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2019 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria

NIGERIA: Tier 2

The Government of Nigeria does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore Nigeria was upgraded to Tier 2. These efforts included supporting implementation of a 2017 action plan between Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), a government-supported nongovernmental armed group, and an international organization to end its recruitment and use of child soldiers. There were no verified cases of any Nigerian government-supported entity recruiting or using child soldiers during the reporting period. The government convicted significantly more traffickers than the previous reporting period and initiated prosecutions against seven government officials allegedly complicit in trafficking. At the state level, the Edo State Government passed a new anti-trafficking law and provided additional resources to combat trafficking, while Delta and Ondo states established anti-trafficking task forces. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. For the fifth consecutive year, the government did not convict any complicit government officials despite consistent reports of government officials committing a variety of trafficking offenses each year. The government did not investigate, prosecute, or hold accountable any military or CJTF members for exploiting IDPs in sex trafficking or past recruitment and use of child soldiers. The Nigerian military did not provide female and child trafficking victims allegedly associated with insurgencies trafficking victim protections. The government identified fewer trafficking victims and did not fully disburse the budget allocated to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP).

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS

Hold complicit officials, including security officials, and CJTF members accountable for trafficking offenses, including in particular sexual exploitation of IDPs and child soldiering offenses. • Improve access for humanitarian actors to provide assistance to trafficking victims, including in IDP camps and military facilities holding potential trafficking victims. • Allow independent criminal investigations into alleged trafficking abuses among security officials and CJTF members in northeast Nigeria. • Improve coordination among law enforcement actors, including NAPTIP, the Nigerian Immigration Service, police, and others. • Continue to ensure the Nigerian military has ceased unlawful use of children, including in collaboration with CJTF. • Work with CJTF

and the UN to implement fully the child soldier action plan and confirm all children have been removed from the CJTF's ranks and, if they have not, cut provision of financial and in-kind support to CJTF. • Continue to vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers—including labor traffickers and those who force children to beg—and impose sufficiently stringent sentences involving imprisonment. • Expand existing efforts to identify trafficking victims among IDPs, investigate cases, and implement preventative measures. • Disburse the full promised budget for NAPTIP, particularly to provide adequate victim care. • Finalize and implement the draft protocol to hand children identified in armed conflict over to civilian authorities, screen for trafficking among those detained, and provide appropriate care. • Continue to implement programs for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of child ex-combatants that take into account their specific needs, and work with the Nigerian military and CJTF to implement these plans. • Increase training for judges on the 2015 law, specifically the provision prohibiting the issuance of fines in lieu of imprisonment. • As security and safety permits, allow trafficking victims to obtain employment and move freely in and out of NAPTIP shelters. • Increase the capacity of Nigerian embassies to identify and provide assistance to victims abroad, including by providing replacement travel or identity documents free of charge.

PROSECUTION

The government significantly increased anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts, but there were continued reports of, and only insufficient efforts to address, government officials' complicity in human trafficking offenses. The Trafficking in Persons Law Enforcement and Administration Act, as amended in 2015, criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed a minimum penalty of two years' imprisonment and a fine of 250,000 naira (\$693) for both sex and labor trafficking; the minimum penalty for sex trafficking increased to seven years' imprisonment and a fine of 1 million naira (\$2,770) if the case involved a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as kidnapping. In May 2018, the Edo State government approved a state-level anti-trafficking law that criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed a minimum penalty of five years' imprisonment and a fine of one million naira (\$2,770) fine for both sex and labor trafficking; the minimum penalty for sex trafficking increased to seven years' imprisonment and a fine of one million naira (\$2,770) if the case involved a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with regard to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as kidnapping.

NAPTIP received 938 cases for investigation, completed 192 investigations, prosecuted at least 64 suspects in 64 cases, and convicted 43 traffickers, compared with receiving 662 cases for investigation, completing 116 investigations, 43 prosecutions, and 26 convictions the previous reporting period. In addition, NAPTIP convicted three perpetrators for baby-selling for the purpose of exploitation. In addition, the Edo State Task Force (ESTF) was codified in the Edo state by its anti-trafficking law to investigate and prosecute trafficking cases in Edo state, and investigated 56 cases and initiated prosecutions in 20 cases; all 20 prosecutions were ongoing at the end of the reporting

period. NAPTIP did not report how many investigations remained pending, led to prosecutions for other offenses, or had been dismissed at the end of the reporting period. Judges convicted all traffickers under the 2015 anti-trafficking law compared to the previous reporting period when some judges convicted traffickers under the 2003 anti-trafficking law, which allowed the option of fines in lieu of imprisonment. Prison sentences ranged from one to 12 years' imprisonment, although two convicted traffickers were given the option of fines in lieu of imprisonment despite a 2015 amendment that removed fines alone as an option; this is a decrease from the previous reporting period, when judges penalized seven traffickers with the option of fines alone. Judges issued fines reportedly due to a lack of familiarity with the 2015 anti-trafficking law and at times due to corruption. The government convicted at least nine labor traffickers, an increase from five labor trafficking convictions the previous reporting period. Enforcement of the anti-trafficking law remained ineffective in many parts of the country, and while officials made efforts to address trafficking cases, insufficient resources hampered efforts. Prosecutors and investigators reported poor coordination between NAPTIP and other government agencies impeded prosecution efforts. The government acknowledged many judges remained unfamiliar with the anti-trafficking law—including the provision requiring judges to prescribe sentences that include imprisonment—which hindered law enforcement efforts. In addition, the judiciary remained slow and corrupt generally, which impeded prosecutions and convictions of most crimes, including trafficking.

During the reporting period, NAPTIP investigated four cases and initiated prosecutions of seven suspected officials complicit in trafficking. These investigations and prosecutions included NAPTIP officers, Nigerian Police Force officers, National Quarantine Service officers, Nigerian Immigration Service officials, and a Nigerian Prison Service officer. However, the government did not convict any government officials complicit in trafficking for the fifth consecutive year, despite consistent reports of government employees committing trafficking offenses each year. Despite 16 years of reports of significant government complicity in human trafficking offenses and trafficking-related corruption, the government has only reported convicting one official for complicity in human trafficking.

While the government made modest, concrete steps to address complicity in some cases, widespread and pervasive corruption affected all levels of government, including the security forces, and undermined accountability for trafficking offenses. The government did not take adequate steps to investigate or prosecute military personnel or CJTF members complicit in trafficking in the Northeast, in particular sexual exploitation of IDPs and female detainees. An NGO alleged 10 male soldiers in Giwa Barracks, including five who worked in the health clinic, coerced at least 15 female detainees into sex in exchange for food, soap, basic necessities, and the promise of freedom. Several international organizations and media reported that the sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, of IDPs in camps, settlements, and host communities around Maiduguri remained a pervasive problem. In more than 14 IDP camps, reports documented soldiers, CJTF, and police forced or coerced IDPs to have sex in exchange for food and freedom of movement in and outside of the camps. As previously reported by media, there were continued reports that camp officials and members of security forces, including some individual Nigerian military personnel, used

fraudulent or forced marriages to exploit girls in sex trafficking and reports that the Nigerian military, CJTF, and other camp officials fraudulently recruited female IDPs for jobs outside of IDP camps and transported them to town for commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, an NGO reported CJTF members and military officials fraudulently recruited approximately 100-200 women and girls to work outside the IDP camps for work in Bama to sell food but were coerced into commercial sex. NAPTIP filed charges against a Nigerian Prison Service employee for sexual exploitation of a 14-year-old IDP; however, proceedings were delayed as the case was reassigned to multiple different judges and, to discourage the victim's family from cooperation with the prosecution, the officer offered to marry the victim. Aside from this case, the government did not report any prosecutions or convictions for sexual exploitation of IDPs, including children, and did not investigate, prosecute, or convict any government security officials, including military officials and CJTF members, alleged to have exploited IDPs. The Nigerian Army categorically denied that any of its personnel used child soldiers in the past or sexually exploited IDPs, which impeded investigation of such reports. A credible international organization reported that when representatives from the Ministry of Defense headquarters visited the camps with journalists after the release of a May 2018 NGO report, victims were coached ahead of the visit to remain silent. In June 2018, a Senate panel began to investigate these allegations; however, contacts reported the panel's access to the camps was restricted and heavily curated by military officials.

In past reporting periods, an international organization reported the Nigerian military used children in support roles; there were no new verified cases of such acts during the reporting period, and an NGO confirmed it did not encounter any children affiliated with Nigerian security forces during that time. In the past, the CJTF also reportedly used some child trafficking victims recovered from Boko Haram to lead CJTF and army personnel to Boko Haram camps, putting the children at serious risk for retaliation and denying them trafficking victim care. There were no such verified cases during the reporting period. The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions for child soldiering offenses, including of government officials who committed such offenses. There were reports 49 Nigerian soldiers deployed as UN peacekeepers to Liberia sexually exploited 58 women and children from 2003-2017, including in sex trafficking; the government did not report investigating any of these allegations.

The government collaborated with foreign governments on anti-trafficking cases. It participated in joint investigations and provided technical assistance with countries in West Africa and Europe. Through the United Kingdom-Nigerian Joint Border Task Force, NAPTIP supported law enforcement to make significant arrests and prosecutions in multiple European countries and improved investigative capacity domestically. The government, at times in partnership with foreign donors and other international partners, trained at least 302 officials on identifying and investigating human trafficking. However, law enforcement cooperation with Italy remained uneven, partly due to the lack of a signed mutual legal assistance treaty.

NAPTIP's budget in 2018 was 4.3 billion naira (\$11.91 million), an increase from 3.1 billion naira (\$8.59 million) in 2017; however, NAPTIP received approximately 2.6 billion naira (\$7.2 million) of this budget in the reporting period. Despite this increase, however, NAPTIP did not have sufficient resources given the scale of the problem. For example, the agency did not have resources to carry out sufficient proactive anti-trafficking operations, and NAPTIP officers were often concentrated in state capitals, which hindered identification and investigation of trafficking in rural areas. The Edo state government allocated 242 million naira (\$670,360) to the ESTF in 2018.

PROTECTION

The government decreased efforts to identify and protect trafficking victims. NAPTIP identified 126 forced labor victims and 1,028 potential victims. This was a decrease compared to 188 forced labor victims and 1,121 potential trafficking victims identified in the previous reporting period. NAPTIP conducted several fact-finding missions to Mali to investigate reports of Nigerian sex trafficking victims in Mali and in January 2019, NAPTIP announced there were 20,000 Nigerian trafficking victims in Mali; however, international organizations, NGOs, and other international observers were unable to corroborate this estimate. NAPTIP provided initial care for all trafficking victims, which could have included referrals to government facilities for medical care, shelter, legal assistance, psychological services, vocational training, or education assistance. NAPTIP did not report how many victims it referred to NGOs for additional care. During the reporting period, the ESTF referred to care 1,030 returning migrants, some of whom were trafficking victims. The government had formal written procedures to guide law enforcement, immigration, and social services personnel in proactive identification of trafficking victims among high-risk populations, and NAPTIP trained police, immigration, and social services personnel to identify trafficking victims and direct them to NAPTIP. Additionally, the government's national referral mechanism provided formal guidelines for law enforcement, immigration officials, and service providers to improve protection and assistance to trafficking victims, both within Nigeria and abroad.

Although the law mandated NAPTIP to care solely for victims of crimes under the 2015 anti-trafficking law, the government often referred victims of other crimes to NAPTIP, which reduced its capacity to care for trafficking victims. NAPTIP's 10 zonal commands, including the Abuja headquarters, each operated a victim shelter during the reporting period, for a total of 10 shelters for trafficking victims. During the reporting period, a foreign donor funded the renovation and expansion of NAPTIP's Lagos shelter; after the expansion, NAPTIP's 10 shelters had a total capacity of 334 compared to 315 in the previous reporting period. NAPTIP shelters offered six weeks of initial care. Extended care in NAPTIP shelters was dependent on cooperation with law enforcement investigations; if a victim needed to remain in a shelter beyond the six-week period but did not want to participate in the law enforcement investigation or prosecution, NAPTIP referred the victim to NGOs for care. Specialized services at the NAPTIP shelters were available for both men and women. NAPTIP staff did not permit victims to leave shelters without a chaperone, which limited victims' freedom of movement and educational and work opportunities; however, victims staying longer term were generally able to leave unaccompanied to access rehabilitative services. Because NAPTIP operated closed

shelters, it often referred school-aged victims to foster care so they could attend school. Through these shelters, NAPTIP provided access to legal, medical, and psychological services, as well as vocational training, financial empowerment, and business management skills. These shelters were also available to Nigerian trafficking victims exploited abroad upon repatriation. NAPTIP had agreements with certain hospitals and clinics to provide additional medical and psychological treatment for victims, as needed. Additional government and NGO shelters provided services, including long-term shelter, to vulnerable children and victims of crime, including trafficking; authorities sometimes assigned child trafficking victims to foster homes or orphanages for care. Foreign victims had access to the same services as domestic victims. NAPTIP provided training as well as limited in-kind and financial resources to NGOs providing services to trafficking victims.

In response to continued reports of sexual exploitation of IDPs in the Northeast, NAPTIP continued partnering with an international organization to implement a screening and sensitization campaign to identify sex trafficking victims in IDP camps in Bama and other areas near Maiduguri. NAPTIP reached an unreported number of camps in the Maiduguri area with screening, sensitization, or both; however, due to the deteriorating security situation, these activities were generally restricted to areas in and around Maiduguri. According to an international organization, the government participated in the forced return of Nigerian refugees from Cameroon, including populations vulnerable to trafficking, during the reporting period; it is unclear whether the government made efforts to screen for trafficking among this population. In response to a large number of Nigerian migrants stranded in Libya, including some trafficking victims, the government created an inter-ministerial committee to facilitate repatriation and resettlement in Nigeria for those migrants in the previous reporting period; between April and November 2018, an international organization, with assistance from the government, repatriated 3,160 Nigerians from North Africa. The influx of migrants returned from Libya, some of whom were trafficking victims, overwhelmed the shelter and service system, including NAPTIP facilities. In May 2018, the governor of Edo State signed the Edo state anti-trafficking law, which codified the ESTF and provided a legal framework for state-level anti-trafficking efforts. The ESTF, chaired by the state attorney general, was mandated to combat transnational trafficking of Nigerians to Europe in one of the regions of Nigeria most affected. Its mandate included investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases, alongside NAPTIP, and coordinating national and international actors' protection and reintegration efforts for returning trafficking victims. ESTF screened some returnees from Libya for trafficking and referred the identified trafficking victims to NAPTIP facilities or NGOs. Several Nigerian embassies, particularly within West Africa, provided funding or in-kind support to repatriate Nigerian trafficking victims exploited abroad.

The anti-trafficking law prohibited the penalization of trafficking victims for unlawful acts committed as a result of being subjected to trafficking, including by armed groups. However, multiple credible international organizations reported the government continued to arrest and in some cases detain for prolonged periods, reportedly for screening and perceived intelligence value, women and children removed from or allegedly associated with Boko Haram and ISIS-WA, including women and girls who had been forcibly married to or sexually enslaved by the insurgents; authorities did not

consistently screen for trafficking. The military, in cooperation with an international organization, released some adults and children from detention but also newly detained other children during the reporting period. An NGO reported 68 boys were first detained by the Nigerian military in Giwa Barracks before they were transferred to Maiduguri prison where they were housed with adult inmates; according to the NGO, inmates raped some of the detained boys during the reporting period. The government continued working with an international organization to develop standard procedures to refer children identified in armed conflict to civilian care providers. After release from detention, the military generally referred women and children classified through a security screening process as “low risk” or “inactive” in the conflict to a government-run rehabilitation center. While the standard procedures developed in partnership with an international organization improved identification of potential trafficking victims among those detained, some trafficking victims—including women and children forced to be combatants—remained in detention and subject to criminal prosecution, contrary to Nigerian law, for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit. International organizations provided medical care, psycho-social support, education, and nutritional services through a 12-week rehabilitation program at the center. The government also had a separate 16-week deradicalization and rehabilitation program for low-level ex-combatants. Some women and child ex-combatants participated in this program, in addition to men. The government adopted a communique and national action plan on DDR for persons formerly associated with Boko Haram or ISIS-WA, including children, during the previous reporting period.

Officials encouraged victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases and reported 16 victims assisted in investigations and prosecutions during the reporting period. The government did not have a formal policy to prevent the removal of victims to countries where they would face hardship or retribution; there were no reports of trafficking victims removed to such countries during the reporting period. It could grant temporary residence visas to a trafficking victim that had a pending criminal, civil, or other legal action; the government did not report that any foreign victims requested this relief during the reporting period. The victims’ trust fund, financed primarily through confiscated assets of convicted traffickers, was available to all victims. The government allocated a total of 1.8 million naira (\$4,990) from the trust fund to 18 trafficking victims during the reporting period. The anti-trafficking law provided for victim restitution and allowed victims to file civil suits against their traffickers. While NAPTIP prosecutors regularly sought restitution in trafficking cases, NAPTIP did not report successfully receiving restitution for victims in any cases, largely because judges were unfamiliar with that provision of the anti-trafficking law.

PREVENTION

The government increased efforts to prevent human trafficking. NAPTIP continued to lead national government efforts to combat trafficking. In May 2018, the new Edo state anti-trafficking law codified the ESTF, a working group led by the attorney general of Edo state, to lead state-level government efforts in Edo state. The inter-ministerial committee on trafficking met on an ad hoc basis and helped to develop national policies on trafficking, including the draft of a Protocol for Identification, Safe Return, and

Rehabilitation of Trafficked Persons; at the end of the reporting period, the protocol was pending cabinet approval. In March 2018, NAPTIP approved a 2019 anti-trafficking national action plan and continued drafting a five-year national action plan in collaboration with international donors and NGOs. NAPTIP continued awareness campaigns at schools, churches, and transit centers, among other places, and expanded media outreach via television and radio to educate the public on the identification and dangers of human trafficking. Once a week, each of NAPTIP's nine zonal commands and the Abuja headquarters led such outreach campaigns to raise awareness of trafficking. In response to reports that some individual government employees, service providers, and security officials sexually exploited female IDPs, NAPTIP and an international organization continued conducting a screening and sensitization campaign in IDP camps in and around Maiduguri, including all state-run camps. NAPTIP also conducted outreach activities in IDP camps in Benue State for persons displaced by mass flooding and rural violence, and in IDP camps in the Federal Capital Territory. The ESTF also conducted public awareness campaigns in Edo state, as did the Lagos state government, focused on the vulnerability of migrants to trafficking and sexual exploitation. NAPTIP and the ESTF increased collaboration during the reporting period to overcome initial conflicts over mandates. At the close of the reporting period, NAPTIP encouraged other states, such as neighboring Delta and Ondo states, to follow Edo state's model; in March 2019, Delta and Ondo states inaugurated anti-trafficking task forces. The government did not provide sufficient protections for workers employed in the informal economy—including children working in agriculture, domestic work, and artisanal mining—rendering such workers vulnerable to trafficking. In the previous reporting period, NAPTIP began discussions on how to provide pre-departure information to migrants on available assistance if exploited abroad; NAPTIP did not report on the status of these plans. The government made some efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex but did not make discernible efforts to reduce the demand for forced labor. Each of the nine NAPTIP zonal commands and NAPTIP headquarters in Abuja operated hotlines for trafficking victims; the hotlines were staffed 24 hours and hotline staff spoke English and the relevant local languages for the region. There were reports Nigerians traveled to Togo for child sex tourism during the reporting period but the government did not report efforts to address child sex tourism.

The Borno State government continued to provide financial and in-kind resources to the CJTF, a non-governmental self-defense militia, which used and recruited children in previous reporting periods. The Borno State government provided administrative support to help implement a 2017 action plan between CJTF and an international organization to end CJTF's recruitment and use of children; the international organization did not verify any cases of recruitment and use of child soldiers by CJTF during the reporting period. However, humanitarian organizations were unable to access some areas of Borno state due to insecurity and restrictions imposed by security forces; the international organization had limited visibility in those areas. During the reporting period, the CJTF separated 866 of an estimated several thousand children previously affiliated with the group and referred them to the international organization for care. The Nigerian government publicly criticized and imposed restrictions on those who portrayed the government in a negative light on human rights, including human trafficking. The government provided anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel and, with foreign donor support, to Nigerian troops prior to their deployment

abroad on international peacekeeping missions. During the previous reporting period, a foreign government reported to NAPTIP a Nigerian diplomat suspected of attempted smuggling, trafficking, or both; the government did not report investigating these allegations. In partnership with a foreign donor the government provided anti-trafficking training to its troops prior to their deployment as peacekeepers; however, the government did not report investigating reports that 49 Nigerian soldiers deployed on a UN peacekeeping mission to Liberia in 2003-2017 exploited 58 women and children, including in sex trafficking.

TRAFFICKING PROFILE

As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Nigeria, and traffickers exploit victims from Nigeria abroad. Nigerian trafficking victims are recruited from rural areas—especially the country's southern regions—and, to a lesser extent, urban areas. Women and girls are victims of domestic servitude and sex trafficking, and boys are victims of forced and bonded labor in street vending, domestic service, mining, stone quarrying, agriculture, textile manufacturing, and begging. In 2010, the government estimated as many as 9.5 million young boys were studying in Quranic schools, commonly known as Almajiri, many of whom may be subjected to forced begging. Traffickers operate “baby factories”—often disguised as orphanages, maternity homes, or religious centers—where traffickers hold women against their will, rape them, and force them to carry and deliver a child. The traffickers sell the children, sometimes with the intent to exploit them in forced labor and sex trafficking. In southern Nigeria, especially Lagos, some women drug and “rent” their infants out to street beggars to increase the beggars’ profits; in at least one case, an infant died from a drug overdose. Nigerian traffickers take women and children to other West and Central African countries—including Mali, Senegal, Cote d’Ivoire, and Cabo Verde—as well as to South Africa, where they are exploited in forced labor and sex trafficking. Nigerian women and children are recruited and transported to destinations in North Africa, the Middle East—including Saudi Arabia, Oman, and United Arab Emirates—and Central Asia, and exploited in sex trafficking or forced labor. West African children are subjected to forced labor in Nigeria, including in granite and gold mines. Women from West African countries transit Nigeria en route to Europe and the Middle East, where traffickers force them into commercial sex. Nigeria’s ports and waterways around Calabar are transit points for West African children subjected to forced labor in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. As in past reporting periods, NGOs reported Nigerians traveled to Togo for child sex tourism.

Authorities identified Nigerian trafficking victims—often exploited by Nigerian traffickers—in at least 34 countries in four regions during the reporting period. Nigerian women and girls are subjected to sex trafficking within Nigeria and throughout Europe, including in Italy, Spain, Austria, and Russia; an international organization estimated 80 percent of all female Nigerian migrants in Italy are or will become sex trafficking victims. In 2015, a foreign government reported that with the exception of internal trafficking within the EU, Nigerian nationals are the most common trafficking victims in the EU. Following relaxed visa requirements for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, traffickers fraudulently recruited Nigerian women for jobs in Russia and later exploited them in

sex trafficking; as of early 2019, 1,863 Nigerians remained in Russia without travel documents. Historically, the majority of Nigerian trafficking victims in Europe have come from Edo State, via Libya. One local press report noted that traffickers recruit women and girls from IDP camps in Northeast Nigeria for ostensibly legitimate jobs in Italy but exploit them in prostitution in Italy. Nigerian sex traffickers operate in highly organized criminal webs throughout Europe, and many sex trafficking victims begin to work for their traffickers in exchange for leaving sex trafficking themselves. Before departure for work abroad, many Nigerian women participate in a traditional ceremony with a *juju* priest; some traffickers exploit this tradition and tell the women they must obey their traffickers or a curse will harm them, which prevents victims from seeking assistance or cooperating with law enforcement. In March 2018 the Oba of Benin—the most powerful religious ruler in Benin City—issued a curse on sex traffickers and revoked all *juju* spells that had been administered by priests to bind victims to their traffickers; there were some reports traffickers were now performing the *juju* ceremonies in neighboring states such as Delta state. While some sex trafficking victims arrive in Europe believing they will be working in prostitution, traffickers coerce them to stay in prostitution by changing the working conditions and increasing victims’ travel debts. Some victims’ parents encourage them to obey their traffickers and endure exploitation to earn money.

Nigerians are exploited in Libya—by both Libyans and Nigerians—in forced labor in construction, agriculture, and prostitution in Tripoli, Sabha, Benghazi, and Misrata. Lured by the promise of reaching Europe, traffickers keep victims in “control houses” or “prostitution camps” located on the outskirts of Tripoli and Misrata until they can repay travel debts; sometimes before victims repay the debt, traffickers sell them again. Some trafficking victims in Libya reported Nigerian embassy officials in Tripoli asked for payment before removing victims from Libyan detention camps. Between April and November 2018, an international organization repatriated 3,160 Nigerians from North Africa, 80 percent of whom were repatriated from Libya. In 2017, the international organization repatriated more than 4,316 Nigerians from Libya, some of whom were trafficking victims or vulnerable to trafficking; 4,000 had departed from Edo State. There were reports of re-trafficking among the trafficking victims repatriated from Libya. In March 2018, a foreign government estimated as many as 20,000 Nigerians await repatriation from Libya, some of whom are trafficking victims. ISIS has captured Nigerian women and girls in Libya and exploited them in sexual slavery. Criminal gangs—some of whom might have had ties to so-called student cults—partner with organized crime networks to transport Nigerians to Europe for exploitation.

As in past years, reports continue to indicate government officials and security forces commit widespread sexual exploitation—including sex trafficking—and such exploitation is a major concern across the Northeast, including in informal IDP camps and all of the 13 formal, state-run IDP camps in and around Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, which hosts IDPs affected by the ongoing conflict with Boko Haram and ISIS-WA. “Gatekeepers” in control of some IDP camps, at times in collusion with Nigerian policemen and soldiers, reportedly force women and girls to provide sex acts in exchange for food and services in the camps. In July 2016, a Nigerian research organization surveyed 400 IDPs in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states, and 66 percent said camp officials sexually abused women and girls, some of which constitutes sex

trafficking. As media previously reported, there were continued reports that camp officials and members of security forces, including some individual Nigerian military personnel, used fraudulent or forced marriages to exploit girls in sex trafficking. Some Nigerian military personnel and CJTF members promised female IDPs jobs but instead took them to military barracks for sexual exploitation by Nigerian military personnel. Various NGOs and news outlets report that children in IDP camps are victims of labor and sex trafficking, and some alleged that government officials managing the camps are complicit in these activities. Media and an international organization reported Cameroonian soldiers coerced Nigerian female refugees in a Cameroon refugee camp to have sex in exchange for food or protection from deportation.

Boko Haram and ISIS-WA continued to forcibly recruit, abduct, and use child soldiers as young as 12-years-old as cooks, spies, messengers, bodyguards, armed combatants, and increasingly as suicide bombers in attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad. In 2018, Boko Haram used at least 48 children as human bombers, compared to 158 used in 2017. The groups continue to abduct women and girls in the northern region of Nigeria, some of whom they subject to domestic servitude and forced labor. Boko Haram routinely forces girls to choose between forced marriages to its fighters—for the purpose of sexual slavery—or becoming suicide bombers. In some cases, Boko Haram forced child soldiers to marry one another. International organizations continue to express concerns about the arrest and detention of children by the Nigerian military for alleged association with Boko Haram. Contrary to Nigerian law, the government continued to arrest and, in some cases, detain for prolonged periods, reportedly for screening and perceived intelligence value, women and children removed from or allegedly associated with Boko Haram and ISIS-WA, including women and girls who had been forcibly married to or sexually enslaved by the insurgents. For example, as previously reported, in 2016, the government detained and considered to be combatants at least 78 child trafficking victims aged 13- to 17-years-old.

There were no verified reports during the reporting period that the Nigerian military or CJTF recruited or used child soldiers. In previous reporting periods, the Nigerian military unlawfully used children as young as 12 years old in support roles such as messengers and porters. The Nigerian military interrogated children in detention for later use as collaborators to identify Boko Haram members among newly arrested persons. As reported by the Secretary-General of the UN, as of May 2016, Nigerian military personnel were using four boys between ages 14 and 16-years-old in support roles. The Nigerian military also conducted on-the-ground coordination with the CJTF, a non-governmental self-defense militia that received state government funding and recruited and used child soldiers in the past. In past years, media reported that the CJTF also used some child trafficking victims recovered from Boko Haram to lead CJTF and army personnel to Boko Haram camps, putting the children at serious risk for retaliation and denying them trafficking victim care. In past reporting, CJTF recruited children as young as 12-years-old to man checkpoints, conduct patrols, search and arrest suspected insurgents, guard IDP camps, and gather intelligence, at times in collaboration with the Nigerian military. As of March 2019, CJTF and an international organization compiled a list of 3,737 children potentially associated with CJTF and were in the process of interviewing the children and separating those associated with the group.

ecoi.net summary:

Annual report on trafficking in persons (covering April 2018 to March 2019)

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Austrian Red CrossAustrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research
and Documentation (ACCORD)

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien

T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589

info@ecoi.net

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