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1. [Prevalence of sexual exploitation and forced prostitution](#)
2. [Legal Framework](#)
3. [State protection](#)
4. [Services available for victims](#)
5. [Treatment by society](#)

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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Nigeria

Sexual exploitation and forced prostitution, including in Imo state

1. Prevalence of sexual exploitation and forced prostitution

According to a report by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Interpol, and the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, in 2023 trafficking in human beings (THB)¹ affected men, women, and children in Nigeria.² According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), between 750 000 and one million persons are trafficked every year in Nigeria.³ According to the US Department of Labor, Nigeria is an origin, transit and destination location for sex trafficking and forced labour of both children and adults.⁴ In October 2022, the Vice President of Nigeria indicated that THB in Nigeria is a ‘transnational organized crime of extraordinary magnitude’ that affects numerous Nigerians who are trapped in sexual and labor exploitation across various African and European countries.⁵ In June 2024, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Joy Ezeilo, indicated that ‘the most widespread form of human trafficking is sexual exploitation,⁶ which [...] accounts for 79% of cases.’⁷

Freedom House indicated that organised crime groups in Nigeria are ‘heavily’ engaged in trafficking in human beings.⁸ Sources indicated that traffickers operating in the south of the country are involved mainly in sex trafficking.⁹ In southern Nigeria, criminals set up ‘baby factories’,¹⁰ which consists of illicit facilities in which young girls and women, often driven by poverty, are lured to get pregnant and then sell their babies.¹¹ Some girls are raped and held

¹ UNODC defines THB as ‘the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit.’ UNODC, Human trafficking, n.d., [url](#)

² ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p. 3

³ UNODC, Prevention of human trafficking, n.d., [url](#)

⁴ USDOL, 2022 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Nigeria, 26 September 2023, [url](#), p. 2

⁵ Nigeria, NAPTIP, Human Trafficking is a Challenge of Extraordinary Magnitude that Requires Joint Efforts, 29 October 2022, [url](#)

⁶ The United Nations (UN) defined sexual exploitation as ‘any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) specified that sexual exploitation ‘includes trafficking and prostitution.’

UN Documents, United Nations Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Involving Implementing Partners, 21 March 2018, [url](#), para. 9; UNHCR, What is sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment?, n.d., [url](#)

⁷ PUNCH, Establish early warning mechanism to tackle human trafficking, Ex-UN Envoy tells FG, 8 June 2024, [url](#)

⁸ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 – Nigeria, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

⁹ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#); ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p. 3

¹⁰ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#); DW, Why Nigeria’s ‘baby factories’ continue to thrive, 18 March 2024, [url](#)

¹¹ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report – Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#); ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p. 3

against their will in these illegal facilities.¹² According to the US Department of State (USDOS), rural communities, International Displaced Persons (IDPs), irregular migrants, people working in the informal economy, and those with disabilities are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking.¹³

The UN Security Council indicated in 2024 that sexual exploitation is a 'major protection concern' in North-East Nigeria due to ongoing conflict and gender inequality.¹⁴ The same source reported that non-State armed groups abducted women and girls, subjecting them to rape and sexual slavery as both a reward for fighters and an incentive for new recruits.¹⁵ A study published in 2024 by H. A. Salihu and A. O. Shodunke¹⁶ on children who became orphans during Boko Haram attacks in North-East Nigeria, indicated that they were subjected to 'life-threatening situations', including sexual exploitation.¹⁷ The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported in June 2024 that in Adamawa, North-East Nigeria, asylum seekers have been exposed to survival sex and sexual exploitation due to poverty and lack of food or other survival needs.¹⁸

Foreign and Nigerian illegal actors also engage in sex trafficking and forced labour along the migration route across northern Africa to Europe.¹⁹ USDOS reported that Nigerians were held in Libya in "control houses" or "prostitution camps" until they pay back travel debts.²⁰ The EU Commission indicated that Nigeria ranked first of the top five countries of origin of trafficking in human beings in the EU in 2022.²¹ The USDOS report also indicated that women and girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation throughout countries in Europe such as France, Italy, Spain, and Austria.²² Frontex reported that Nigerian women were among the main nationalities that are trafficked into southern European countries for sexual exploitation in private apartments, bars, and nightclubs.²³

¹² DW, Why Nigeria's 'baby factories' continue to thrive, 18 March 2024, [url](#); ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p. 128

¹³ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

¹⁴ UN Security Council, Conflict-related sexual violence; Report of the Secretary-General, 4 April 2024, [url](#), para. 90

¹⁵ UN Security Council, Conflict-related sexual violence; Report of the Secretary-General, 4 April 2024, [url](#), para. 90

¹⁶ Habeeb Abdulrauf Salihu is a lecturer in the Department of Criminology and Security Studies at the University of Ilorin in Nigeria. Ali Oladimeji Shodunke is a PhD student in Criminology in the Department of Sociology and Criminology at The Pennsylvania State University in the USA. Salihu, H. A. and Shodunke, A. O., Crisis in crisis: Boko Haram violence, orphaned children, and the precariousness in human survival in Northeast Nigeria, 6 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷ Salihu, H. A. and Shodunke, A. O., Crisis in crisis: Boko Haram violence, orphaned children, and the precariousness in human survival in Northeast Nigeria, 6 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁸ UNOCHA, Nigeria: Situation Report, last updated 5 June 2024, [url](#)

¹⁹ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

²⁰ USDOS, Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

²¹ European Commission, Report on the progress made in the fight against trafficking in human beings (Fourth Report), COM (2022) 736 final, 19 December 2022, [url](#), p. 3

²² USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

²³ Frontex, Risk Analysis for 2023/2024, 18 September 2023, [url](#), p. 38

Additional information on the modus operandi of THB in Nigeria for sexual exploitation in Europe can be found in Section 2 of the [EASO Country of Origin Information Report, Nigeria: Trafficking in Human Beings](#), 26 April 2021.

Incidents of sexual exploitation and forced prostitution, as reported by sources, include:

- In June 2024, Nigerian teenage girls between 15 and 18 were rescued by the Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation in Ghana²⁴ after being trafficked to Ghana and forced into prostitution.²⁵
- In May 2023, the Tripoli Bureau of Investigation arrested a criminal gang that had kidnapped girls, including minors, from Nigeria and trafficked them to Libya, where they were forced into prostitution.²⁶
- In October 2022, the Nigerian Navy rescued 50 women and arrested three suspected sex traffickers during a raid on two brothels in Port Harcourt.²⁷
- In June 2022, Nigerian police rescued 35 teenage girls between 14 and 17 years old from a baby factory in Anambra state, South-East Nigeria where they were subjected to forced prostitution and 'child making' or 'baby harvesting'.²⁸

Information on sexual exploitation and forced prostitution in Imo State could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

2. Legal framework

Nigeria adopted the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act in 2015, repealing the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act of 2003.²⁹ The Act established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) to enforce the Act and coordinate legislation on trafficking in human beings and related offences, among other responsibilities.³⁰

The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act provides the following:

²⁴ The Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation (NIDO) Ghana is the Ghanaese arm of a global Nigerian Diaspora network coordinated by the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission. The Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, established by Nigeria's National Assembly, engages Nigerians abroad in policies, projects, and development efforts to leverage their human and material resources for the country's socio-economic, cultural, and political advancement. NIDCOM, About NIDCOM, n.d., [url](#)

²⁵ Cable (the), Nigerian teenage girls 'trafficked for prostitution' rescued in Ghana, 8 June 2024 [url](#); Punch, Rescued teenage girls arrive in Nigeria, 15 June 2024, [url](#)

²⁶ Nova.news, Arrested a gang that kidnapped minors in Nigeria and forced them into prostitution in Libya, 8 May 2023, [url](#); Libya Review, Libyan Police Arrest Human Smuggling Gang in Tripoli, 8 May 2023, [url](#)

²⁷ Sahara Reporters, Nigerian Navy Busts Sex Trafficking Ring, Rescues Over 50 Girls Forced into Prostitution in Rivers, 30 October 2022, [url](#); PM News, 'In a day I sleep with more than 10 men': Story of a young girl rescued in Port Harcourt, 30 October 2022, [url](#)

²⁸ Africanews, Nigeria Police rescue 35 teens exploited as sex slaves, 16 June 2022, [url](#); OCCRP, Nigeria: Dozens of Underage Girls Rescued From a 'Baby Factory', 27 June 2022, [url](#)

²⁹ Nigeria, Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition), Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015, [url](#)

³⁰ Nigeria, Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition), Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015, [url](#), Art. 5

‘14. Any person who-

(a) imports another person into Nigeria, knowing or having reason to know that the person will be forced or induced into prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation in Nigeria or while in transit; or

(b) exports another person from Nigeria, knowing or having reason to know, that the person will be forced or induced into prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation in the country to which the person is exported or while in transit, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of not less than 5 years and a fine of not less than N 1,000,000.00 [about EUR 1 282].

15.-Any person who-

(a) by the use of deception, coercion, debt bondage or any means, induces any person under the age of 18 years to go from one place to another to do any act with intent that such person may be, or knowing that it is likely that the person will be forced or seduced into illicit intercourse with another person, or

(b) keeps, detains or harbours any other person with intent, knowing or having reason to know that such a person is likely to be forced or induced into prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation with or by any person or an animal, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for 5 years and a fine of N 500,000.00 [about EUR 641].

16. (1) Any person who procures or recruits any person under the age of 18 years to be subjected to prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation with himself, any person or persons, either in Nigeria or anywhere else, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of not less than 7 years and a fine of not less than N 1,000,000.00 [about EUR 1 282].

(2) Any person who procures or recruits any person under the age of 18 years to be conveyed from his usual place of abode, knowing or having reasons to know that such a person may be subjected or induced into prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation in any place outside Nigeria, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of not less than 7 years and a fine of not less than N 1,000,000.00 [about EUR 1 282].³¹

Article 30 and 31 of the Child Rights Act 2003 indicated the following:

30.-(1) No person shall buy, sell, hire, lei on hire, dispose of or obtain, possession of or otherwise deal in a child.

³¹ Nigeria, Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition), Enforcement and Administration Act, 2015, [url](#), Art. 14- 16

(2) A child shall not be used-

- (a) for the purpose of begging for alms, guiding beggars, prostitution, domestic or sexual labour or for any unlawful or immoral purpose; or
- (b) as a slave or for practices similar to slavery such as sale or trafficking of the child, debt bondage or serfdom and forced or compulsory labour;
- (c) for hawking of goods or services on main city streets, brothels or highways;
- (d) for any purpose that deprives the child of the opportunity to attend and remain in school as provided for under the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act;
- (e) procured or offered for prostitution or for the production of pornography or for any pornographic performance; and .
- (f) procured or offered for any activity in the production or trafficking of illegal drugs and any other activity relating to illicit drugs as specified in the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency Act.

(3) A person who contravenes the provisions of subsection (1) of this section commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of ten years.

31.-(1) No person, shall have sexual intercourse with a child.

(2) A person who contravenes the provision of subsection (1) of this Section commits an offence of rape and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for life.³²

3. State protection

NAPTIP coordinates activities related to the investigation and prosecution of THB cases, including sexual exploitation and forced prostitution.³³ The Agency also oversees the protection, assistance, and rehabilitation of trafficked persons.³⁴

In 2022, authorities investigated 1 242 cases related to trafficking, including 511 cases of sex trafficking.³⁵ USDOS noted that official data could include crimes beyond the international concept of trafficking.³⁶ Sources indicated, however, that victims did not always rely on the judiciary system and authorities to denounce traffickers due to lack of confidence in the system and corruption.³⁷

³² Nigeria: Act No. 26 of 2003, Child's Rights Act, 2003, [url](#)

³³ Nigeria, NAPTIP, About us, n.d., [url](#)

³⁴ Nigeria, NAPTIP, About us, n.d., [url](#)

³⁵ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁶ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁷ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 7; ISS, INTERPOL, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, ENACT Organised Crime Index, Africa – Nigeria, 2023, [url](#), p. 6; USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

USDOS indicated that, according to observers, ‘the government arrested and, in some cases, inappropriately detained for prolonged periods – reportedly for a security screening and perceived intelligence value – women and children removed from or allegedly associated with Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa (ISIS-WA), including women and girls who insurgents had forcibly married or sexually enslaved.’³⁸

Additional information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

4. Services available for victims

According to the USDOS report, 1 634 victims of THB were identified by the government in 2022 and were provided with assistance by the government and government-supported non-profit organisations (NGOs).³⁹ For victims participating as witnesses in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases, the government provided security, victim advocates, temporary immigration relief, and travel and lodging assistance.⁴⁰

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the body responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights in Nigeria, includes a Women, Children and Vulnerable Groups Department, which receives complaints related to sexual violence and liaises with local authorities.⁴¹ The Nigeria Police Force has gender units that handle sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) cases, train officers across Nigeria, and cooperate with NGOs.⁴² In 2021, NAPTIP established Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) which offer services for survivors of sexual violence, including counselling, medical, forensic, legal as well as psycho-social support.⁴³

Sources listed several organisations offering services to women victim of sexual violence across Nigeria⁴⁴ For instance, the Brave Hearths Initiative provides crisis support to victims of sexual violence in Edo State.⁴⁵ Women Aid Collective Nigeria (WACOL) offers various support services such as legal aid and assistance to victims/survivors of human trafficking, and shelter.⁴⁶

NAPTIP runs ten shelters in the country with a total capacity of 329 bedspaces which can be occupied for a maximum of six weeks.⁴⁷ Victims in need of longer assistance in terms of

³⁸ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

³⁹ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴⁰ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁴¹ Nigeria, NAPTIP, 2022 Implementation Report: Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act - 2015, 6 February 2024, [url](#), p.17

⁴² Nigeria, NAPTIP, 2022 Implementation Report: Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act - 2015, 6 February 2024, [url](#), pp. 31, 32

⁴³ Nigeria, NAPTIP, Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 Annual Report 2021, 9 February 2023, [url](#), p. 27

⁴⁴ MediaCon, Service Providers Directory, n.d., [url](#); Resource&Support Hub, Survivor support services in Nigeria, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁵ Brave Hearths Initiative, About us, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁶ WACOL Nigeria, About us, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁷ Nigeria, NAPTIP, Counselling & Rehabilitation Department, n.d., [url](#)

accommodation in shelters are referred to centres run by NGOs.⁴⁸ According to a confidential source consulted for a January 2023 COI Report on Nigeria by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, covering the period from April 2021 to December 2022, shelters run by NAPTIP were not available for male victims of THB.⁴⁹ Additional and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

In May 2022, NAPTIP reported that two NGO-run shelters fully complied with standards and six partially complied.⁵⁰ Victims of THB who returned to the country could access shelters, and foreign victims could also access support services.⁵¹ An explanatory note on the January 2023 COI report on Nigeria by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands indicated that, according to one confidential source, available resources to assist and protect victims of THB were insufficient and that the number of shelters was about 40 across the country.⁵²

A May 2024 World Food Programme (WFP) report on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), covering the period between March 2017 and October 2023, indicated that, according to an 'informant', the hotline in Nigeria had technical and promotional faults that made it ineffective in reporting sexual exploitation and abuse.⁵³

Imo state has a NAPTIP State Command,⁵⁴ which supports the regional activities of the National Agency.⁵⁵ Additional information on the NAPTIP Imo State Command's activities and protection services could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

5. Treatment by society

According to confidential sources cited by the COI Report on Nigeria by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, even though it is 'difficult to paint a clear picture of society's views on women who have been exploited in the sex industry in Europe' upon their return, mainly due to the 'country's high degree of cultural diversity and the differing profiles of trafficking victims,' the stigma suffered by victims of sexual exploitation is present across the country.⁵⁶ Women who returned pregnant or with a child faced increased difficulties

⁴⁸ Nigeria, NAPTIP, Counselling & Rehabilitation Department, n.d., [url](#)

⁴⁹ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, 31 January 2023, [url](#), p. 89

⁵⁰ Nigeria, NAPTIP, Non-Compliance to Regulation 2019: NAPTIP to Clamp Down on Shelters and Homes, 19 May 2023, [url](#)

⁵¹ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#)

⁵² Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 6

⁵³ WFP, Strategic Evaluation of WFP's Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Centralized evaluation report – Volume I, May 2024, [url](#), p. 54

⁵⁴ Nigeria, NAPTIP, Imo State Command, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁵ Nigeria, NAPTIP, Organizational Structure, [url](#)

⁵⁶ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, 31 January 2023, [url](#), p. 87

because the child would be considered as ‘proof of sex work’ abroad.⁵⁷ Moreover, sources indicated that victims returning with a child could face family rejection.⁵⁸ The explanatory note by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands indicated that in cases in which the debt with traffickers was not settled upon return, or traffickers considered that the debt was not paid, traffickers ‘would do everything they could’ to collect payments, including physical abuse and murder.⁵⁹ Sources reported that victims were held against their will until the debt is fully paid.⁶⁰

The explanatory note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands noted that victims of trafficking in human beings could face reprisals from ‘human traffickers and/or their accomplices, [...] their own family members, friends or partners’.⁶¹ The source added that many victims did not speak about the reprisals ‘out of fear’ and that studies and data were not available on this phenomenon.⁶² Europol reported that, in addition to threats, traffickers used violence, intimidation, and religious practices to exert control over the victims.⁶³ Sources specifically reported the use of the *juju* tradition by traffickers as a reprisal for breaking the oath administered before the journey.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, 31 January 2023, [url](#), p. 87

⁵⁸ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Country of Origin Information Report Nigeria, 31 January 2023, [url](#), p. 87; IOM, Nigerian women defying stigma upon return, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁹ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁶⁰ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#); Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 3

⁶¹ Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 2

⁶² Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 2

⁶³ Europol, 15 arrested in intercontinental crackdown against Nigerian crime syndicates, 26 January 2024, [url](#)

⁶⁴ USDOS, 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria, 15 June 2023, [url](#); Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Explanatory note for the Country of Origin Information Report on Nigeria, January 2023, 21 March 2024, [url](#), p. 84; Adeyinka, S., Lietaert, I., & Derluyn, I., The Role of Juju Rituals in Human Trafficking of Nigerians: A Tool of Enslavement, But Also Escape, 22 November 2023, [url](#), p. 8

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