for other crimes under the Penal Code (Crimes related to trafficking, such as sex offenses)?
- In case of return, are there any criminal charges that could be filed against victims (false documents, illegal entry, sex work)?
- What are your data collection methods? Are we able to access the data?
- What would you suggest could be done to improve data monitoring/collection?
4. TRAFFICKERS

- What is known about the link between trafficking and organized crime?
- How do the networks operate? What is known about the structure/organization of the trafficking operations?
- Are sexual and labor exploitation related to the phenomenon of organized crime in general? Is it different in cases of domestic servitude?
- What is the profile of the perpetrators?
- What is the gender breakdown among victims?

5. WITNESS PROTECTION

- What provisions exist for the protection of witnesses? Is there a general witness protection program?
- Would a victim involved in a prosecution have access to witness protection?
- Does a person who has a lawsuit or other legal action pending in the sending country have access to witness protection? Is there ongoing cooperation with the other country?
- Is there support available for victims when they are to appear in court for legal proceedings?
- What barriers are there to accessing state protection for children?

6. CIVIL PROCEEDINGS / RECOURSE TO LEGAL ACTION

- How do you initiate a criminal proceeding? Who is responsible for prosecutions?
- How are investigations carried out?
- Is there any difference between a trafficker and a re-trafficker in terms of prosecution?
- Are there any civil measures that can be taken against traffickers? For example, employment proceedings, damages proceedings, Article 4 proceedings. Are there any examples of such proceedings having been brought?
Do victims have access to legal representation? (Including for civil proceedings).

How often is the victim compensation fund in Nigeria used? How can it be accessed? What are the terms?

Does a child have legal standing? If not, who brings the action on behalf of the child?

7. COURT PROCESS

How effective, in general terms, is the court process?

How do the courts deal with trafficking cases?

What works well and what does not?

Do victims have access to legal advice?

Are victims given anonymity?

Are there any special measures taken for children (such as giving evidence by video link, codes of conduct, etc.)?

8. POLICE
(for specific interviews)

What are the investigative procedures?

What is the attitude of the police regarding specific types of trafficking?

Are there any cultural barriers preventing effective investigation?
If a witness does not come forward, why might this have happened? What steps are taken to increase witness participation?

Is there a risk of abuse at the hands of police?

9. JUDICIAL (for specific interviews)

- What is the attitude of the courts towards trafficking cases?
- What factors may cause delays to obtaining convictions?

10. IMMIGRATION (reserved for specific interviews)

- Which documents are required to return? Is there a difference between voluntary and involuntary return with regards to documentation?
- What is the procedure for identifying trafficking victims? Is there a strategy or are indicators used to identify victims?
- Are you notified when a trafficking victim returns? In which cases? If you are notified, what do you do? If not, what procedures do you have to identify victims?
- What procedures do you have when victims identify themselves?
- Do people who have not been identified by a government agency have access to NAPTIP?
- Are there any women’s organizations in Europe in contact with NAPTIP?
- Does NAPTIP have experience working with the EU agency Frontex?

11. SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

- How many shelters does NAPTIP have? Are all shelters operational?
- What services are available? Are they the same in each? How long is accommodation in the shelter available to victims?
- Who has access (women, men, children, women with children)? What are the access requirements?
- What is the security situation at the shelters? How many guards, type, etc.
Is a medical assessment taken on the victim's admission? By whom? What training do they have?

Do the people in the shelter receive medical assistance? Are appointments or evaluations individual or in a group?

Does this assistance take into account gender considerations, such as assigning a male or female doctor? Does it respect cultural identity?

What kind of medical assistance is available specifically for women and girls? (Contraception-abortion, HIV/AIDS, treatment for other conditions, psychological assistance/mental health).

What policy or practice is there for pregnant or nursing mothers and their children?

Regarding therapeutic services, please describe the training of those providing the services and the duration of the therapeutic treatment. What kind of therapy is it?

Are there any child-specific mental health services available?

What other services are available? (Educational and vocational skills, microcredit). In terms of seeking work, do you have agreements or contacts in the private sector?

What information is provided about other institutions or organizations that can offer assistance?

How is it determined that a victim is ready to move on and what preparations are made?

What happens at the end of the period that a victim is allowed to stay at the shelter?

What processes or policies do you have for when people leave? Is there any follow-up support for victims who leave the shelter?

Is there access to financial support, either in the shelter or after leaving?

Is there access to social services? (Welfare, benefits, child protection, housing...) How do the women manage their money?

Are there any factors that would lead to eviction or withdrawal of support?

We understand that you, at NAPTIP, prioritize reuniting victims with their families. What safety measures are in place to ensure that the family was not involved in the trafficking or, if the family was involved, to determine whether the victim would be at risk if returned to them?

What risk assessments are made when the person is returning to the community where the trafficking network may still be active or the traffickers may still be living?

What do you do when the victim fears violence when they return?
What if the traffickers have made specific threats to the victim regarding the payment of a debt?

Is family or social support a requirement for successful integration?

12. RETURN AND REINTEGRATION

Are there any statistics available on re-trafficking?

What role does juju play in the trafficking process?
   And in return and reintegration?

Are there statistics on success rates for former victims who are now reintegrated and living independently?

13. NGOs

Does NAPTIP have collaboration agreements with any non-governmental organizations?

Does the institution/organization have a program for returning trafficking victims?
Nigeria is a country with accentuated social and economic inequality. Oil revenues, the main driver of the economy, are of little benefit to most of the country’s inhabitants due to a corrupt political culture sorely lacking in accountability mechanisms. The gap between rich and poor is increasing and 80% of oil revenues go to one percent of the population.  

Violence against women and girls, including rape, sexual assault, and domestic abuse, continues to be a serious problem. Widespread corruption and disregard for due process and the rule of law continue to plague the Nigerian criminal justice system. Furthermore, the discrimination and repression women and girls face in Nigerian society have contributed to desensitization to trafficking, particularly in certain regions where it has become endemic, such as Edo State.  

Corruption remains chronic in the country. From 1999 to 2003, Nigeria alternated between last place and second-to-last place on the Annual Corruption Perceptions Index. It has been documented that the governing elite squanders and embezzles public funds meant to improve the lives of Nigerian citizens. Corruption affects trafficking victims as well. There are reports of authorities and public officials being in collusion with trafficking networks, as well as jurisdictional disputes between police and immigration officials.
NIGERIA: SOME NUMBERS

Population:
- Total (millions): 166.6 (2012).
  The most populous country in Africa.
- Female: 82,231,140.
- Male: 84,398,250.
- Urban: 50.3%.

Human Development Index (HDI): 0.471. Rank: 153.
Low human development.

Multidimensional Poverty Index\(^9\): 0.368 (2010).
According to the UNDP, more than half of the Nigerian population is living in poverty.

GINI coefficient\(^10\): 49 (2010).

Population living in multidimensional poverty:
- Incidence: 54.1% (83.5 million).
  - Intensity of poverty: 57.3%.

Population at risk of poverty: 17.8%.

Population living in extreme poverty: 33.9%.

Population below the poverty line:
- US $1.25 per day in PPP (2002-2011): 68.0%.
  - National Poverty Line (2002-2012): 54.7%.


Life expectancy at birth: 52.3 years (2012).

Persons living with HIV/AIDS: 3.3 million (2009).

Adult literacy rate (% of people ages 15 and above): 61.3% (2005-2010).

Average years of schooling: 5.2 (2012).

Expected years of schooling: 9.0 (2011).

Unemployment rate: 24% (2011).

Maternal mortality rate (deaths per 100,000 live births): 630 (2010).

Adolescent fertility rate (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19): 111.3 (2012).


Labor force participation rate, total (% of total population ages 15+): Women: 47.9% (2011); Men: 63.3% (2011).

Median age: 18.5 (2010).

Total fertility rate (births per woman): 5.5 (2012).

Children in employment (children ages 5 to 14 years): 29.0% (2001-2010).

Confidence in community: (% positive responses): 67.4% (2011).

Confidence in central government: 55.0% (2011).
Women and Girls in a Context of Pervasive Human Trafficking: A Case Study of Edo State

Many areas in Nigeria are source, transit and destination sites for human trafficking for multiple types of exploitation. However, it should be noted that most of the people who are trafficked from Nigeria to Europe, particularly to Spain, are women from Edo State, many of them minors, who are trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation.\textsuperscript{11}

Edo State is located in a region marked by a long history of slavery among the different local ethnicities,\textsuperscript{12} including the Bini people, also known as Edo, Esan, Afemai and Akoko-Edo.\textsuperscript{13} This is the ethnic group that immigrates to Spain in the largest
numbers. They trace their origins to the Benin Empire, whose traditions and culture consider movement a natural part of life. This is a widespread sentiment in Sub-Saharan Africa, where freedom of movement is a concept integrated into customary and common law.

In order to understand migration out of Nigeria and its connection to human trafficking, we must understand the semi-nomadic culture of its people and consider factors such as the deterioration of traditional lifestyles and economics since the early 19th century\textsuperscript{14} and the idealization of life in the big city and abroad, which has been promoted by the media as well as by many returning migrants.

Furthermore, the discrimination and repression women and girls face in Nigerian society, along with the demand for girls of different “races” in the European sex industry, have led to feminization of migration from the area. Several reports on trafficking have pointed to the size of the European sex industry and the demand for women for this market as a contributing factor to trafficking.\textsuperscript{15} The gender inequality that exists in almost all cultures and which places women in a subordinate position, along with the high demand for sex workers in European countries, are factors that have often been cited as drivers of human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation.\textsuperscript{16}

In Edo State, human trafficking mainly affects groups living in extreme poverty\textsuperscript{17} that also suffer serious gender inequality manifested as structural violence.
against women. Women trafficked from Edo State cite poverty, lack of opportunity and gender violence, particularly sexual abuse and domestic violence, as reasons for their departure.

Polygamy is common in the social structure of Edo communities and it is up to the men to decide whether to contract multiple marriages. Forced marriages are also frequent. In this context, women and their children are often abandoned by their husbands who are unable to support multiple families. And the high numbers of trafficked minors are symptomatic of a lack of effective protection for children’s rights.

All these factors have made trafficking in women and girls a source of revenue that stimulates the local economy. Sending women and girls to Europe through trafficking networks is perceived and construed by society as a migration strategy and a means of community development. Since the nineteen-nineties, trafficking has become a booming growth sector with many customers, recruiters and middlemen. In recent years, Nigerian networks have become sophisticated professional structures able to adapt and negotiate the obstacles that the authorities attempt to erect against them.

Desensitization to human trafficking in this part of Nigeria tends to lead to a lack of social censure of traffickers. Trafficking networks are part of the secret societies that govern social structure and they are linked to the temples, where customary law is established through traditional rituals. High rates of corruption, poor protection for human rights and a lack of equal justice for all lead to a social construct with its own laws and rules and which acts outside the state legal structure.

This leads to situations such as that of the _madames_, who have achieved great economic power through trafficking and have become important figures in society. They act as community leaders and have even become part of the secret societies that are still present in traditional structures. Trafficking is seen by women and the community in general as an opportunity for independence and mobility, since most _madames_ were once trafficking victims themselves. We will elaborate further on this point below.

Paradoxically, prostitution and promiscuity on the part of women is disapproved of and severely punished in Edo society. Trafficked persons and those close to them consistently repeat this sentiment: "I don’t want to go to Europe to work in prostitution; working in prostitution is not good." This tension between traditional values handed down from generation to generation and the pressure placed on women and girls to view trafficking as an opportunity for community development leads to major conflicts in victims that can seriously affect their mental health.

This paradox can also be seen in the high social value placed on buildings built with funds originating from the sexual exploitation of women and girls in Europe. The finest buildings in Benin City, particularly private homes and churches, were built with money originating from human trafficking.
Recruitment: Recruiters and the Role of the Family

The fact that most victims come from a single area where trafficking is widespread leads to a division of labor in which different people play different roles in trafficking networks and exploitation. In general, networks consist of recruiters, transporters, connection men, receivers, pimps and corrupt government officials in different locations.

Traffickers are often members of victims’ extended families and have ties to their immediate families. They may even be people the victims know or other influential community members. Whatever the scale and structure of the organization, the process is an economic, systematic, highly organized phenomenon.
TRAFFICKERS AND THEIR ROLES

- **RECRUITERS:** May be relatives, friends, other women who have been exploited, neighbors, church pastors or government officials.

- **MADAME:** The woman at the top of the network’s pyramid structure, in charge of the exploitation of the victim in the destination country. Selects victims in the origin country through recruiters and fronts travel expenses. In the contract ceremony, in which the victim’s debt is established, the *madame*’s name is mentioned, and the trafficked person now belongs to her until the debt is settled. Her role is to control women and ensure that they obey the orders of network members. *Madames* are often former trafficking victims who settled their debt and turned to exploiting other women.25

- **GUIDEMAN:** A Nigerian man living in North Africa who was unable to make it to Europe. The guideman sees to the recruitment and transport of women and girls from Nigeria to Morocco, Algeria or Libya. He fulfills the *madame*’s orders for women and girls.

- **BOSS:** Controls women and girls in the transit countries of North Africa on behalf of the *madame*. Negotiates the connection to Europe before crossing the border.

- **CONNECTION MAN:** Facilitates the border crossing into Europe. Connection men are sometimes directly in contact with the *madame*; sometimes they are not part of the network, but they are traffickers contacted by the guideman and the boss to negotiate the victim’s entry as if she were any other immigrant.

- **HUSBAND OR BOYFRIEND:** Establishes an intimate relationship with the victim. The network usually chooses this person. It is usually the husband or boyfriend who gets the victim pregnant.

- **PIMP:** If the victim is not working in street prostitution, the *madame* seeks the assistance of owners of businesses or apartments to be used for prostitution. They are usually natural citizens of the destination country.

- **CORRUPT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS:** Key players in origin countries as well as transit and destination countries, allowing trafficking networks to carry out their activities while the justice system turns a blind eye. They facilitate the movement of victims and protect network members while the victim is exploited.
Traffickers use the parents, relatives, friends, neighbors and acquaintances of women and girls to recruit them for trafficking. This is sometimes done through deceit and false promises and sometimes with the complicity of people close to the victims who are used by traffickers and made into recruiters. Recruitment is facilitated in this way by community leaders, government officials and administrative staff and even representatives of religious organizations.

It is important to understand that, in this context, trafficking sometimes takes place with the blessing of the victim’s own family, who see it as a sacrifice or a price to be paid for the good of the family unit and the community. In this situation, the daughter who is trafficked takes on a key role because Edo tradition requires children to prioritize and fulfill the family’s needs and wants.
Traffickers, well aware of this tradition, approach parents and offer to take their daughters away to be taken in by a madame and the deal is sealed through a juju or voodoo ceremony which serves as a guarantee of the agreement or contract executed. Moreover, in the social imaginary, sending a daughter abroad places a family in a position of greater status within the community.

This recruitment strategy, in which traffickers operate with the family’s blessing, is the most common strategy in Edo State, though victims are not consulted on the matter. Over time, it has come to be seen as normal for families to consent to women and girls being taken from the family home and trafficked.

Another recruitment strategy is to deceive families about their daughters’ destination. Traffickers offer a position in a supposed business in Europe in a field such as beauty, housecleaning or childcare. In these cases, when the woman or girl accepts the offer and begins her journey, she usually finds out or realizes that she is being trafficked for sexual exploitation when she begins to suffer sexual violence in Morocco or Algeria.

A third method of capture that has been identified is abduction. This happens most often in rural areas of Edo State and mostly affects minor girls. In these cases, traffickers wait until a child is far from town on her way to work in the fields, going to market or attending school in order to kidnap her. The girls are sent to Benin City or Lagos where they stay until preparations for their journey to Europe are complete.

In recent years, another figure has become a key part of the recruitment process: the guideman. Guidemen are Nigerian men who have attempted to immigrate to Europe but have become stranded in North Africa without the financial resources necessary to attempt the border crossing. They then join a trafficking network. A madame residing in Europe, or a “brother” of the guideman, contacts him and asks him to travel to Nigeria to recruit women or girls for human trafficking. The “brother” is usually part of the extended family of the guideman or a man from his neighborhood or ethnicity. The term “brother” is used very loosely but it generally denotes a relationship of loyalty and trust established between two men. In trafficking networks, it refers to someone whom the trafficker trusts or who is involved in the same activity as him.

The guideman calls his relatives or neighbors in Nigeria and explains that he is looking for women and/or teenage girls who want to travel to Europe. A price is set based on an estimate of travel expenses for the guideman and the women victims, and the madame fronts half of these expenses.

After the terms are negotiated, the guideman travels to Edo State and carries out the final phase of recruitment of the women or girls he is to capture. He then asks one of his “brothers” to join him on the return trip as the boss of the trafficked women or girls, controlling them during the voyage and in North African transit countries, and ensuring their entry into Europe, where the madame awaits them.
Once the recruiters have them, the girls and women begin their journey. Many women from rural areas report that they went first to major Nigerian cities, particularly Lagos and Benin City.

Edo State-based trafficking networks use long land routes that pass through several transit countries. This overland transport, on foot and in private vehicles that may belong to smugglers (in the desert) or public transportation (such as buses), has become one of the most important modes of travel used by Nigerian trafficking networks because it is more affordable than other modes and it is easier to avoid the authorities this way.

Air travel is another strategy used by the networks, though less often, to transport victims from Edo State to Europe. They use counterfeit documentation or passports stolen from people living in European countries. In these cases, the networks’ strategy consists of sending women to Eastern European countries that have recently become European Union member states and where immigration enforcement is relatively lax, so they can then make their way to other countries.
Overland travel, on the other hand, almost always requires a long stay in North African transit countries while awaiting a chance to enter Europe by sea.

The **first route** consists of leaving Nigeria for Niger, then heading for Libya by way of the Agadez region. Once they reach the Libyan coast, women and girls are taken by sea to Malta or Italy.  

A **second transit route** passes through Mali and Algeria to Morocco. The route usually passes through the settlement of Tin Zaouaten, Mali, to enter Algeria through the city of Tamanrasset. From there, traffickers cross the border from Algeria to Morocco and proceed to Oujda. Once in Morocco, victims are sent to the coast of Andalusia on inflatable rafts or smuggled into the Spanish enclave cities of Ceuta and Melilla, concealed in the trunks or engine compartments of cars. From there they are sent to destinations all over Europe.

A **third route** takes women and girls through Mali to Mauritania and, from there, to cross the desert to Morocco, then attempt entry into Europe by the same means described above.
Transport expenses for each woman or girl trafficked from Edo State to North Africa are around a thousand euros. This money covers bribes for border officials in the transit countries as well as clandestine transportation.

During the journey to the destination country, networks use different strategies to exploit the women in the transit countries. For instance, networks do not generally allow women to work in prostitution in Morocco but they force them to do so in Libya. These strategies always serve the interests of the traffickers, who consider their victims a sort of merchandise. In Morocco, there is little demand for Nigerian prostitutes, so traffickers prefer to use them in forced begging. In Libya, on the other hand, it is profitable for the network to make Nigerian women work in prostitution, so their sexual exploitation begins before they reach Europe.

Another defining element of the trafficked women and girls’ journey is the extremely high rate of multiple forms of violence that they suffer along the way. Women and girls report extreme fatigue, unbearable thirst, starvation and inhumane conditions while in transit. The desert crossing and the journey through Sub-Saharan Africa on the way to the Arabic countries in North Africa are seen by victims as the most challenging parts of transit.
Border crossings are another part of the journey that women describe as traumatic, because networks use the women as a sort of bargaining chip to secure easy passage. When discussing this stage of transit, women often attempt to downplay or conceal the sexual violence they suffered by talking in the third person, as if it were something that had happened to others but not to them.

Once in Morocco or Libya, the guideman receives the other half of the fee negotiated with the madame to arrange for transportation for the victims. Once they get to North Africa, women may be stuck in the transit country for a while, depending on border crossing conditions and how quickly the madame sends the money for the final leg of the journey.

On arrival in Morocco or Libya, women come under the control of a boss. The guideman and boss propose a connection man to the madame to see to the trafficked woman’s entry into Europe. The boss negotiates a fee with the connection man on behalf of the madame, who promises to send the connection fee. The women now remain under the control of the boss, who reports to the madame and keeps her apprised of the situation. Fees range from 1,500 euros for crossing by raft to 3,000 euros to enter Ceuta or Melilla concealed in a vehicle.

In principle, the madame should cover the women’s room and board in the transit countries before entry into Europe, but this very often does not happen and the boss makes them work in forced begging or prostitution.

This is also when the “boyfriend” or “husband” comes into the picture. They are almost always the fathers of the babies the victims take to Europe with them. Women victims must have the approval of their bosses before initiating a relationship with any man.

If a woman becomes pregnant while awaiting her chance to enter Europe, it is up to the madame whether she will carry the pregnancy to term. This decision is made based on several factors. For instance, if destination countries such as Spain or Italy are deporting large numbers of people to Nigeria, the network may consider it advantageous for women to be pregnant on arrival in order to prevent them from being sent back to their country. However, when deportations to Nigeria are not taking place or the European economy is in crisis, the children of trafficked women are seen by the network as a burden. The control of women’s sexual and reproductive health by trafficking networks, as well as their manipulation of victims’ children, are clearly key elements to understanding the coercive strategies used by the networks.31

The waiting period in transit countries before the final leg of the journey to Europe is also characterized by multiple types of violence against the victims. The network uses psychological violence, including threats by traffickers, isolation in houses and ghettos32 and insults. Network members inflict brutal physical violence on their victims as well, from whippings and beatings with clubs to burning them with scalding water. Sexual violence is common, including sexual torture, rape, sodomy and degrading acts such as making women dance nude in front of authorities. These violent acts take place behind closed doors, within the community and the trafficking network in transit countries.
In addition to the above, women face extreme violence at the hands of public authorities and the local populations of transit countries which exacerbates the victims’ fear. Against this backdrop of intense violence, the network assumes a protective role against outside aggressions and becomes a facilitator for immigration to Europe and a means of survival in transit countries marked by high rates of human rights violations. The network paradoxically becomes a structure that “takes care of,” knows, and “protects” its victims against the social marginalization they suffer as undocumented black immigrant women.
In Edo tradition, the group plays a very important role in society. It is a culture that prizes the community over the individual and it is understood that the good of the group is the duty of individuals in the society. The group, in turn, protects individuals and is held accountable for their actions. For instance, atonement for an individual’s act is made by the community as a whole. Being part of the group provides the individual with physical and spiritual security. This facet of Nigerian culture must be taken into account if we are to understand the modus operandi of the networks, which appropriate the role of the community and act as a social structure for trafficked women and girls.

This conception of the individual as indivisible from her community is a factor which, along with the existence of the tradition of *juju* or voodoo, is helpful in understanding the close relationships that form between Nigerian women and girls and their traffickers, as well as the difficulties they face in exiting the network at different moments of the trafficking process.
The recruiting process is sealed by *juju* ceremonies, which are religious and spiritual rituals. These ceremonies serve as a basis for the control exerted over the women throughout their exploitation. This is also the moment at which the victim is allowed, through a contract, to “violate” the rules set by tradition. The contract absolves the woman of the sin and guilt associated with working in prostitution, forbidden in her culture, which is extremely important to victims.

*Juju* acts as a control mechanism over women, helping to ensure their loyalty and allowing the network to exert control over them with a simple telephone call. This eliminates the need for the *madame* to be in the same physical location where the woman is being exploited, among other things.

The contract requires Nigerian women and girls to repay a debt that is among the highest of those imposed by trafficking networks from different countries. A Nigerian woman who is trafficked must repay from 27,000 to 63,000 euros to be completely released from the debt and fulfill the contract in order to leave the network. Once in the destination country, if payment is not made in accordance with the schedule and amounts set by the *madame*, this leads to multiple forms of coercion, threats and physical violence. Threats are directed against the victims’ families still living in the country of origin, including any children they have.

The minor children of trafficking victims have become a tool used by networks to maximize profits and control women. Cases have been reported in which minor children, usually babies, are used at border crossing to try to ensure that the victim will remain in Europe. In some cases, the network has a minor child cross the border with a woman who is not the birth mother but who registers the child as her own.

Once the minor children of victims are on European soil, the *madames* decide their fate. Children often do not live with their mothers but remain under the control of traffickers in order to ensure the loyalty of the victims. When victims’ children are in the destination country where the exploitation is taking place, they sometimes come under the control of the *madame* while the women are being exploited. *Madames* sometimes threaten to turn the children over to the social services agencies of the destination country, which makes the trafficked woman fear losing custody. In other cases, children are legally registered as the children of other people or social services agencies initiate proceedings to have the children adopted by other families.

Another common form of coercion used against victims is the threat of deportation. The *madames* tell them they have contacts in the police and the justice system in the destination country. They sometimes pose for pictures with Nigerian government officials to show the pictures to their victims as evidence of the network’s power.
One of the unique characteristics of Nigerian human trafficking networks is their systematic use of juju, also sometimes referred to as voodoo, as part of their system of control and coercion of victims.\(^{39}\)

Using juju as a control mechanism ensures the victim’s loyalty and allows the network to control her without physical restraint. The trafficking network thus takes on the protective role usually played by the community, becoming the social structure for trafficked women and girls.\(^{40}\)

Juju is part of the ancestral belief system of Nigerian society, which accepts it as something natural. Belief in juju is protected under the religious freedom clauses of several international and domestic instruments such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.\(^{41}\) This value system, inherited from ancestors and ancient deities, not only has spiritual power over people, but also makes up part of the basis for customary law. Juju has its origins in West Africa and is currently widespread in Nigeria, Benin, Togo and Ghana.\(^{42}\) It predates the presence of the Western legal system that arrived with English colonization.
The term *juju* was originally used to refer to the practice of "swearing oaths" at a shrine in order to achieve better health, enhance beauty or find a husband. Studies with victims have found that the girls interviewed did not experience these rituals as intimidating or coercive *per se* and they did not associate them with a loss of the expression of personal desires and choices.43

In addition to this set of personal beliefs, *juju* has its own institutions, as with any established religion. *Juju* temples are places where ceremonies are held, but also where justice is meted out according to customary law.

Many victims reported viewing the *juju* ritual as a necessary step in "unblocking" the spiritual energy that prevented them from successfully migrating to their chosen destination. They viewed unfettered travel as a sign of immense heavenly benevolence.44 In *juju* initiation rites, victims are required to submit parts of their body such as nail clippings or pubic hair, or garments such as underwear.45 They then swear an oath on a contract or agreement that sets out obligations for the victims such as the repayment of travel expenses, including travel papers and any other expenses incurred by the trafficker or *madame* on behalf of the victim, and warns of dire consequences if the oath is not adhered to.46 The aim of the oath is to ensure secrecy; prevent victims from revealing the identities of members of the network, including the traffickers and *madames*, and ensure that victims repay their "debts" in full.47

*Juju* has become a standard control mechanism for traffickers, and family members are more and more often involved in the rituals, which makes the women and girls feel that they are endangering their loved ones if they betray the traffickers. The specialists in rituals become enforcers for the contract. “*This primitive ceremony will serve as a means of control throughout the time the victim is exploited. These ceremonies may be understood as part of the power the group has over victims to tell them what to do, but also to protect them and absolve them of any responsibility.*”48

Cases have been reported in which the *juju* ritual is performed again when the woman reaches the destination country in which she is to be exploited.49 This control mechanism ensures the victim’s loyalty in a subliminal fashion that is difficult for the authorities to detect and difficult to prove in criminal prosecutions of traffickers.50 Externally, the women do not appear to be subjected to any kind of control. They appear to enjoy freedom of movement and many of them carry their own papers. However, the subjugation and control exerted over them is subconscious, based on the spiritual and material consequences that breaking the oath would bring for the victims, their families and future generations.

The fear inflicted on women and girls seriously undermines their ability to escape the network and prevents them from cooperating with the authorities in origin, transit and destination countries.51 Victims never feel safe. Even if they are living in a shelter for victims, women and girls do not believe that they are out of danger. The network uses this fear to ensure the exploitation of the victim, the repayment of the debt, the network’s survival and the protection of its members.
NAPTIP, the Nigerian government agency charged with combating trafficking, stated that in virtually all cases they deal with, particularly when the victim has been trafficked to Europe, *juju* plays a major role. The agency highlighted two main factors in relation to *juju*: fear and control. Victims are threatened and warned that breaking the oath will cause them harm, including the loss of limbs, madness, or impotency, or death to themselves or their families if they do not pass all proceeds on to the *madame* if they under-perform or if they attempt to escape. When a victim attempts to return to her country of origin prior to “completing the job,” the “*juju* doctors” speak with them, terrifying the victims in order to bring them back into the network.

We have seen cases in Nigeria where the *madame* denounced the victim to the community for failure to repay the debt. The *madame*, based on the contract executed during the *juju* ceremony, cynically assumed the role of the victim and called on the traditional justice system to intervene. In these situations, the trafficked woman’s family is summoned to the temple and full repayment of the contract is demanded. If they do not come up with the money, the *juju* temple imposes the justice demanded by the *madame*.

In the eyes of women victims, *juju* does in fact work, because in most cases a family member dies in murky circumstances. The family and the community see this as an act of the ancestors for failure to repay the debt. The secret societies, powerful and widespread in Nigerian society, are often behind these threats and deaths. As noted above, human trafficking network members are also part of the secret societies, which in turn are present in
the temples and other places where justice is meted out according to customary law. Similarly, whenever a natural death occurs, whether caused by disease or an accident, it is often attributed to the sinister powers of juju.

The consequences for the victim of breaking the contract are seen not only in Nigeria but also in the transit and destination countries where the networks operate.

When trafficking networks exploit juju, it instills fear of death or disease in their victims, but also the fear of going mad. Victims feel that everything that happens to them is their fault because they violated the rules of juju. Many victims suffer minor psychotic episodes, delirium and sometimes even hallucinations. As noted above, the juju ceremony is closely associated with the body because body parts are used in it and victims are spattered with animal blood. It is no surprise then that this trauma may manifest itself physically as well.

"The psychological consequences of this relationship of control are very serious, particularly when it persists over time. The woman gradually loses control over her life and begins to believe that the role that her controllers in the trafficking network impose on her really is hers. Victims show shame, guilt, isolation, fear, low self-esteem and, above all, submissiveness. The results of this control over women and girls manifest as anxiety, behavior problems, nightmares, depression, shame and guilt, loss of self-confidence and loss of trust in others." Most cases are treated with antidepressants and the victim never verbalizes what she thinks is really happening to her.

The Nigerian organizations we interviewed indicated that, although victims could theoretically escape, the oath they have sworn makes them believe that they cannot. If the girls return early without repaying the debt, the traffickers harass the family. Victims also live in fear of the juju shrine. The lack of protection for victims in Nigeria, along with the high rate of corruption, undermine society’s trust in state structures, so people turn to traditional structures and juju. The organization GPI (Girls’ Power Initiative) and staff from NAPTIP indicated that the fear associated with juju is based on traditional beliefs. They drew a link between the power and proliferation of juju and the poverty and lack of resources in Nigeria.

Victims interviewed by Women’s Link insisted that the only escape from juju and its consequences was to repay the debt. They felt responsible for complying with the agreement even if was made by deceit. GPI also explained that the girls are terrified of retaliation.

The otherness of the concept of juju or voodoo and the difficulties in explaining or translating its significance to the uninitiated, including and particularly government officials and authorities in transit and destination countries, has caused significant difficulties in the identification, investigation and prosecution of traffickers. However, in countries such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, a very small number of prosecutions have addressed the issue of juju and have resulted in convictions of traffickers.
This abuse of cultural tradition by the networks can hinder efforts to prevent trafficking and makes reintegration for victims more difficult. However, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)\(^2\) indicates that if *juju* leaders and other religious figures can be influenced, this could lead to many opportunities for change.\(^3\)

NAPTIP relies on religious counselors to combat the “oath.” The counselors explain to the victims that it was a lie used to deceive them. They cite examples of former victims who took the oath and later broke it and have come to no harm. They also inform them of “*juju priests*” who performed ceremonies for traffickers who have since been arrested. Moreover, in an effort to reclaim *juju* and work with the superstitions that already exist and the faith of victims in their traditional beliefs, they invite *juju* priests to renounce the oaths that victims have sworn and invite religious leaders to pray with victims to reassure them that *juju* cannot harm them. This, they say, allows victims to open up and speak more freely about their experiences and those involved.
1. **DEBT**: The existence of an overwhelming debt, among the highest imposed by trafficking networks anywhere, is the main form of coercion. The debt often increases in the destination country because the network requires the victim to cover costs of room and board, condoms and clothing, and may even impose fines for misbehavior or for disobeying network members.

2. **RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT AND LOSS OF LIBERTY**: The women’s movement is not physically restrained, but control is exerted through the *juju* contract executed in the origin country and fear of the consequences of violating it. Victims are also warned of the danger of deportation if they are contacted by the authorities. In some cases, victims are imprisoned in the destination country after a failed escape attempt. Traffickers instill fear and mistrust in their victims by setting rules prohibiting them from going to certain public places and requiring them to stay in isolated and remote locations. The women are not in contact with the society of the host country and they face a language barrier. The network controls their social life completely.

3. **THREATS AND PHYSICAL VIOLENCE**: Physical and psychological abuse is a major part of the coercion used against trafficking victims. It is inflicted not only on the women, but also on their children. There have been cases of abuse and murder of the minor children of trafficking victims by traffickers.

   Their bodies are controlled as well: the network decides which women will become pregnant and by whom (including whether they are to be raped), when they may carry a pregnancy to term and when they may exercise their abortion rights.

   Threats of deportation to the country of origin also play a major role. Victims fear having to return and face an even higher debt.

4. **THREATS TO FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**: This may include threats to kidnap the victim’s children who stayed behind in the country of origin, or the death of a family member, attributed to *juju*, if the woman attempts to escape the network.

5. **INCITEMENT TO CRIME**: In some cases, the network makes women cross the border with babies that are not their own and claim that they are. They are also forced to smuggle drugs, especially cocaine, throughout the trafficking process and to carry counterfeit papers.

6. **USING VICTIMS’ CHILDREN**: Networks control and make life decisions, usually through the *madames*, for the babies born while the women are controlled by the network.
NOTES


8 UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). 2013 Human Development Report [online]. Available at: www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/2013GlobalHDR/Span- ish/HDR2013%20Report%20Spanish.pdf. In this table, PPP stands for purchasing power parity, a measure designed to compare how much money would be necessary to purchase the same goods and services in two different countries. First, the exchange rate necessary for both currencies to have equivalent purchasing power must be calculated. www.exfoty.com/dicciona rio/p/5221-paridad-de-poder-adquisitivo; Gross Domestic Product (GDP) represents the monetary value of the total production of goods and services of a country (or region) over a set period of time (usually a year).

9 The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) has been created by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) in partnership with the University of Oxford since 2010. It includes income factors as well as deprivation factors that affect the lives of people. It shows the type and intensity of individual poverty in three basic dimensions: health, education and standard of living. In 2010, the country with the highest MPI was Niger, with 0.642, and the lowest was Latvia, with 0.001.

10 The Gini coefficient measures how much the distribution of incomes (or in some cases expenses) between individuals or households in an economy differs from a perfectly equitable distribution. A Gini coefficient of 0 represents perfect equity, while a coefficient of 100 represents absolute inequality.


12 Major ethnicities in Nigeria include the Hausa-Fulani, making up 30% of the population; the Yoruba, who represent around 20% and live mostly in the west, and the Igbo, who represent another 20% in the east. For more information, visit: www.nigeria.gov.ng/2012-10-29-11-05-46/people.

13 For more information, visit: www.edostate.gov.ng/people-edo-state and www.edoworld.net/Edo_people.html.


16 Ibid. (APRAMP).

17 “Extreme poverty” or “indigence” is defined as the lack of the resources necessary to cover at least basic food needs. Persons considered “extremely poor” live in households whose incomes do not allow them to afford a basic food basket even if they spend all their income on it. United Nations. El Progreso de América Latina y el Caribe hacia los Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio. Desafíos para lograrlos con igualdad [online]. 2010. Available at: www.eclac.cl/cgi-bin/getprod-asp?xml=/MDG/noticias/paginas/1/40211/P40211.xml&xsl=/MDG/tp/tpl/p18f-st.xsl&base=/MDG-tp/tpl/top-bottom.xsl.


21 The political and religious secret societies date from the political organization of the Benin Empire which was colonized by the British Empire in 1897. These societies have conserved their power within the postcolonial political structure and are influential in Edo State.

22 For more information on the role of madames in trafficking networks, see sidebar on traffickers.


24 Benin City is the capital of Edo State, with a population of slightly over one million.


31 To learn more about trafficking networks’ use of women’s bodies and violations of their sexual and reproductive rights as part of the migration and exploitation strategy, see Women’s Link’s report: The clandestine reality of migrant women: abortion in Morocco [online]. Pages 29 and 30. Available at: www.womenslinkworldwide.org/wh/new.php?modulo=detalle_proyectos=&proyectos=&c=55.

32 Ghetto here refers to makeshift shelters made of sticks and plastic in the clandestine immigrant colonies in Moroccan forests.


34 This strategy by trafficking networks has been documented by the Attorney General of Spain: “Of special concern is the use of so-called ‘anchor children’ to help get women across the border and keep them there for purposes of exploitation. Victims are brought by boat accompanied by a nursing baby, knowing that, as ‘mothers with children’, they will not be repatriated but protected in dedicated shelters. It has been shown that in a significant number of cases—around 25%—there is no blood relationship between the woman and the child. A few days later, the ‘foster mother’ and the child leave the center. The woman ends up working in prostitution for the criminal organization somewhere in Spain or another European country.” Office of the Attorney General of Spain. Memoria Anual 2012 [online]. Chapter III, section 4. Pages 341 and 342. Available at: http://s01.s3c.es/imag/doc/2013-09-26/18.informe.pdf. However, Women’s Link has documented a case in which a woman trafficking victim was convicted of charges related to her entry into Spain with a baby who was not her biological child. It should be noted that under Penal Code Article 177 bis, section 11, of Law 10/1995, of November 23, 1995, “a victim of human trafficking will be exempt from penalty for those criminal offenses committed within the situation of exploitation, whenever his or her involvement in said offenses results directly from the situation of violence, intimidation, deceit, or abuse he or she has been subjected to, and the criminal conduct is appropriately proportionate to said situation.”


36 EUROPA PRESS. “Desarticulada una organización que obligaba a mujeres nigerianas a prostituirse bajo amenaza del vudú” [online]. April 5, 2013. Available at: www.20minutos.es/noticia/1777751/0/.

37 The European Court of Human Rights, in its April 10, 2012 ruling on the matter of K.A.B. v. Spain, condemned Spain for negligence on the part of authorities who determined that a deported Nigerian woman’s child was abandoned and placed him up for adoption, over the objections of the father, a Nigerian permanent resident in Spain. See the full text of the ruling at: http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/sites/eng/pages/search.aspx?i=001-110884.
38 Interview with eight NAPTIP employees, conducted February 21, 2011. NAPTIP is the National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters, created August 26, 2003, by the Nigerian Government. For more information, visit: www.naptip.gov.ng/aboutus.html.


40 VV.AA. Gender Transition and Borderlands Life [online]. Coordinated by Marlene Solís. Social Studies Department, El Colegio de la Frontera Norte. 2014.

41 Article 18.1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (which includes the freedom to hold beliefs). General Comment No. 22 by the Human Rights Committee, the body charged with monitoring States parties’ compliance with the Covenant, establishes that "the terms 'belief' and 'religion' are to be broadly construed. Article 18 is not limited in its application to traditional religions or to religions and beliefs with institutional characteristics or practices analogous to those of traditional religions. The Committee therefore views with concern any tendency to discriminate against any religion or belief." Available at: http://conf-dts1.unog.ch/1%20SP/Tradutek/Derechos_hum_-_Base/CCPR/00_2_obs_024.pdf?sequence=1.


54 Nigerian trafficking victims complain of constant body pain.


56 Interview with two WOCON staff members, conducted in Lagos on February 22, 2011.

57 Girls’ Power Initiative (GPI) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization dedicated to addressing the challenges facing Nigerian girls from 10 to 18 years of age and equipping them with information, skills and opportunities. For more information, visit: www.gpinigeria.org.

58 Interview with eight NAPTIP employees, conducted February 21, 2011; interview with the coordinator of GPI for Edo State, in Benin City, conducted February 25, 2011.

59 Interview with the coordinator of GPI for Edo State, in Benin City, conducted February 25, 2011.


61 See for example the October 29, 2012 conviction of Osezuwa Elvis Osoanse by the Canterbury Crown Court, Case No. T20117301/T20127023, for rape, sexual activity with a child, conspiring to/trafficking into the UK for sexual exploitation (two counts) and trafficking out of the UK for sexual exploitation (three counts). In this case, Judge Williams heard expert evidence on how Mr. Osoanse, through the use of juju witchcraft rituals, was able to exert control by using fear to ensure the silence of the victims. See also: www.thelawpages.com/court-cases/Osezuwa-Elvis-Osoanse-9446-1.law.

62 The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) “is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime, in addition to being responsible for implementing the United Nations lead programme on terrorism. Established in 1997, UNODC has approximately 500 staff members worldwide. Its headquarters are in Vienna and it operates 20 field offices.” For more information, see: www.unvienna.org/unov/es/unodc.html.

63 Interview with four UNODC staff members, conducted in Abuja on February 24, 2011.
Introduction

The consequences of trafficking and re-trafficking on women and girls are severe and manifold. At each stage of the process, victims may face psychological, physical and/or sexual abuse, including widespread rape, gang rape, beatings, broken bones and even death. The injuries sustained by victims constitute violations of their fundamental rights and may also increase vulnerability to HIV transmission and AIDS infection, as well as other sexually transmitted diseases, as women and girls are unable to insist upon the use of condoms. Further reproductive health problems include forced abortions, high-risk pregnancies and deliveries, gynecological infection and permanent damage to reproductive organs, to which young girls with immature bodies may be particularly vulnerable.

A variety of psychological symptoms can surface over a period of time even after victims escape or are rescued from the trafficking situation. Traffickers dehumanize and objectify their victims, which leads to loss of self-esteem, control over their own lives, visibility and dignity. Women’s physical and mental well-being is harmed by the isolation they suffer in the form of restriction of movement and confinement in closed living spaces.

The forced or coerced use of drugs or alcohol is also a common practice during the process. The majority of victims begin using alcohol after they enter trafficking situations. While some use it in order to help them cope with their situation, others are forced to use by traffickers.
Finally, both trafficking and re-trafficking entail a risk to life: many women and girls die en route to the destination country. It is estimated that out of every 100 victims taken via the hazardous land and sea routes through the Sahara Desert and Mediterranean Sea, only 25 to 30 reach their destination, while about 53% die in the desert. It is a long and dangerous venture during which women and girls are systematically raped by traffickers and used as a type of bargaining chip to cross borders and to secure money, food, transport and other considerations.

**ISSUES SPECIFIC TO WORKING WITH NIGERIAN WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Working with Nigerian women and girls in trafficking situations has a set of specific issues and challenges based on the unique Nigerian context. In order to undertake any advocacy action or accompaniment on behalf of these trafficking victims, it is essential to understand this context and take into account Nigeria’s particular social, economic, cultural and institutional characteristics as a country of origin.

Human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation is a complex phenomenon that usually involves several countries. The ratification of international human rights conventions carries multiple shared obligations for origin, transit and destination countries in the areas of identification, protection and reparations for victims, as well as crime prevention and prosecution.

Spain, as a transit and destination country for large numbers of Nigerian trafficking victims, is bound by international obligations to accurately identify victims, offer and apply protective measures, investigate criminal activity (with or without the cooperation of victims, which is voluntary), facilitate immigration documents and legal residence in the country under certain circumstances and establish mechanisms of compensation and reparations, among others.
Spanish law already provides certain protective measures for trafficking victims, chief among which are those set by the immigration regulations\textsuperscript{16} and a ministerial protocol.\textsuperscript{17} Recognition of status as a trafficking victim and access to the rights and protective mechanisms it provides are achieved only by successfully navigating the strict identification procedure set by these two documents.

In Spain, the determination of whether a person is a victim of human trafficking—a serious human rights violation often described as “21st century slavery”—is the exclusive responsibility of the State Security Forces and Corps and, more specifically, the National Police. Identification is often done by immigration units, whose core mission is border security and immigration enforcement.\textsuperscript{18} Organizations specializing in working with trafficking victims may provide any reports and documentation they wish to support the conclusion that the person in question is a trafficking victim. Law enforcement, however, is not required to consider this information and during identification interviews with alleged victims\textsuperscript{19} legal counsel or accompaniment by other persons or organizations is not provided.\textsuperscript{20}

This law enforcement-based approach to identification of trafficking victims\textsuperscript{21} is particularly problematic for Nigerian women and girls, who are extremely reluctant to speak with law enforcement out of fear of possible retaliation by the networks that exploit them, the terrifying effect of juju or voodoo (which is unique to Nigerian networks) and the coercive methods used by the networks, such as using victims’ babies or contacts with influential members of Nigerian society to control them.

For these reasons, in order for any action to successfully safeguard the rights of Nigerian women and girls who are victims or alleged victims of trafficking, we must first understand the reality on the ground in Nigeria. This is essential for performing an adequate identification procedure, granting a recovery and reflection period, determining any need for international or secondary protections, ruling on the legality of voluntary or involuntary return of a person alleging victim status when authorities dispute this status, assessing whether to grant residency or a work permit based on personal circumstances etc.

In light of the above, this Fact Sheet will start by analyzing the Nigerian context, including the institutional context and authorities’ ability to provide effective protections to women and girls who are deported from Spain. We will describe the Spanish protection system and legal protections for Nigerian trafficking victims and offer a critical assessment of these protections, pointing to serious gaps and barriers that prevent women and girls from fully achieving rehabilitation. Then we will discuss the specific obligations that transit and destination countries must comply with when they deport people who are trafficking victims or alleged trafficking victims, whether or not they have been identified as such by the authorities, including the obligation to make an individual assessment of any risk to life or safety if deported in light of the Nigerian authorities’ lack of capacity to protect victims and the existence of discrimination and violence against them in Nigeria. Finally, we will analyze the system for protecting victims and alleged victims in Nigeria and present the perspectives of major non-governmental and international organizations working in the country, as well as the realities faced by these women and girls within Nigerian society where they are stigmatized and at risk of re-trafficking.
Spain as a Destination and Transit Country: Obligations Related to Deportations of Nigerian Women
In this section, we will review Spain’s international obligations related to the expulsion of persons from its territory and how these obligations apply to Nigerian trafficking victims and alleged victims.

We will advocate for a broader interpretation of the non-refoulement principle, which provides that no one shall expel or return (refoul) a refugee to a territory where he or she fears threats to life or integrity. This principle applies not only to victims recognized as such by the authorities, but also those who have been identified by specialized organizations and those who identify themselves as victims. This broader interpretation is necessary if trafficking victims are to be effectively protected, as it may provide the time necessary to appeal potentially inaccurate administrative decisions regarding victim status. This means that the existence of signs of possible status as a trafficking victim should suffice to activate certain protective mechanisms, including the non-refoulement principle.

Compliance with these international obligations requires Spanish authorities to understand the Nigerian context and the capacity of Nigerian authorities to protect and assist persons who are returned to Nigeria, which, in turn, requires an individualized risk assessment.

**THE NON-REFOULEMENT PRINCIPLE**

In international human rights law, one of the obligations binding states is the non-refoulement principle, which requires state authorities not to return anyone to a country where he or she may suffer persecution, torture, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. This principle appears, for example, in Article 3 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (European Convention on Human Rights or European Convention), in force in Spain since October 4, 1979, which establishes that “no one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, ratified by Spain on October 21, 1987, also includes this principle in Article 3, which reads that “No State Party shall expel, return (‘refoul’) or extradite a person to another State where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture.” Spain, as a signatory of the Convention against Torture and a member of the Council of Europe, has an obligation to respect the rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights when it expels or deports aliens from its territory. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), as part of its enforcement and oversight of States Parties’ compliance with the European Convention, has held that protection against torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment includes those situations in which deportation or expulsion of an alien from a State Party’s territory may jeopardize his or her life or safety.

In addition, European Union member states, which are also members of the Council of Europe, are subject to the provisions of Directive 2011/36 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, which includes mandatory compliance with the non-refoulement principle.
The importance of compliance with and application of the non-refoulement principle applies to cases of gender-based discrimination as well, establishing an obligation not to expel, deport or extradite a person to any country where he or she may face discrimination and/or gender violence constituting torture or cruel or inhuman treatment, including human trafficking for purposes of exploitation. Human trafficking includes a broad range of violations of victims’ rights, not only in destination countries, but in origin and transit countries as well. In many cases it may constitute a form of torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has indicated that “the recruitment of women and children by force and deceit to work in forced prostitution or sexual exploitation is a form of gender violence that may even lead to death.”

In order for the authorities to ensure that a deportation or expulsion does not violate the non-refoulement principle, they must perform a risk assessment that takes into account the violations of rights that victims may face when they return or are returned to their countries of origin. This includes potential retaliation by mafias or the possibility of being re-trafficked. As we will detail in
the third section of this Fact Sheet, re-trafficking is a frequent occurrence, particularly in Nigeria. Retaliation by traffickers may be directed against family members of the victim because networks usually have access to family members in the country of origin and they make threats against them in order to control trafficking victims.\textsuperscript{31} Victims also frequently face ostracism, discrimination, and exclusion by their families, the local community or, in some cases, by the authorities upon returning, as we will explain below.\textsuperscript{32}

Spain’s obligations under Article 3 of the European Convention should therefore apply to the expulsion of trafficking victims and alleged victims as well, since they risk facing retaliation constituting inhuman and degrading treatment and, in some cases, such as in the case of Nigeria, they cannot count on the protection of the authorities of the country to which they are being returned.\textsuperscript{33} Based on ECtHR case law, Article 3 of the European Convention may also be interpreted to prohibit the deportation of trafficking victims to countries in which well-founded reasons exist to believe that there is an actual risk for victims of being re-trafficked or suffering inhuman and degrading treatment because of their status as trafficking victims.

Compliance with the non-refoulement principle requires state authorities charged with carrying out expulsions to guarantee that the person to be expelled is not at risk of suffering inhuman and degrading treatment or torture. To this end, an individualized risk assessment must be performed, taking into account the context and personal circumstances of the person to be expelled.\textsuperscript{34} This risk assessment must be included in any decision to carry out an expulsion and must clearly state the risk, or lack thereof, to the life and integrity of the specific person in his or her specific circumstances if returned to a certain country at a certain time. The assessment must analyze the context of the country, its authorities’ ability to provide protection and shelter services, the stigma that may be faced by returning persons and the risk of re-trafficking.

In Spain, however, multiple reports have indicated that Nigerian trafficking victims or alleged victims are sometimes expelled to their country without a risk assessment, in violation of the non-refoulement principle. The Spanish Office of the Ombudsperson, in its report entitled “La trata de seres humanos en España: víctimas invisibles” (Human Trafficking in Spain: Invisible Victims), which discusses the need to create individualized reports assessing the risks and needs of trafficking victims,\textsuperscript{35} noted the presence in detention centers of Sub-Saharan African women who had made the European coast in rafts and who may have been trafficking victims, but for whom no background investigation or risk assessment in case of return was made.\textsuperscript{36} This risk assessment is also mandatory in order to comply with obligations related to international protection.\textsuperscript{37} The abovementioned report by the Ombudsperson also noted an alarming practice by the agency charged with hearing and ruling on petitions for international protection: as a general rule, it rejects any petition based on status as a current or former trafficking victim, claiming that this status does not fall under applicable asylum law and that these cases should be heard under the immigration regulations instead. In the Ombudsperson’s opinion, this exclusionary practice leads to a risk that petitions for international protection made on this basis will be denied both in border proceedings and regular proceedings, without performing a complete analysis of the allegations or a risk assessment in the event of return to the country of origin.\textsuperscript{38}
It is clear that the above measures must be taken by authorities in transit and destination countries prior to proceeding to any expulsion or deportation of Nigerian trafficking victims or alleged victims to their country of origin. To do otherwise would be a failure to fulfill their international obligations and could therefore carry international responsibility for these countries. In the next section, we will analyze the current Nigerian context, specifically as regards the realities faced by trafficking victims, which must be assessed by authorities in transit and destination countries prior to expelling or deporting Nigerian trafficking victims or alleged victims.
The following section includes information obtained through interviews conducted by Women’s Link with several institutions and organizations in Nigeria and from our visits to shelter facilities run by the government and NGOs. Information was provided by interviewees who are involved in this work on the ground. It includes a broad range of sometimes contradictory perspectives from different employees of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP). It is clear that the organizations interviewed find the system of protections to be ineffective in practice and seriously lacking in certain areas, and that contradictions exist regarding the basic aspects of this system, revealing a serious lack of transparency and access to official information regarding resources available to victims.
In general, as we will explain in more detail below, authorities in Nigeria lack the capacity to provide protection to returning trafficking victims.\textsuperscript{41} This lack of protection is particularly acute when victims have not been identified as such by the deporting country,\textsuperscript{42} because Nigerian authorities also fail to perform an adequate process of identification when women are deported back to Nigeria from Europe.

In many cases, Spanish authorities unsafely return Nigerian women to their country when they do not consider them to be trafficking victims, even when organizations present evidence to the contrary or the women self-identify as victims. By expelling these women without taking protective measures or notifying the Nigerian authorities, Spain places them at risk of suffering irreparable harm, in violation of several provisions of international law.

Trafficking victims’ physical and mental integrity may be at risk when they are returned to Nigeria, which is an origin, transit and destination country for many women who are trafficked for sexual exploitation.\textsuperscript{43} Nigerian authorities’ efforts to address the problem have been described as insufficient and symptomatic of an ineffective system of protection, due to a wide range of issues, including corruption.\textsuperscript{44} Nigerian women and girls who are trafficked to Europe to be sexually exploited lack real opportunities to build a new life and become reintegrated into Nigerian society, because the causes and circumstances that made them vulnerable to recruitment and exploitation in the first place remain intact upon their return.

Very few Nigerian trafficking victims return to their country voluntarily before or after paying off the debt contracted when they were recruited,\textsuperscript{45} for several reasons. Their families are usually living in poverty, with no other source of substantial financial support besides the income provided by trafficking victims. Victims fear the rejection
of their families for having failed in their attempt to remain in Europe and earn money. They still owe on the debt contracted with the trafficking network for the journey to Europe and they fear the consequences of violating the contract with the traffickers and the harmful or even deadly effect of juju, which the traffickers use to control them. Trafficking victims are marginalized and stigmatized by Nigerian society because they are assumed to have worked in prostitution. And victims do not trust the Nigerian authorities to have the resources or capacity to provide them with effective protection against traffickers or other means of subsistence.

Nigerian government agencies, especially NAPTIP, emphasize the need for foreign immigration or law enforcement authorities to identify deportees as trafficking victims so they may be properly assisted and protected once they reach Nigerian airports. Nigerian authorities claim they are unable to appropriately receive, protect and assist trafficking victims arriving by plane from Europe to prevent their re-trafficking by the same networks if they are not notified by the deporting countries. But it has been shown that, in most cases, European countries that deport victims to their countries of origin do so because they have not been identified as victims, but treated as undocumented aliens. It is clear that international collaboration is an indispensable tool in the struggle against exploitation, but this by no means relieves countries of their international responsibilities to protect human rights.

Nigeria has a set of international obligations related to prevention and prosecution of human trafficking and protection and reparations for victims, which are not dependent on the identification of victims by other countries. On the contrary, Nigerian authorities are under obligation to take measures to identify trafficking victims, such as creating a screening protocol for all women landing in Nigerian airports after being deported from Europe.

In one of our interviews with the staff of NAPTIP Lagos, we learned that planes from European countries often land in Nigeria full of handcuffed trafficking victims, each guarded by two agents. Notwithstanding the insistence of Nigerian authorities and NAPTIP that they cannot be held responsible for receiving, assisting and protecting returning trafficking victims when they are not notified of expulsions by the deporting countries, a large number of victims are returned without being properly identified as such by European authorities, despite the existence of evidence of their status as victims, and they therefore receive no specific assistance or support upon return.

Staff for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) mission to Lagos indicate that in order for successful reception, monitoring and reintegretion of victims to be possible, one or both institutions—IOM itself or NAPTIP—must be notified of the return. The mission chief in Nigeria has called on deporting countries to notify NAPTIP of all returning victims to ensure that they arrive in the country safely and are offered protection. However, in many European countries, including Spain, there is no specific mechanism or protocol in place by which European authorities or IOM delegations in Europe consistently contact Nigerian authorities or NAPTIP to report returning trafficking victims.
When trafficking victims reach Nigeria and the authorities are not certain whether they have been trafficked, they are taken from the airport to a police station for an interview. In theory, and according to the authorities, they remain at the station for the shortest time possible in order to perform some administrative tasks. However, several cases have been reported in which women have been held for extended periods of three to five days as if they were criminals, without ever being informed what crime they were charged with, if any.

In other cases, women’s names have been divulged to the media. It has also been documented that some women have been required by Nigerian authorities to undergo an HIV/AIDS test during the detention period. This requirement is imposed only on women, and it is not clear where the results end up or what is done with them, since those women who do test positive are not provided with appropriate treatment. In addition, the police make a record of their personal information in order to prevent them from exiting the country legally in the future.

Once the identification process and the interview at the police station are completed, the women are released and transferred to one of the State Liaison Offices, which are in charge of arranging for their return home. However, cases have been reported in Lagos in which the Edo State Liaison Office has failed to perform this duty correctly and has dropped off victims in a part of the city where they do not live or with people other than their family, placing them at risk for being contacted by traffickers or re-trafficked. IOM’s mission chief in Nigeria notes that both IOM and NAPTIP have an obligation to act if they become aware of a re-trafficking situation or an attempt to re-traffic a person who has been returned to Nigeria.

THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT: INABILITY OF THE STATE TO ENSURE THE RIGHTS OF TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

Victims Deported to Nigeria: Lack of Appropriate Assistance and Effective Protection

In Nigeria, NAPTIP is the government agency charged with enforcing the country’s prevention, protection and prosecution obligations under the United Nations Palermo Protocol ratified by Nigeria. The agency’s headquarters are located in Abuja and it has seven local offices in Lagos, Benin City, Uyo, Maduguri, Sokoto, Kano and Udu (Enugu). It also has a total of eight shelters for victims throughout the country.

In 2007 (the most recent year for which data is available), NAPTIP shelters had a total capacity of 468 people, distributed as follows: Lagos shelter: 120 people; Abuja shelter: 50 people; Uyo shelter: 50 people; Kano shelter: 50 people; Sokoto shelter: 50 people; Benin City shelters: 50 and 48 people, and Enugu shelter: 50 people.
Official information on the number of women and girls staying in NAPTIP shelters and where they end up afterwards is hard to come by. The agency does not publish an annual report or any other information on their activities, which presents a challenge for assessing the agency’s capacity, and therefore that of Nigeria, to receive and assist victims who return or are deported from destination countries. Whatever information is available on the number of victims in NAPTIP facilities appears in reports issued by international agencies or organizations after in-country visits or missions. According to these reports, the number of women and children in the shelters is always low, almost insignificant and shelter residents are moved frequently from place to place. Recent reports include information provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Abuja, which references eight victims in one Benin City NAPTIP shelter and two in the other, an insignificant figure if we consider that an estimated 94% of persons trafficked from Nigeria to Europe for sexual exploitation come from this city, the capital of Edo State.

Some sources indicated that the maximum length of stay in NAPTIP shelters is six weeks, while others said that it ranges from two to six weeks. Several interviewees described situations in which exceptions may be granted and the stay may be extended,
such as when a victim’s testimony is necessary for NAPTIP’s criminal investigations and the cooperating victim may have a greater need for protection. Exceptions may also be made if the victim has serious family problems, though the amount of time their stay may be extended is not specified in these cases. If a victim does not want to return to her family or is unable to do so, NAPTIP may refer her to a local organization such as COSUDOW (Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women) in Benin City, which also has a shelter. However, several interviewees noted that this NGO and others like it lack the resources necessary to adequately accommodate victims. The embassy of a European country in Abuja confirmed claims by an IOM official that the only victims who remain in shelters for over two weeks are those whose cases are under investigation by NAPTIP and who have testified.

The possibility of extending the maximum length of stay in NAPTIP’s shelters is therefore essentially predicated on the filing of criminal charges against traffickers and the victim’s cooperation with the case. Medical and psychological staff at NAPTIP’s Lagos shelter indicated that when there are no charges filed against traffickers, they usually do not consider the victims to be at risk. When asked about their perception of the risks faced by returned victims, they said that when victims have escaped from their traffickers and reported them to the authorities, the risk is greater than when they have been detected and “rescued” by the authorities because, in the former case, their debt is still owed and they have broken the “contract.” Other risks, such as the threat of being re-trafficked in order to pay the debt they were unable to pay before their deportation from the European countries they were being exploited in, do not appear to be assessed on an individual basis by the agency. The organization Girls’ Power Initiative (GPI) indicated that there are widespread security problems in Nigeria and people are only safe to the extent that they are able to obtain private security.

A figure supplied by staff of NAPTIP Lagos reveals the Nigerian agency’s limited capacity to assist victims. Out of 1,385 victims who stayed at their shelter, from opening in 2003 to December 2010, 27 received training on assorted skills and were awaiting financing to open their own businesses and five were attending school. This represents a mere 1.9% of the trafficking victims who have stayed at the NAPTIP Lagos shelter. Other reports confirm that the failure of Nigerian authorities to appropriate sufficient resources for reception and housing for trafficking victims results in a severe lack of protection for these women.

“All NAPTIP interviewees noted that the chief aim of their work is to reunite victims with their families. However, all the NGO staff and even some NAPTIP employees interviewed pointed to the complicity of families in the trafficking of their children or other relatives as a widespread phenomenon in Nigeria. Immigration authorities also noted that it is often the family who is behind the recruitment of victims into trafficking situations. It is therefore alarming that the system of protection in Nigeria has family reunification as its core value.”

“Every victim who comes to the agency should be reunited with her family”
UNODC also acknowledges that in most cases in Nigeria the families are involved in trafficking and, even when they are not, they often refuse to take returning victims back because they are living in poverty.\textsuperscript{80} There is an obligation to provide financial support to the family, meaning the extended family, so trafficking victims often have no power or control over their own lives and choices, they explained. According to UNODC staff members, in many cases families do not want their children to return because they have spent a lot of money to send them abroad. Although their objective is also working with families to achieve reintegration into the community for returned victims, they acknowledge that in these cases mediation is not the best option.

In cases in which families are involved in the victim’s trafficking situation or in the network, as is often the case in Edo State, the agency attempts to contact the family and tell them what has happened and why their involvement in trafficking constitutes a crime. NAPTIP Lagos indicated that the families always say that they too were deceived and it is very difficult to get victims to testify against their own families.\textsuperscript{81} At the same time, the families are usually so poor that they are unlikely to realize that they are being deceived regarding the destination that awaits their daughters. In other cases, victims are afraid to return to their communities because that was where they were captured and where the traffickers live, explained NAPTIP Lagos.

IOM’s Lagos office indicated that when a victim is at risk of facing violence if returned to her family or community, NAPTIP does not return her until they are sure that she will be safe, and afterwards, they monitor the family.
situation.\textsuperscript{82} However, this information is inconsistent with statements by the agency’s own staff and other interviewees, who insisted that the agency’s priority is the reunification of victims with their families and reintegration into their communities, without regard for whether reintegration can be done safely.

The organization WOCON (Women’s Consortium of Nigeria)\textsuperscript{83} stated that when the six-week maximum stay in the NAPTIP shelter is up and victims do not wish to return home, “they are out on the street again.”\textsuperscript{84} They added that lodging is the most challenging issue for returned victims due to the high cost of housing in Nigeria, even for marginal, rundown housing.\textsuperscript{85} Regarding their chances of making a living, one of the organization’s employees noted that “in Nigeria, it is almost impossible for a woman to purchase supplies or food to set up a shop.”

\textquotedblright Our challenge is the lack of sufficient resources to properly rehabilitate these people\textsuperscript{86}\textquotedblright

NAPTIP Lagos and Abuja staff members complained of a lack of staff with adequate specialized training, as well as a lack of resources to assist with the broad range of family and personal situations of returning trafficking victims.

WOCON indicated that they offer professional training for some victims, but the lack of resources limits how many people they can reach.\textsuperscript{87} GPI, too, felt that although NAPTIP is the agency responsible for the protection of potential trafficking victims and prevention of trafficking, their capacity is affected by this lack of resources. In their assessment of Nigeria’s response to human trafficking for exploitation, they stated that there is “good policy, but poor implementation.”\textsuperscript{88} UNODC agreed that the Nigerian system of protection for trafficking victims lacks sufficient resources.

IOM’s mission in Nigeria stated that NAPTIP is the agency charged with providing medical attention to returned victims, and that it has agreements with most of the country’s hospitals to refer victims to them. This assistance was previously limited to victims from Edo State, although the same organization stated that this restriction has since been lifted. They also noted that there is no specialized assistance for women who have children, and that prenatal care is a complicated gray area.

When victims return without money, it is very difficult for them to reintegrate. A large number of victims are re-trafficked, victimized and stigmatized by their families, especially if the families were complicit in their trafficking and exploitation.\textsuperscript{89} The Nigerian government gives victims a reintegration package of between 150,000 and 200,000 naira.\textsuperscript{90} This amount, according to UNODC, is not enough to achieve financial autonomy and set up a new life in Nigeria. UNODC staff felt that if women victims were given an adequate reintegration package, they would be able to reintegrate, and victimization and stigmatization would be reduced as well. The package should cover families too, as is done in Sweden, because many victims come from very poor families. They also noted that NAPTIP’s monitoring of victims who have been reunited with their families is inadequate.
NAPTIP Lagos explained that they do not allow victims to leave the shelter alone, but that they set up a meeting with the families and try to monitor the family reunification.\textsuperscript{91} It is not clear what sort of follow-up monitoring the agency does with victims who return to their families. In theory, monitoring of the reunification process takes place once a month for three years, although this is difficult for the agency to do for victims who live far away. Once the three years are up, the victim is considered safe and no longer at risk. However, employees of the agency acknowledge that closer monitoring is done for victims who have participated in the prosecution of traffickers.
It is clear that Nigerian government agencies and NGOs lack the capacity to provide appropriate assistance to returning trafficking victims or victims who are deported from Europe after their exploitation, whether they are identified as victims or not. This points to the need for countries who deport or expel victims to take measures to ensure compliance with their protection obligations by making an individualized risk assessment for each person to be deported or expelled to Nigeria, taking into account the country’s capacity to offer them protection and assistance.

**Minor Trafficking Victims**

Nigeria has no state child protection service (for minors under 18) capable of taking in children and ensuring their safety and best interests when the family is not an appropriate environment for them. Providing protection and assistance for minor trafficking victims is a challenge for the country.

According to GPI, "victims’ families carry the brunt of the responsibility" for trafficking, in a social context marked by high levels of discrimination against women and girls. They noted that there is a widespread perception that girls are property of the family to be "used and thrown away." They also indicated that it is very unlikely for a girl to travel without her family’s knowledge and involvement, and that the decision to send girls abroad is often motivated by the family’s poverty.

Interviewees reported cases in which families do not readily take their returning daughters back because the whole family depends on the money they could send them if they were being exploited in Europe. WOCON confirmed that many victims cannot go home because their families do not want to have anything to do with them, so they try to find their way back to the country they were deported from. Interviews with this NGO revealed that families often pressure girls to enter trafficking situations by citing examples of other girls who send money home from Europe.

The organization WOTCLEF (Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation) stated that if a child does not want to return to the family home, she is not forced to do so. NAPTIP has occasionally referred minors to WOTCLEF, along with some money to support them, when the family could not be located. The organization tries to counsel families and mediate with them, but many families would prefer for the children to remain with WOTCLEF rather than taking them back.

NAPTIP Lagos confirmed that they send victims back to their families even in cases in which the families have abused them. In domestic violence cases, they warn the family not to abuse their children and tell them they will monitor the situation. Nigeria lacks legal mechanisms to combat child abuse and there is no system of protection for children in this situation. In cases of minor victims who have been or are being abused by their families after their return, NAPTIP is unable to provide them with stable housing or professional psychological counseling. There are no mechanisms or protocols to address domestic violence, so the agency attempts to mediate with the family to prevent further child abuse with no guarantee that their efforts will be successful.
According to UNODC, NAPTIP lacks any kind of rehabilitation services for minor children, and the agency considers the family home the best place for them, although it is clear that whatever assessment of the family situation is done does not ensure protection for these children. They noted that there are foster families who sometimes take custody of returned minor children, notwithstanding NAPTIP’s statements that there is no regulated foster home system in Nigeria. However, UNODC staff felt that this places minor children, particularly girls, at risk of sexual violence.

Furthermore, children who have been trafficking victims are often stigmatized and labeled as “witches” in Nigeria. NAPTIP does outreach work to sensitize the public to the fact that victims were deceived and did not know that they would be exploited, and that if they had known, they would never have agreed to get involved. They also advise families not to talk about what happened with anyone to prevent victims from being singled out by the community.

**PROTECTION AGAINST SOCIAL STIGMATIZATION OR MARGINALIZATION AND RE-TRAFFICKING: AN OBLIGATION OF COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN, TRANSIT AND DESTINATION**

As noted in Fact Sheet 2, prostitution and promiscuity on the part of women is disapproved of and severely punished in Edo society, as is the case in almost all societies. Therefore, when women and girls who have been living in Europe return to Nigeria, the community often assumes that they have been working in prostitution, and they are rejected by society as a whole. This rejection, along with the lack of protection and options for reintegration in their country of origin, places many women and girls at risk for re-trafficking.

Re-trafficking is rampant in Nigeria. Because trafficking victims are so often handed over to the networks by their own families, friends or members of their communities, the risk of re-trafficking is extremely high upon return. It is also common for victims to face ostracism, discrimination and exclusion by their families, local community or sometimes even the authorities when they return.

For these reasons, before transit and destination countries proceed to deport or expel Nigerian women and girls, they should consider the stigma they will face in their
communities or places they are returned to, which often leaves them in situations of extreme poverty. They should also be aware that these women and girls face a high risk of re-trafficking, which sets into motion a whole new cycle of violence and violations of their rights. These considerations should be made in light of the lack of systems of protection and resources for trafficking victims or alleged trafficking victims in Nigeria, as noted in the previous section.

Furthermore, Nigerian authorities have the obligation to combat the stigma that these women and girls face on return and to prevent potential re-trafficking situations. Clearly, the obligation to protect against the violations of rights that may result from this stigma and the risk of re-trafficking applies to countries of origin that receive victims or alleged victims, as well as transit and destination countries when they deport women or girls who may be trafficking victims.

**Stigma**

“Nobody wants to marry a woman who has been involved in prostitution or human trafficking, or have a relationship with her”\(^{104}\)

The stigma associated with human trafficking, which often affects a victim’s ability to reintegrate into her former community or family,\(^ {105}\) is a frequent contributing factor in the re-trafficking of victims, particularly victims of sexual trafficking.\(^ {106}\) Victims “are stigmatized in their host communities as vectors of deadly sexually transmitted diseases contracted abroad.”\(^ {107}\) This hostile reception, which may come from family, friends, community members, and society in general, heightens the victim’s vulnerability to re-trafficking.\(^ {108}\)

UNODC confirmed that NAPTIP does not have appropriate facilities for reintegration of victims after rehabilitation and that this lack of resources places victims at risk for stigmatization.\(^ {109}\) When a person is known to have been a trafficking victim, particularly if she is a woman, society associates her with sexual exploitation and AIDS. The stigma is greater still in cases in which victims have in fact contracted HIV, as they are rejected by their own families.

WOCON explained that anything related to girls’ and women’s sexuality is a very sensitive topic in Nigeria, which places victims at risk of social exclusion.\(^ {110}\) Furthermore, there is an assumption in society that any single woman who has traveled to Europe is a prostitute. When a woman has worked in prostitution or been a trafficking victim, it is seen as undesirable to have a relationship with her, and particularly to marry her. Her family comes to see her as a disgrace. WOCON went on to note that most women and girls from Benin City who have been trafficked “no longer exist” for their families. When a woman has become a trafficking victim and been exploited abroad, she is expected to send money home and remain in the destination country, never to return. According to WOCON, if a victim wants a different life upon her return to Nigeria, “she has to move to a new place and lie,” which is complicated by several factors, including cultural and economic challenges, discrimination, and language barriers.
GPI, too, noted that one of their greatest challenges is raising awareness and getting people to understand that this is a systematic, deeply rooted social problem.

Immigration authorities indicated that there is a stigma associated with trafficking victims who stay in NAPTIP shelters because everyone assumes that this means that they have worked in prostitution in Europe. In order to prevent this stigma, they refer victims to other NGOs for rehabilitation whenever possible or sometimes even send them directly back to their families.

NAPTIP Lagos said that the objective of the family counseling they provide is to impress upon families that if they do not protect victims appropriately, they will end up in another trafficking situation. However, the idea that the families have the capacity to take on the responsibility of protecting their daughters against trafficking networks is questionable at best, and the state has no system for guardianship and protection of children whose families are not up to the task. IOM’s Lagos office noted that it has tried to counter this stigma with counseling for victims and their families. They concluded that victims who attend school after returning do not suffer as intense a stigma, or none at all.
The Risk of Re-Trafficking

"If they come back with nothing it will be very difficult to reintegrate them and most will fall victims of re-trafficking."115

The term re-trafficking is commonly used to describe a situation where a trafficking victim has returned to the country of origin and is then trafficked from there for a second time.116 However, this definition is problematic as it excludes victims who do not return to their countries of origin prior to being trafficked a second time.117 Bearing this in mind, re-trafficking may be defined as a situation in which a person who has been trafficked on one occasion exits that trafficking situation by whatever means and, later, reenters another trafficking situation, whether it is with the same trafficking network or another one.118 “Exit” in this context can refer to escape with or without the help of others, the fulfilment or “repayment” of the trafficking “contract” or “debt,” or interception by the authorities or other organizations.119 It may or may not involve return to the place or country of origin and it may be for any length of time.120 The secondary trafficking may be for the same purpose or an entirely different one.121

When Does Re-Trafficking Occur?

Trafficked persons are highly vulnerable to re-trafficking. Some categories of victims appear to be more vulnerable to re-trafficking than others. For example, victims who return home may be more vulnerable to re-trafficking where there are economic and social difficulties in the country of origin122 or within the family or community of origin123; where there are significant gender inequalities; where there is ongoing armed conflict or political unrest; when the victim is a refugee or displaced person; when the victim is of a young age, particularly if there are unresolved difficulties at home, or when the victim has psychological or emotional difficulties either preexisting the trafficking experience or as a result of it.124

The phenomenon of re-trafficking is generally difficult to quantify. Nonetheless, interviewees were almost unanimous in their affirmation of the existence of re-trafficking of Nigerian victims. While there was reluctance within some NAPTIP offices to acknowledge the existence or scale of the issue, other interviewees, including the immigration authorities, who by virtue of their work confront the issue regularly, acknowledged its existence. Immigration authorities stated that re-trafficking was “a significant issue.”125 Within the various NAPTIP offices there were somewhat differing views on the prevalence of re-trafficking.

In many countries, including Spain, one of the main ports of entry for people who travel overland to Europe, trafficked Nigerian women and girls who are identified by the authorities as undocumented immigrants may be detained, taken to foreign detention centers and deported to their country of origin.126 When asked about Nigerian trafficking networks and trafficking processes based in Nigeria, WOCONE described how traffickers residing in Europe have representatives in Nigeria, including Benin City.127 The traffickers in Europe contact these representatives to alert them when women are being deported, and members of the
network in Nigeria wait in the airport for the victims to return from the foreign detention centers or elsewhere. Even in cases where the family or NAPTIP has been alerted to the victim’s return, WOCON indicated that traffickers can easily find a way to get to them first and pick them up immediately on arrival to the airport. In these cases, the control exerted over the victims in origin, transit and destination countries, through the use of juju and other means, keeps them trapped in the trafficking situation.\(^\text{128}\)

Women are also vulnerable to re-trafficking immediately after exiting the trafficking situation when they are seeking assistance, due to the lack of available resources and the authorities’ inability to protect them.\(^\text{129}\) WOCON noted that due to the lack of housing resources for victims and because institutions are not prepared to provide shelter for returning victims, “many women go back to the only thing they know and start working in prostitution again.”\(^\text{130}\) As a result, it is usually the traffickers who pick
them up at the airport or elsewhere, or the women themselves seek them out, and they are trafficked again. When victims are able to access services such as those offered by NAPTIP and they do not wish to return to their families afterwards, "they are out on the street again." GPI stated that the risk of re-trafficking is particularly high when the situation that originally led to the trafficking situation still exists upon the victim’s return.

According to NAPTIP staff, in cases in which the family was complicit in the trafficking, victims have a greater likelihood of being re-trafficked and minor girls are especially at risk. In this context, NAPTIP’s emphasis on family reunification for victims is problematic. It is difficult to determine if a family was involved in the victim’s recruitment, though it should be noted that in many cases, families may be involved without really understanding what the trafficking process will mean for the girl or woman. The girls and women, for their part, are unwilling to speak out against their own families. They do not want to reveal what happened to them for fear of facing ostracism or stigma, or they keep quiet because of threats of violence or the use of juju, which may instill even greater fear.

Another NAPTIP office cited poverty as the chief factor leading to re-trafficking, indicating that although this is also the case in contexts of labor exploitation and domestic servitude, it is more common among women and girls who are sexually exploited abroad. On the issue of poverty, victims sometimes feel that their economic situation is worse once they exit the trafficking situation, especially if they do so before paying the "debt" to the traffickers, because they may have to pay additional fees to be released from the "contract."
A complex, related issue is the willingness, or perception of willingness, of the victim to return to the destination country and continue working in the sex industry. Faced with a lack of support, economically as well as emotionally and psychologically, victims feel they have no future in Nigeria. They are often identified as “prostitutes” in their communities, and the stigma this carries has a major impact on their opportunities and possibilities, both economically and personally, in the country. Physically exiting the initial trafficking situation does not always mean escaping the methods of control used by the traffickers.137 Specifically, victims may still be “controlled” to a lesser or greater extent by the effects of *juju*. Facing a desperate situation with no real possibilities for a better future, coupled with the fear associated with *juju*, many victims prefer to return to the trafficking network and then the destination country. Other victims, of course, are re-trafficked without even this perception of consent on their part.

“Some times, the trafficking network threatens to kill the returned victims for having come back without finishing their job”138

Another factor related to the causes of re-trafficking is fear of reprisals.139 In the Nigerian context, this fear is often closely linked to *juju*. IOM reported cases in which traffickers have threatened to kill victims when they returned without the network’s permission, sending “*juju* doctors” to pressure them.140 UNODC added that traffickers may threaten and attack victims and their families, particularly if the victims have not paid off the debt or fulfilled the conditions of the “contract.”141

When victims are re-trafficked, they are often taken to a different destination. A victim of international trafficking may be trafficked domestically or vice versa, and the type of exploitation may change as well.142 Victims who attempt to exit a trafficking situation are especially vulnerable to re-trafficking when the authorities, particularly law enforcement, are involved in trafficking.143

**Combating Re-Trafficking in Nigeria**

Contrary to statements by the organizations interviewed by Women’s Link, NAPTIP claimed that a “*good number*” of trafficking victims succeed in becoming reintegrated in Nigerian society. The agency offers victims counseling and rehabilitation services, reunites them with their families and “gets them to settle down and be more responsible.”144 WOTCLEF said that when girls are at risk of re-trafficking by their families, they are allowed to remain in the organization’s facilities and visit home at Christmas, accompanied by liaison officers, until they finish secondary school.145

However, both UNODC and GPI identified areas for improvement in the context of re-trafficking. UNODC indicated that the reintegration packages provided by destination countries should include assistance for victims’ families as well, because most victims come from very poor families. They cited the example of Sweden, a destination country where this type of support already exists.146 GPI also said that both trafficking and re-trafficking would be reduced significantly if immigration were legal.147
The term re-trafficking refers to any situation in which a person who has been trafficked before and exited the trafficking situation by whatever means is trafficked again, whether by the same trafficking network or another. For more information on re-trafficking, see page 24 of this Fact Sheet.


Ibid. Page 2.


Ibid.

Ibid.


Women’s Link Worldwide has documented that most Nigerian women and girls immigrating to Europe do so through a trafficking network. In such cases, they are accompanied by a “journey husband.” This is a member of the network who exerts control over them and keeps the network informed of their whereabouts. For more information on the transit process of Sub-Saharan African women, including trafficking victims, visit: www.womenslinkworldwide.org/wlw/new.php?modo=detalle_proyectos&tp=publicaciones&dc=36.


For more information, visit the official website of the General Department on Alien Affairs and Borders; www.policia.es/org_central/extran_front/com_extran_front.html.

The term alleged victims is used here to refer to persons for whom evidence exists that they may be trafficking victims. Evidence may be specific to the person or based on a general context, such as the case of a Nigerian woman arriving by boat to the Spanish coast. Alleged victims may also be persons who self-identify or are identified by an organization as victims, but have not been confirmed as such by the authorities.


The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) recommended in 2004 the creation of National Referral Mechanisms as a "co-operative framework through which state actors fulfil their obligations to protect and promote the human rights of trafficked persons, co-ordinating their efforts in a strategic partnership with civil society," in order to "ensure that the human rights of trafficked persons are respected and to provide an effective way to refer victims of trafficking to services." See: OSCE/ODIHR. National Referral Mechanisms. Joining Efforts to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons: A Practical Handbook [online]. Page 16. Available at: www.osce.org/es/odihr/13973.


The Council of Europe is an international organization based in Strasbourg. Its main objective is to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law in all its member states. The 28 European Union member states are also members of the Council of Europe, but the Council, with 47 member states, has much broader membership.

understaffed and lack medication and equipment. These shortages are particularly serious for mental health services, with only four beds in psychiatric hospitals available per 100,000 people in Nigeria and very few available outside of the big cities. Available at: http://we-archive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20101208171359/http://uk.sitestat.com/homeoffice/- rds/?rds=nigeria-180110-dockn Type=clickout&ns_url=http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ rds/pdfs10/nigeria-180110.doc.


48 The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is the only worldwide intergovernmental organization dedicated to migration issues. Its objectives are the promotion of humane and orderly migration as a benefit to all, and it provides services and advice to governments and migrants. For more information, visit: www.iom.int. For information on the IOM mission in Nigeria, visit: www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/where-we-work/africa-and-the-middle-east/central- and-west-africa/nigeria.html.


51 Ibid. Page 161.


62 The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) “is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime, in addition to being responsible for implementing the United Nations lead programme on terrorism. Established in 1997, UNODC has approximately 500 staff members worldwide. Its headquarters are in Vienna and it operates 20 field offices.” For more information, visit: www.unvienna.org/unov/es/unodc.html.

63 Op. cit. Note: 49. Page 4. “Each flat comprise three bedrooms and each bedroom can accommodate four residents, i.e. altogether 48 victims of trafficking can be accommodated in the shelter at once. At the time being the shelter accommodates two victims of human trafficking. During the last two weeks eight victims of trafficking have passed through the shelter.”


65 The information about the six-week maximum length of stay was supplied in multiple meetings with different authorities in Nigeria. However, this information is inconsistent with statements by Aminat ‘Tope Abdulrahman and Anne Ikpeme, protection officers for the UNODC office in Abuja, in the 2010 report by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS), Allegations against the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and warnings against return to Nigeria (Op. cit. Note: 49), which indicates that the maximum length of stay in NAPTIP shelters is two weeks.

66 Op. cit. Note: 46. Report on human rights issues in Nigeria. “No long-term shelters for returned or deported victims of trafficking are available in Nigeria. The existing shelters only offer protection and rehabilitation for a maximum of two weeks. After this period of time victims are expected to manage on their own and for some victims this could prove itself to be very difficult.” Pages 43 and 44.


68 COSUDOW is a Catholic human rights organization that works to prevent human trafficking, protect and rehabilitate those who are already victims, and seek out and prosecute traffickers. For more information, visit: www.unodc.org/ngo/showSingleDetailed.do?req_org_uid=20922.
Interview with eight NAPTIP employees, conducted in Lagos on February 21, 2011.

This refers to the juju “contract.” For more information, see Fact Sheet 2. Page 19 ff.

Girls’ Power Initiative (GPI) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization dedicated to addressing the challenges facing Nigerian girls from 10 to 18 years of age and providing them with information, skills and opportunities. For more information, visit: www.gpinigeria.org.

Interview with the coordinator of GPI for Edo State, in Benin City, conducted February 25, 2011.

Interview with eight NAPTIP employees, conducted in Lagos on February 21, 2011.


Five interviews were conducted with NAPTIP staff members: one at the NAPTIP Head Office in Lagos, one with the staff of the NAPTIP shelter in Lagos and NAPTIP Lagos medical staff, one with the NAPTIP delegation to Abuja; and one with NAPTIP shelter staff in Abuja.

Interview with five immigration officers, conducted in Abuja on February 23, 2011.

Interview with four UNODC staff members, conducted in Abuja on February 24, 2011.

Interview with eight NAPTIP employees, conducted in Lagos on February 21, 2011.

Interview with IOM Nigeria mission chief in Lagos, conducted February 22, 2011.

Women’s Consortium of Nigeria is a grassroots human rights organization working for women’s and girls’ rights in Nigeria. For more information, visit: www.womenconsortiumofnigeria.org/node/12.

Interview with two staff members, conducted in Lagos on February 22, 2011.

According to WOCON, housing with a shared bath and “poor hygiene conditions” can cost 60,000 naira per year (around 265 euros). An alternative is to live in the shantytowns for about 20,000 naira (around 90 euros), without a kitchen or bathroom.

Interview with eight NAPTIP employees, conducted in Lagos on February 21, 2011.

Interview with two staff members, conducted in Lagos on February 22, 2011.

According to WOCON, housing with a shared bath and “poor hygiene conditions” can cost 60,000 naira per year (around 265 euros). An alternative is to live in the shantytowns for about 20,000 naira (around 90 euros), without a kitchen or bathroom.

For information on the use by Nigerian human trafficking networks of women’s babies as a means of controlling their victims, see: Fact Sheet 2. Page 18.
Interview with four UNODC staff members, conducted in Abuja on February 24, 2011.

Interview with two staff members, conducted in Lagos on February 22, 2011.

Interview with the coordinator of GPI for Edo State, in Benin City, conducted February 25, 2011.

Interview with five immigration officers, conducted in Abuja on February 23, 2011.

Interview with eight NAPTIP employees, conducted in Lagos on February 21, 2011.

Interview with IOM Nigeria mission chief in Lagos, conducted February 22, 2011.

Interview with four UNODC staff members, conducted in Abuja on February 24, 2011.


Op. cit. Note: 106. Although the IOM definition of "exit" does not including fulfilling or completing the "contract" or paying off the debt, it is included here because, although it does not happen often, it may happen and if these persons find themselves in another trafficking situation as defined by the Palermo Protocol, they should be considered victims of re-trafficking.


Interview with eight NAPTIP employees, conducted in Lagos on February 21, 2011.


Interview with two staff members, conducted in Lagos on February 22, 2011.


Interview with WOCON.

Interview with the coordinator of GPI for Edo State, in Benin City, conducted February 25, 2011.

Interview with two staff members, conducted in Lagos on February 22, 2011. See also: OKOJIE, Christian. International Trafficking of Women for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation and Prostitution. The Nigerian Case. Pakistan Journal of Women’s Studies Alam-e-Niswan. Vol. 16, Nos. 1&2. 2009. Pages 147-178 and 162. ("Even in cases in which victims have been deported, their families have pressured them until they returned to the destination country.")

Interview with four staff members, conducted in Abuja on February 23, 2011.


Interview with IOM Nigeria mission chief in Lagos, conducted February 22, 2011.


Interview with IOM Nigeria mission chief in Lagos, conducted February 22, 2011.

Interview with four UNODC staff members, conducted in Abuja on February 24, 2011.


Interview with eight NAPTIP employees, conducted in Lagos on February 21, 2011.

Interview with the organization’s national coordinator, conducted in Abuja on February 25, 2011.

Interview with four UNODC staff members, conducted in Abuja on February 24, 2011.


Interview with IOM Nigeria mission chief in Lagos, conducted February 22, 2011.


Interview with WOCON.
FACT SHEET 4  ■ Case Studies
She’s on her way to Spain. Her hands are dry and chapped. Her face has taken a yellowish tone. She’s cold, freezing cold. She feels like she’s freezing to death. And Juliet really is close to death.

She writhes in pain in the hallway of the Moroccan public hospital she has been transferred to. Her stomach hurts. She had an abortion two months ago by taking Cytotec like one of the girls in the house she lives in told her. Ever since, the sharp pain and the bleeding won’t stop. She didn’t want to go to a hospital because she knows that abortion is illegal in Morocco.

She does realize that her life is in danger. She exits the examination room. The diagnosis is that there are still parts of the fetus in her uterus from the abortion. Juliet is afraid to explain that it has already been two months.

She thinks of death and starts to talk. She comes from a very poor family. She is from Edo State, but she is not an Edo—she is an Esan. Her mother supports the whole family on her own. One day, the brother of a neighbor showed up at their house and offered to send her to Europe. She knew it was to work in prostitution. She agreed because she thought she would be able to send money home to her family.

She remembers the juju ritual and the contract. She remembers it as if it were yesterday because she is terrified of it. She says that it works, that it is real. “Juju will kill you if you don’t obey. It has many ways to kill, it enters your body, makes you sick and you die.” She says white people can’t understand it, but she has seen the things that juju can do and she would never break the contract.
When she got to Morocco, she was told she owed 45,000 euros. The guy who brought her was also transporting other women. Some of them stopped in Rabat but she continued on to Tangier. She doesn’t know where her madame is, because she only has contact with her boss. She says the madames are being very careful to protect themselves because there have been a lot of arrests in Spain lately.

In Tangier, she met her husband, who spoke with her boss. Her boss gave them permission to be together. He is nice to her, she says, but he has never come to visit her in the hospital.

Then she got pregnant. The boss checked with the madame, and Juliet ended up having her first child, who is now two years old. When she fell pregnant again, the boss didn’t want to take on the financial burden, so he made her have an abortion.

The abortion almost killed her but Juliet says she was willing to take the risk because her family is very poor and there is no other way.

She speaks of God, because her life “is in His hands.” She sings in the choir of one of the unauthorized Nigerian churches in Morocco. Her pastor always tells her that God is more powerful than juju, and that she needs to pray every day, but she can’t help being afraid when she talks about the power of the ancestral gods of her community.

She says that juju works, that it metes out justice. She doesn’t see juju as good or bad, just fair. And its decisions, when it does justice, are sometimes very harsh. She starts describing the situations of women who didn’t follow the rules of juju: women who didn’t pay their debt and went insane; family members who died in Nigeria because their daughters didn’t complete the contract.

As she speaks, between spasms of pain, she keeps saying how afraid she is. She is not free and she knows it. She doesn’t want to talk about all the suffering she has faced along the way, let alone think of what is to come. Her life is not her own—it is in the hands of God and her madame, whose name she doesn’t even know.
She came by raft, along with some other women. She made it to Motril, in Granada (Spain), and when she was intercepted on the beach, she was sent to a foreign detention center.

They said she was an adult, even though she wasn’t. She says they took x-rays of her and pulled her pants down so a man could look at her “private parts.” It was no big deal for her that the man who looked between her legs didn’t explain anything to her. It was normal for her—no man had ever asked her permission to take her clothes off. She thought he was a doctor because he wore a white gown and spoke Spanish.¹

Afterwards, the police told her she was 18 years old and took her to a place she described as a “jail,”² where she met many foreigners. She shared a cell with other women: some who had just arrived from Nigeria like her and others who had lived in Spain for years.

Two women who came to visit her in the “jail” said they were attorneys and that they could help her if she told her story. She did but she told it the way the man who brought her to Spain had told her to. She didn’t dare disobey.

She cried and cried but early one morning they took her to an airplane and sent her to Lagos. A relative of the man who took her to Spain came to pick her up at the airport. She called one of the women who came to visit her at the jail, a white woman who had offered to help her.

She was a very kind lady and she gave Queen’s number to some other Nigerian women who called her from Lagos and told her she should go to a center for juveniles. But she couldn’t. She had to go back to Spain. She was indebted to the man and to her *madame* and they were waiting for her.
Her story had begun two years before, when a trafficker came to her town and offered to take her with him. Her mother refused at first, but she had to go with him. He promised her that she would be able to go to school and pay for the trip over time. Then he took her to the juju shrine to swear an oath.

“Juju’ is when they take you to a place where you have to swear not to escape and if you don’t want anything to happen to you, you have to pay the man the money he asks for, that’s what ‘juju’ means,” she explains confidently.

Then he took her to Oujda. She doesn’t remember the names of the other places she went through on the way there, but she does remember Oujda, because that’s where it all started. He began forcing her to sleep with people and wouldn’t let her go outside. She started to have chest pain but she was never taken to a hospital.

The man put her on a raft and she made it to Spain. She still had the chest pain when she arrived to the Spanish “jail.”

After her deportation to Nigeria, the man told her she had to come back to Europe and if she didn’t, he would send someone to kill her. She still owed the debt from the juju ceremony.

She also had documentation showing that she was really a minor but that didn’t matter anymore. She had to stay in the Lagos apartment along with the other deported women to start the trip back to Europe to be exploited by the trafficking network.
Sandra arrived in Tarifa, Andalusia (Spain). From there, she was taken to a foreign detention center. Someone came to see her. He didn’t tell her he was with the Nigerian Consulate. She thought he was there to help her.

One night, one of the foreign detention center’s guards woke her up. He gave her some of her clothes and told her it was time to go. She doesn’t know what city in Spain she was taken to, but from there, she was put on a plane to Lagos.

They were waiting for her in the Nigerian capital. Two men came to pick her up. They were “brothers” of the “guideman” who had taken her to Morocco. The “brothers” told her she would go back to Benin City, see her family, then start preparing for the trip back. The second trip would increase her debt to the trafficking network. When she went home, she cried and cried when she saw her parents, and she told them she would die if she had to make the trip to Morocco again. She didn’t want to tell them about all the abuse she suffered when she traveled with the trafficking network. “I kept the rapes, the beatings, the diseases and the exhaustion to myself, I didn’t tell them anything,” remembers Sandra.

Her parents spoke with the traffickers. There was a new agreement and they would try to get her into Europe by plane with a visa. They didn’t explain what route she would take, but someone would pick her up at the airport.

Her first stop was in Dakar, Senegal. There was a Nigerian man from Benin City there to pick her up from the airport and he told her he had all the documentation prepared to get her a visa.
She was very upset when she was taken to the Moroccan Consulate in Dakar because she thought she was going straight to Europe. It had been a living hell the first time she was trafficked to Morocco and she didn’t want to go through that again.

The trafficker explained that they would make a stop in Casablanca and, once they got there, they had a connection in the Spanish Consulate who could give her a visa. The man saw to getting her papers and she stayed in Dakar for a week.

She got her visa and flew to Casablanca. Another Nigerian man, also a “brother” of the “guideman” who brought her the first time, picked her up at the airport. She was taken to Rabat where she was told that in a few days her papers would be ready at the consulate. But it never happened. The traffickers explained to her that the person they were working with couldn’t do it at
that moment and they took her to Tangier. There, the boss told her she would have a “husband.” She didn’t want to because she knew it was because they wanted her to get pregnant, but she had no choice.

Soon enough, she did get pregnant. It was a tough nine months because she suffered constant anxiety, which led to pre-eclampsia. She had to have an emergency caesarean section to save her life and that of the baby.

Eight months later, it was back to the sea. She and her tiny daughter boarded an inflatable raft, but it capsized. Still near shore, something went wrong when the motor revved and suddenly they were under water. She didn’t know how to swim and she saw her baby sinking next to her. She still doesn’t know how she managed to get them both out of the water in the dark.

It’s a hard life, having to beg every day with her daughter on her hip. Her anxiety is back because her boss told her he might send her daughter to Europe without her and make her get pregnant again.

She knows she might lose her baby like some of the other women she knows who have not heard from their children in years.

NOTES

1 One of the many methods and procedures to determine age is the observation of sexual development of the body. "Girls’ sexual development may be estimated by the age of menarche (the first menstrual cycle); stage of pubic hair development (distribution and quantity); and degree of development of the breasts." Office of the Ombudsman of Spain. ¿Menores o adultos? Procedimientos para la determinación de la edad. Special report. Madrid. 2011. Page 83. Available at: www.defensordepueblo.es/es/Documentacion/Publicaciones/monografico/Documentacion/Menores-O-Adultos-Procedimientos_para_la_determinacion_de_la_edad-vOPT.pdf.

2 She is referring to Spain’s Foreign Detention Centers.

3 Pre-eclampsia is a disorder of pregnancy characterized by high blood pressure and large amounts of protein in the urine, formerly referred to as toxemia. Pre-eclampsia may develop into eclampsia, which causes dangerous seizures. Pre-eclampsia causes constriction of the blood vessels, which reduces the flow of oxygen and nutrients to the fetus and may lead to low birth weight. If left untreated, it may lead to liver failure, pulmonary insufficiency and renal failure. Despite extensive study, it has not been determined with certainty what causes the condition, which affects around 7 of every 100 pregnant women. Pre-eclampsia appears during the second half of pregnancy and is more common in first-time pregnancies, multiple pregnancies, teenagers and women over 35. University of Maryland Medical Center. For more information, visit: http://umm.edu/health/medical/spanishpreg/embarazos-de-cuidados-especiales/-preeclampsia-2#ixzz2ryFa3115.

4 The use by Nigerian human trafficking networks of women’s bodies and babies as an immigration strategy has been documented by organizations including Women’s Link and by the Office of the Attorney General of Spain in its 2013 report Memoria de la Fiscalía General del Estado. Pages 341 and 342. Available at: http://s01.s3c.es/imag/doc/2013-09-26/18.informe.pdf.