

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	568
Land:	Nigeria
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	2021 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria
Udgivet:	1. juli 2021
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	6. december 2021

USDOS – US Department of State

2021 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, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Nigeria was upgraded to Tier 2. These efforts included convicting more traffickers and sanctioning the majority of perpetrators with significant prison terms; prosecuting officials suspected of being complicit in trafficking crimes; improving intra-governmental coordination on anti-trafficking operations; launching nine new state task forces; and for the first time, the Ministry of Defense acknowledged service members sexually exploited internally displaced persons (IDPs). Additionally, officials increased collaboration with foreign governments on international trafficking investigations. However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. Members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Borno State used two children at an IDP camp checkpoint; there continued to be reports of sex trafficking in government-run IDP camps; and officials prosecuted fewer suspected traffickers. Further, corruption remained a significant concern in the judiciary and immigration services, and the Ministry of Defense did not finalize its handover protocol to refer child soldiers to care for the sixth consecutive year.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

CJTF members cease the recruitment and use of child soldiers, including in support roles, and refer all children to appropriate care. • Hold complicit officials as well as individuals affiliated with the government – including security officials and CJTF members – criminally accountable for trafficking offenses, including for the sex trafficking of IDPs and unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers. • National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and Nigeria Police Force (NPF) enhance coordination on law enforcement efforts – including investigating illicit centers exploiting women in forced surrogacy – and prosecute suspects while respecting the rights of the accused. • Finalize the draft protocol to refer children identified in armed conflict to civilian authorities, screen for trafficking among those detained, and provide appropriate care for all those identified as victims. • Strengthen efforts to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable groups, such as children in religious schools, IDPs, returning migrants, and children in domestic service. • Increase public awareness programming to educate more of the population on human trafficking indicators. • Expand shelter capacity for identified victims in coordination with other government entities, civil society, NGOs, international organizations, and the private sector. • Increase efforts to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers – including labor traffickers and those who force children to beg – and impose sufficiently stringent sentences involving imprisonment. • 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. • Facilitate training for local, state, and federal judges on the 2015 law, specifically the provision prohibiting the issuance of fines in lieu of imprisonment in collaboration with international partners. • 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. • Finalize, resource, and implement the country's 2021-2025 draft anti-trafficking national action plan in coordination with civil society, NGOs, partner governments, as well as the private sector. • Develop and implement a centralized database linking NAPTIP, NPF, and other relevant law enforcement agencies.

PROSECUTION

The government increased convictions, but overall anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts were mixed. The Trafficking in Persons Law Enforcement and Administration Act (TIPLEAA), 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 (\$649) for both sex and labor trafficking; the minimum penalty for sex trafficking increased to seven years' imprisonment and a fine of 1 million naira (\$2,600) 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. The Edo State anti-trafficking law criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed a minimum penalty of five years' imprisonment and a fine of 1 million naira (\$2,600) for both sex and labor trafficking; the minimum penalty for sex trafficking increased to seven years' imprisonment and a fine of 1 million naira (\$2,600) 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 total, federal and state authorities investigated 409 cases, prosecuted 49 suspects, and convicted 36 traffickers during the reporting period, according to multiple sources. Authorities reported investigating 943 cases, prosecuting 64 suspects, and convicting 27 perpetrators during the previous year; prison sentences ranged from two to 10 years' imprisonment and at least one convicted trafficker was given the option of fines in lieu of imprisonment. During the reporting period, NAPTIP reported opening 381 new investigations (243 sex trafficking, 138 forced labor) and continuing 452 investigations opened in previous reporting periods; initiating prosecutions against 40 suspects (36 sex trafficking, four forced labor) and continuing 13 prosecutions opened in prior years. Authorities reported judges convicted 36 perpetrators (14 sex trafficking, two forced labor, 20 other forms of trafficking) under the TIPLEAA anti-trafficking sections 13, 15, 16, 18, 21, 23, 24, and 27, sentencing 23 traffickers to average terms of imprisonment of three and half years with no option of paying fines, sentencing 13 traffickers to terms of imprisonment or fines, and ordered two traffickers to pay restitution of 100,000 naira (\$260) and 300,000 naira (\$780). Separately, media reported law enforcement officers investigated four suspects, two of whom were government officials, and officers from the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps opened an investigation into two suspects; the cases were pending at the close of the reporting period. Law enforcement data from prior reporting periods may have included crimes outside the international definition of trafficking. Pandemic-related court closures lasting from April to June 2020 limited overall judicial activity during that period.

Unlike previous years, NPF reported its officers arrested two traffickers in 2020, and media noted NPF officers arrested three suspected traffickers exploiting women in "baby factories," as well as additional potential victims in December 2020 and March 2021 in the Ogun and Katsina states respectively. "Baby factories" refer to criminal enterprises 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. Experts stated this illicit activity was widespread in the country.

The Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT) investigated 17 cases (13 forced labor and four sex trafficking) and initiated prosecutions against nine suspects, compared to investigating 38 cases and prosecuting 22 suspects in the previous reporting period; since its establishment in 2018, the ETAHT has not reported convicting a trafficker, although officers stated Edo State courts ordered five perpetrators to pay restitution to victims during the reporting period. ETAHT officers stated they investigated one government official for suspected complicity in trafficking without providing additional details on the status of the case; officers did not report investigating complicit officials in the prior year.

An international organization verified the CJTF – a non-governmental self-defense militia receiving state government funding – used two children aged between 15 and 17 to assist at a check point in Borno State during the reporting period. The federal and state governments did not report investigating or prosecuting CJTF members for recent or past allegations of child soldiering recruitment or use. Corruption affected all levels of government – including the judiciary, security forces, and law enforcement – and undermined accountability for trafficking offenses. Sex trafficking reportedly occurred in government-run detention centers and IDP camps. Without providing statistics, observers reported NAPTIP investigated allegations of human trafficking in IDP camps, in coordination with Ministry of Defense zonal commanders.

Despite multiple years of allegations, the government did not report prosecuting or convicting any suspects – including officials or CJTF members – for sex trafficking of IDPs during the reporting period; however, the Armed Forces of Nigeria court martialled an enlisted soldier in September 2020 for sexually abusing – without clear indicators of sex trafficking – a 13-year-old IDP and sentenced him to five years imprisonment. Additionally, in response to reports of sex trafficking of IDPs in Borno State, the government's National Human Rights Commission partnered with an international organization to investigate allegations; officials did not disclose the results of the inquiries, although observers noted authorities investigated multiple cases but had not prosecuted any suspects as of March 2021. The government did not report investigating or prosecuting officials for reports of sex trafficking in Giwa Barracks or IDP camps dating back to 2016.

For the first time, the federal Ministry of Defense acknowledged publicly its personnel had sexually exploited individuals, although it continued to deny soldiers recruited children, which impeded investigations of allegations from prior reporting periods. During the reporting period, NAPTIP stated officers investigated and prosecuted two senior officials from the federal ministries of Agriculture and Finance, one immigration officer, an Osun State Agricultural Development Corporation official, and an officer in Lagos state responsible for enforcing the pandemic-related quarantine; all cases

were for sex trafficking and were ongoing as of March 2021. The government prosecuted and convicted three mid-level and senior-level officials for trafficking offenses during the previous reporting period.

NAPTIP, under the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, continued to lead the federal government's efforts to combat trafficking, although officials from the Nigerian Immigration Service, NPF, Labor Inspectorate, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission – as well as the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit, in coordination with prosecutors and the judiciary – all had responsibilities in supporting the country's criminal justice response to human trafficking. NAPTIP did not have resources to carry out sufficient proactive anti-trafficking operations in much of the country, and the agency's officers remained concentrated in state capitals, hindering identification and investigation of trafficking in many rural areas.

Observers reported that poor coordination between NAPTIP and other government agencies impeded prosecution efforts in prior years; NAPTIP and other law enforcement agencies failed to coordinate with each other when mandates overlapped, although collaboration with other government entities reportedly improved during the rating period. Experts stated the lack of a centralized database linking relevant law enforcement agencies continued to prevent effective coordination. However, from January to March 2021, NAPTIP officers conducted law enforcement operations with NPF, Nigeria Immigration Service, Armed Forces of Nigeria, and the Office of the National Security Advisor to identify 80 child trafficking victims, according to media; however, officials stated they have not yet prosecuted any human traffickers through these operations, although investigations into these cases continued as of March 2021.

During the reporting period, increasing terrorist activity as well as banditry throughout much of the country hindered law enforcement and judicial officials' ability to execute their respective mandates, with community defense groups playing a substantial role in judicial service delivery and dispute resolution. The government's capacity to respond to trafficking cases in northeast Nigeria continued to be limited as Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa (ISIS-WA), and other terrorist groups killed hundreds of Nigerian soldiers, took additional territory, and displaced tens of thousands of inhabitants, limiting access to remote areas of Borno State.

Throughout 2020, NAPTIP and observers reported courts increased their use of online technology in response to restrictions on in-person meetings to slow the pandemic's spread. NAPTIP reported delivering 32 trainings for 963 officials in 2020 on topics including identifying and investigating human trafficking; in 2019, the government reported training 1,165 NAPTIP officers. While the Ministry of Justice implemented strict training requirements for federal and state judges, there was no corresponding mechanism for judges at the local level, which contributed to corruption and misapplication of the law. Despite courts sanctioning traffickers with increasingly stringent sentences compared to prior years, the government acknowledged many judges remained unfamiliar with the anti-trafficking law – including the provision requiring judges to prescribe sentences that included imprisonment – which hindered law enforcement efforts. Further, the judiciary remained slow and corrupt generally, which impeded prosecutions and convictions of most crimes, including trafficking. NAPTIP's funding constraints – made increasingly dire by diminished revenue due to the pandemic's economic impacts – remained a perennial challenge for the agency, exacerbated by costs associated with the agency's mandate to provide shelter to victims.

In August 2020, NAPTIP coordinated with an international organization to launch two legal hubs in Edo and Lagos states, in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and NGOs, with the aim of enhancing victims' access to justice through legal aid counseling and representation in court. In February 2021, NAPTIP partnered with an international organization and donor to establish a Judicial Research Center in Abuja; the center provided NAPTIP officers access to resources to strengthen trafficking cases and enhance prosecution efforts.

The Nigerian-United Kingdom (UK) Joint Border Task Force (JBTF) – which is Nigerian-led and UK-supported – continued operations during the rating period, with observers reporting Nigerian judges convicted the country's first perpetrator for conspiracy related to human trafficking, as well as completing their first conviction based solely on digital evidence. Experts noted the development of a panel of judges focused solely on transnational organized crime – including human trafficking – resulted in some courts operating more efficiently, and witness testimony provided via video mitigated a common delay tactic previously used by some defense attorneys. In 2020 – under the JBTF initiative – officials shared intelligence on joint investigations with UK and Spanish authorities.

Over the course of the reporting period, Nigerian law enforcement officials collaborated with the Governments of France, The Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland on joint investigations, intelligence sharing, and prosecutions. NAPTIP reported collaborating with countries to investigate 19 cases of transnational human trafficking crimes. Nigerian judicial officials were prosecuting one transnational case in the Federal High Court in Ibadan and another in the Federal High Court in Lagos as of March 2021. In October 2020, the government entered into force its bilateral agreement with Italy on investigations and extraditions; authorities from the two countries coordinated in 2020 on a case involving a Nigerian trafficker in Italy. International partners reported

corruption and capacity issues with some government agencies – including the judiciary and the Nigeria Immigration Service – hindered cooperation at times. In 2019, two European countries transmitted case files to NAPTIP to prosecute organized trafficking networks.

PROTECTION

The government increased efforts to identify victims, although services for many victims remained insufficient. In total, the government – including NAPTIP, NPF, and ETAHT efforts – identified approximately 499 victims and 812 potential victims, according to official, NGO, and media reporting. During the previous reporting period, NAPTIP identified 181 forced labor victims and 636 potential victims, and ETAHT identified 195 victims. NAPTIP reported identifying 434 victims (135 forced labor and 299 sex trafficking) as well as 321 potential victims, compared with 181 forced labor victims and 636 potential trafficking victims in the previous reporting period. Through its shelters, NAPTIP provided initial care for all 434 victims and 321 potential victims, which may have included referrals to government facilities for medical care, shelter, legal assistance, psychological services, vocational training, or education assistance. During the previous reporting period, NAPTIP provided direct support to 1,009 victims at NAPTIP shelters and referred 71 victims to NGO shelters. NPF officers reported identifying 20 potential victims during the course of law enforcement operations in 2020 but did not report referring the victims to services; NPF did not disclose similar statistics for 2019.

Media reported NPF officers identified at least 21 potential victims (separate from the 20 previously referenced) during the course of law enforcement operations in December 2020 and March 2021. In December, police disrupted a criminal enterprise known as a “baby factory” in Ogun State in southwest Nigeria and removed 10 victims (four children and six women – four of whom were pregnant), and in March 2021, police removed 11 potential victims (nine females and two males) from a suspect in the northern state of Katsina who was allegedly preparing to send the 11 individuals to Libya for onward travel to Europe.

During the reporting period, ETAHT reported identifying and providing comprehensive services to 65 victims; these included psychosocial support, medical, and pro-bono legal assistance. Additionally, ETAHT delivered pandemic relief materials to more than 1,000 returning migrants, some of whom may have been victims. This is compared to assisting 428 returned migrants, 195 of whom were trafficking victims, in the previous reporting period.

Observers reported victim identification and referral to services remained a gap in the government’s efforts. Nonetheless, 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 reported implementing 32 trainings in 2020 for 963 officials from the Armed Forces of Nigeria, police, immigration, and social services to identify trafficking victims; NAPTIP reported training 1,165 NAPTIP officers in 2019. Pandemic-related restrictions on in-person meetings resulted in delayed or cancelled training activities in 2020. 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.

Nigerian law mandated NAPTIP to provide care for victims of crimes under both the 2015 anti-trafficking law and 2015 Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act; NAPTIP’s resources were insufficient to provide specialized care for all trafficking victims. Each of NAPTIP’s 10 zonal commands, including the Abuja headquarters, operated a victim shelter during the reporting period, for a total of 10 shelters for trafficking victims with a total capacity of 334. NAPTIP shelters offered six weeks of initial care, although officials often allowed women to stay longer if they desired to do so; access to the shelters was not based on victims’ cooperation with law enforcement. If there was not space in NAPTIP shelters, agency officials referred the victim to NGOs for care. Measures to slow the pandemic’s spread – including a five-week nationwide lockdown from March to May 2020 – limited shelter capacity throughout the country. In 2019, an NGO reported a lack of funding combined with NAPTIP’s utilization of shelters, as opposed to community-based services, resulted in substandard conditions in some shelters; a lack of oversight allegedly exacerbated these issues.

NAPTIP typically required victims to remain in shelters for six weeks, although individuals staying longer were able to leave shelters unaccompanied absent case-specific security concerns. Through these shelters, NAPTIP provided access to legal, medical, and psychological services, as well as vocational training, financial empowerment, family reunification, 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 continued to partner with an international organization and a foreign donor 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 and the pandemic, these activities were generally restricted to areas in and around Maiduguri. Additionally, NAPTIP officials reported coordinating with the Ministry of Defense's zonal commanders on protection issues pertaining to IDP camps – including in Maiduguri – by funding social workers, raising awareness of the crime among camp residents, and identifying victims.

Unlike previous years, observers reported the government did not forcibly return Nigerian refugees from Cameroon; however, the government did not disclose efforts to screen for indicators of trafficking among this population. Between May and August – with the country under pandemic-related lockdown – NAPTIP collaborated with an international organization to repatriate more than 450 victims and potential victims (included in the previously referenced totals for potential victims) from Lebanon, Mali, and Niger; observers reported the government screened for indicators of trafficking and provided these individuals specialized care and reintegration services. During the previous reporting period, NAPTIP and an international organization screened all returnees from Libya for trafficking indicators and referred the identified trafficking victims to NAPTIP facilities or NGOs. In 2020, the ETAHT opened a shelter for trafficking victims with capacity for 100 victims (60 men and 40 women in separate facilities); officials disclosed there was one victim in the shelter as of February 2021. 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 their traffickers, including armed groups, compelled them to commit. However, as in past years, the government continued to arrest and, in some cases, inappropriately detain 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-WA, including women and girls who insurgents had forcibly married or sexually enslaved. Authorities did not consistently screen the women and children for trafficking indicators.

As previously referenced, observers verified two cases of a CJTF unit using child soldiers during the reporting period in support roles at an IDP camp checkpoint in Borno State. Following the notification of the violation by an international organization, the CJTF demobilized the two children and referred them to care, and – in coordination with an international organization – senior representatives from the Ministry of Justice and Armed Forces of Nigeria, as well as the CJTF's area commander, visited the IDP camp to assess the reports and reinforce the zero tolerance policy for use of child soldiers to CJTF members. After the delegation's mission, authorities worked with observers to organize a three-day workshop with all CJTF unit commanders in Borno's local government areas to highlight the importance of the issue and educate additional militia members. Officials stated key issues included limited awareness by new CJTF members and communities of the 2017 CJTF-UN child soldier action plan to end and prevent forces from recruiting and using children; lack of disciplinary measures at the local level; and the CJTF's Child Protection Unit's limited capacity.

In 2020, authorities released at least 309 children from military detention in Maiduguri; however, children likely remained inappropriately detained in military detention centers at the close of the reporting period. The military released approximately 334 children from detention between September 2019 and March 2020. For the sixth consecutive year, the government did not officially adopt the handover protocol to refer children identified in armed conflict to civilian care providers, although observers reported authorities implemented key aspects of the handover protocol during the reporting period. 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 whom non-state armed groups forced to be combatants or exploited in sexual slavery – remained in detention and subject to criminal prosecution, contrary to Nigerian law, for unlawful acts traffickers compelled them to commit.

The government collaborated with donors to continue the “Operation Safe Corridor” de-radicalization and rehabilitation program for combatants formerly associated with terrorist organizations. Some women and child ex-combatants participated in this program, in addition to men; observers reported allegations of serious abuse in past years including life threatening conditions in detention centers associated with the program.

NAPTIP encouraged victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases by providing security, organizing private testimony in judge's chambers or video testimony, and providing legal assistance; the government did not report how many victims assisted in investigations and prosecutions during the reporting period. In response to the pandemic, NAPTIP coordinated through the JBTF to expand courts' use of video to collect testimony and allow witnesses in other jurisdictions to give evidence in Nigerian criminal trials. During the previous reporting period, NAPTIP used video interviewing equipment in Lagos, Benin City, and Kano, while video link equipment was installed in Federal High Court courtrooms in Lagos, Abuja, and Benin City.

The government did not have a formal policy to prevent the removal of victims to countries where they would face hardship or retribution; however, 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 who had a pending criminal, civil, or other legal action; the government did not report any foreign victims requesting this relief in 2020.

The victims' trust fund, financed primarily through confiscated assets of convicted traffickers, was available to all victims, but the government did not report whether it allocated any funds from the trust fund to victims during the reporting period. The anti-trafficking law provided for victim restitution; ETAHT officials reported traffickers paid restitution to five victims during the reporting period, compared with one convicted trafficker ordered to pay restitution during the prior reporting period. Victims could also file civil suits against their traffickers. While NAPTIP prosecutors regularly sought restitution in trafficking cases, officials from the federal agency did not report any cases in which traffickers paid restitution to victims, an issue exacerbated by judges' unfamiliarity with that provision of the anti-trafficking law.

PREVENTION

The government increased efforts to prevent human trafficking. NAPTIP continued to lead the federal government's efforts to combat trafficking, although officials from the ministries of Defense, Justice, Foreign Affairs, Labor and Productivity, and Women Affairs and Social Development all had responsibilities in supporting the country's response to human trafficking. While ineffective coordination between ministries, as well as across federal and state agencies, hindered the effectiveness of the country's anti-trafficking response in the past, coordination improved during the current reporting period.

The inter-ministerial committee on trafficking met on an ad hoc basis and helped to develop national policies on trafficking. In November, NAPTIP convened key federal and state officials, as well as international organizations, civil society, and partner governments, to develop the country's draft 2021-2025 national action plan, although the government had not officially adopted the plan as of March 2021. Inadequate information management technology – including basic infrastructure such as computers and internet services, especially in zonal commands outside Abuja – hindered data collection, dissemination, and research; many offices continued to use paper-based systems for case management.

Over the course of 2020, NAPTIP reported holding more than 40 sensitization events using radio, television, and other mediums in coordination with partner governments, international organizations, and NGOs, estimating the events reached at least 1,890 individuals; officials postponed or cancelled numerous in-person events to follow protocol intended to slow the pandemic's spread. Officials did not disclose similar details for the prior reporting period. NAPTIP continued to integrate anti-trafficking modules into school core curricula and performed direct outreach to schools during the reporting period. Additionally, in March 2021, NAPTIP coordinated with an international organization to launch the "Blue Bus" campaign – with financial support from a donor – in Abuja to raise awareness of the risks of exploitation associated with irregular migration; officials did not disclose how many individuals the campaign reached. The ETAHT held a press conference in August, two road walks in July, and one road walk in December to raise awareness around trafficking issues in Edo State.

In past reporting periods, the government assisted in the formation of state-level anti-trafficking task forces in Edo, Delta, Ondo, Ekiti, and Borno states; in 2020, NAPTIP partnered with state governments to establish nine new state task forces in Rivers, Cross Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Ogun, Oyo, Enugu, Anambara, and Ebonyi, and it reestablished the Lagos task force. NAPTIP coordinated with international organizations to provide training on victim-centered approaches to addressing human trafficking for task force officials.

The Ministry of Labor and Employment (MLE) reported conducting 9,877 inspections resulting in the removal of 2,996 children from potential child trafficking conditions, and officials referred 1,067 of the identified children to the government's social services; the MLE did not provide statistics for 2019. Despite these actions, workers employed in the informal economy – including children working in agriculture, domestic work, and artisanal mining – remained highly vulnerable to trafficking. International observers reported the government deployed 130 officers to airports throughout the country during the reporting period to assist with screening for trafficking indicators, building on NAPTIP's past sensitization programs at transportation hubs. Despite allegations in prior years that Nigerians traveled to Togo for child sex tourism, the government did not report efforts to address child sex tourism. The MLE regulated private employment agencies and instituted a licensing requirement for labor recruiters; the government did not report revoking any licenses for exploitative recruitment practices during the reporting period. The government did not report efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex.

Each of the nine NAPTIP zonal commands, as well as the headquarters in Abuja, operated hotlines for trafficking victims; the hotlines were staffed 24 hours per day and staff spoke English and the relevant local languages for the region. NAPTIP publicized the hotlines through mass media, in written pamphlets, and in coordination with international organizations. During the reporting period, NAPTIP stated individuals made approximately 12,000 calls to the hotline, leading to the identification of 145 victims and 36 investigations of suspected traffickers; the government did not provide similar statistics for the prior reporting period.

The Borno State government continued to provide financial and in-kind resources to the CJTF, a non-governmental self-defense militia responsible for combating Boko Haram and providing security for some IDP camps, which used two children during the reporting period. The Borno State government continued to provide administrative support to help implement the 2017 action plan between CJTF and an international organization to end CJTF's recruitment and use of children; despite two verified cases of CJTF members using children in support roles at an IDP camp in Borno State, an international observer described CJTF's implementation of its 2017 action plan during the reporting period as commendable. Since the signing of the action plan in 2017, observers verified the CJTF separated more than 2,000 of an estimated several thousand children previously affiliated with the group. NAPTIP officials reported enhancing awareness raising of the crime in IDP camps and coordinating with the Ministry of Defense to bolster protection efforts in the camps – specifically around Maiduguri.

In partnership with a foreign donor, the government provided anti-trafficking training to its troops prior to their deployment as peacekeepers. According to an international organization, there were no reports in 2020 of sexual exploitation by peacekeepers from Nigeria deployed to peacekeeping missions, but there remained five open allegations, including one from 2019, one from 2018, and three from 2017. As of September, two allegations had been substantiated, and the international organization repatriated the perpetrators, but the Nigerian government had not yet provided the full accountability measures taken for all five open cases. Unlike the previous reporting period, NAPTIP officers provided pre-departure training to ambassadors, chiefs of mission, and deputy chiefs of mission on human trafficking principles in February 2021.

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. Internal trafficking is prevalent with Nigerian perpetrators recruiting victims from rural areas, especially the country's southern regions, for exploitation in commercial sex and forced labor in domestic work in cities such as Aboekuta, Calabar, Ibadan, Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, and Port Harcourt. Traffickers – including some community members – exploit women and girls in domestic service and sex trafficking, as well as boys in forced and bonded labor in street vending, domestic service, artisanal mining, stone quarrying, agriculture, textile manufacturing, begging, and in the tie-dye sector in the northwest and southwest of the country. Criminal elements recruit foreigners for labor trafficking within the country.

Rapid population growth drives the country's informal education sector, including Quranic schools – most prevalent in northern regions – known as Almajiri, where some teachers abuse their students and coerce them to beg; in the latest available estimate from 2010, the government estimated as many as 9.5 million boys were studying in Quranic schools. Observers report worsening poverty related to the pandemic's economic impacts may increase the enrollment of these schools, as well as the risks of exploitation of the children by teachers, businesses, and local community members seeking labor. Extreme poverty, lack of economic opportunity, corruption, insecurity throughout the country, and climate change-related pressure to migrate increase Nigerians' vulnerability to trafficking.

Primarily in Cross River and other southern states, as well as from IDP populations in the north, illicit actors – including some church leaders – operate “baby factories,” which the government and NGOs describe as a widespread criminal industry in the country; experts state the phenomenon is driven by poverty and a lack of opportunity for young girls, as well as the demands of the illegal adoption market and cultural pressure for large families in Nigeria. Recruiters – or “mamas” – operating out of unregulated clinics work with enforcers to control the women through childbirth. The traffickers then 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 Fall 2020, personnel from the CJTF – a non-governmental self-defense militia receiving state government funding – providing security for an IDP camp in Borno State used two boys between the ages of 15 and 17 at a checkpoint; observers reported one of the boys was related to a local commander and the CJTF did not recruit the children. The Nigerian military coordinated operations with the CJTF intermittently to combat Boko Haram and ISIS-WA in northeastern Nigeria. Worsening insecurity in northeast Nigeria and pandemic-related movement restrictions prevented observers from accessing many areas in Borno State and reviewing other regions of concern for child soldier recruitment or use. During the previous reporting period, an NGO alleged soldiers in Giwa Barracks

sexually exploited female detainees. Despite authorities releasing some individuals from detention, the government continued to detain children as young as five years old whom authorities suspected of being associated with Boko Haram or ISIS-WA.

Nigerian criminal elements transport women and children to other West and Central African countries – including Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, and Senegal – as well as to South Africa, where they exploit them in forced labor and sex trafficking; experts report mixed migration networks were well organized and involved in both smuggling and trafficking operations. Observers reported traffickers and smugglers using the mixed migration route through Mali sold Nigerian girls into commercial sex in Mali.

Artisanal miners exploit West African children in forced labor in Nigeria, including in granite and gold mines. Observers have reported agricultural firms in rural Nigeria force Togolese to work in palm wine production in rural Nigeria. Nigeria's ports and waterways around Calabar remain transit points for West African children subjected to forced labor in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. During the prior reporting period, NGO and media sources reported Nigerian traffickers compelled Cameroonian child refugees displaced by Cameroon's Anglophone crisis staying in camps in Nigeria to work in forced labor in domestic service and, in some cases, into sex trafficking; there were allegations some parents were involved in selling their children.

Authorities identified Nigerian trafficking victims – often exploited by Nigerian traffickers – in countries in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East during the reporting period. Criminal groups and brothel owners exploit Nigerian women and girls in sex trafficking within Nigeria and throughout Europe, including in and around Paris, France; Turin and Ferrara, Italy; and Madrid, Spain, as well as Austria and Russia. NGOs reported that while Italy remained the primary destination for Nigerian trafficking victims, illicit networks have shifted to other destinations such as France and Spain. According to reports, 80 percent of women in Spain's unlicensed brothels are victims of sex trafficking, with Nigerians forming a large percentage of that population. In France, Nigerian trafficking networks force women and girls into commercial sex around Paris and threaten victims' families in Nigeria to maintain control; illicit recruiters target women and girls predominantly from impoverished families in Edo State and require them to take a loyalty oath to their traffickers. Nigerian women and children are recruited and transported to destinations in North Africa, the Middle East – including Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates – as well as Central Asia, and exploited in sex trafficking or forced labor.

Historically, the majority of Nigerian trafficking victims in Europe have come from Edo State, via Libya; however, observers noted an increasing number originating in other states, to include Delta and Kano. Additionally, officials noted Abia, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Imo, and Kogi states are common origins for trafficking of victims to West Africa and Europe. Cases of labor trafficking involving domestic workers to the Middle East and Gulf States, as well as men coerced into sexual exploitation and drug running to Europe, increased during the reporting period, according to an international organization. In 2019, media and an international organization reported that networks consisting of illicit actors profiting from human trafficking and smuggling recruited women and girls from IDP camps in Northeast Nigeria for ostensibly legitimate jobs in Europe but exploited them in commercial sex in the northern Nigerian city of Agadez, North Africa, the Persian Gulf, and Europe.

Criminal actors increased their exploitation of Nigerians in Turkey in 2020, according to observers. Experts stated traffickers recruit victims directly from asylum or migrant reception centers in Italy and elsewhere in Europe. Larger, well-financed, and highly organized criminal groups – some of which are linked to Nigerian criminal organizations or confraternities originating in Nigerian universities, including Black Axe, Eiye, or Maphite – are responsible for much of the sex trafficking to Europe, especially in Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Additionally, Nigerian sex traffickers operate in highly organized criminal webs throughout Europe – known as the "Nigerian mafia" in Italy – and many former sex trafficking victims referred to as "madams" begin to work for their traffickers in exchange for leaving sex trafficking themselves. While some sex trafficking victims arrive in Europe believing they will be in commercial sex, traffickers coerce them to stay in commercial sex by altering working conditions and increasing victims' travel debts. Some victims' parents encourage them to obey their traffickers and endure exploitation to earn money.

Before departure for work abroad, or upon arrival in Europe, 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. Although the Oba of Benin – the religious leader of Benin City – revoked all previously administered *juju* spells and publicly renounced sex traffickers in 2018, reports continued to note traffickers performed the *juju* ceremonies in neighboring states such as Delta.

Illicit recruiters – including family members and increasingly pastors – in Edo and other southern states continue to target individuals seeking to travel by air to the Middle East, where wealthy individuals and other actors exploit those migrants in forced labor or commercial sex. Further, criminal elements exploit irregular migrants in forced labor and sexual exploitation at multiple stages of their journey through Nigeria, Niger, and Libya. Libyan and Nigerian illicit actors exploit

Nigerians in Libya in forced labor in construction and agriculture, as well as in commercial sex in Benghazi, Misrata, Sabha, and Tripoli; traffickers keep victims in “control houses” or “prostitution camps” near Tripoli or Misrata until they can repay travel debts.

As of December 2020, there were approximately 2.1 million IDPs in the country and 305,000 Nigerian refugees in other countries; many of these IDPs and refugees are vulnerable to traffickers due to their limited access to economic opportunity and formal justice. Increasing violence stemming from expanding terrorist threats exacerbated the vulnerability of many IDPs and limited access throughout much of the country for observers to provide updates on past allegations of government officials exploiting IDPs in sex trafficking. As in past years, reports indicate other IDPs, aid workers, government officials, and security forces commit sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, in government-run IDP camps, informal camps, and local communities around Maiduguri, the Borno State capital. Additionally, there were reports traffickers exploited IDPs moving to cities such as Gombe and Kano, as well as to neighboring countries to include Niger in forced labor.

During the reporting period, Boko Haram and ISIS-WA increased their practice of forcibly recruiting, abducting, and using child soldiers as young as 12 years of age as cooks, spies, messengers, bodyguards, armed combatants, and suicide bombers in attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad. The groups continue to abduct women and girls in the northern region of Nigeria, some of whom they subject to domestic servitude, sexual slavery, 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, with the terrorist organization frequently using drugs to control victims’ behavior. An NGO reported in prior rating periods children detained for association with armed groups in Maiduguri Maximum Security Prison in Borno state were confined with adult inmates who allegedly exploited the children in commercial sex rings in the prison.

ecoi.net summary:



Annual report on
trafficking in persons (covering
April 2020 to March 2021)

Country:

Nigeria

Source:

USDOS – US Department of
State

Original link:

[https://www.state.gov/reports/
2021-trafficking-in-persons-
report/nigeria/](https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/nigeria/)

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

1 July 2021

Document ID:

2055125

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

Wiedner Hauptstraße 32, 1041 Wien
T (Telefon) +43 1 589 00 583
F (Fax) +43 1 589 00 589
info@ecoi.net

Contact
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ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

