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Trafficking in Persons Report 2015 - Country Narratives - Nigeria

NIGERIA: Tier 2

Nigeria is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Nigerian trafficking victims are recruited from rural and, to a lesser extent, urban areas: women and girls for domestic servitude and sex trafficking and boys for forced labor in street vending, domestic service, mining, stone quarrying, agriculture, textiles manufacturing, and begging. Young boys in Koranic schools, commonly known as *Almajiri* children, are subjected to forced begging. Nigerian women and children are taken from Nigeria to other West and Central African countries, as well as to South Africa, where they are exploited for the same purposes. Nigerian women and girls are subjected to forced prostitution throughout Europe. Nigerian women and children are also recruited and transported to destinations in North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia, where they are held captive in the sex trade or in forced labor. Nigerian gangs subject large numbers of Nigerian women to forced prostitution in the Czech Republic and Italy; EUROPOL has identified Nigerian organized crime related to trafficking in persons as one of the greatest law enforcement challenges to European governments. Nigerian women are transported to Malaysia, where they are forced into prostitution and to work as drug mules for their traffickers. West African women transit Nigeria to destinations in Europe and the Middle East, where they are subsequently subjected to forced prostitution. Children from West African countries are subjected to forced labor in Nigeria, including in Nigeria's granite mines. Nigeria is a transit point for West African children subjected to forced labor in Cameroon and Gabon. During the reporting period, an NGO alleged Nigerian officials subjected children in internally displaced person (IDP) camps in northeast Nigeria to labor and sex trafficking. A Nigerian soldier also allegedly engaged in the forced labor of a child.

During the reporting period, media and international observers reported the terrorist organization Boko Haram forcefully recruited and used child soldiers as young as 12-years-old and abducted women and girls in the northern region of Nigeria, some of whom it later subjected to domestic servitude, forced labor, and sex slavery through forced marriages to its militants. An NGO also reported a civilian vigilante group, identified as the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), recruited and used child soldiers, sometimes by force. The government prohibited the recruitment and use of child soldiers and issued official statements condemning such use; however, the CJTF continued to recruit and use child soldiers during the reporting period. The Borno State government continued to provide financial and in-kind resources to the CJTF, which was also, at times, aligned with the Nigerian military in operations against Boko Haram.

The Government of Nigeria does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so. During the reporting period, the government sustained strong anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts by enacting amendments to the 2003 anti-trafficking law, which restrict the ability of judges to penalize offenders with fines *in lieu* of prison time; by investigating, prosecuting, and

convicting numerous traffickers; and by providing extensive specialized anti-trafficking training to officials from various government ministries and agencies. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) identified and provided services to an increased number of victims and continued extensive awareness campaigns throughout the country. The government also created an inter-ministerial presidential taskforce to coordinate anti-trafficking activities across the government. Despite these efforts, during the reporting period, the Borno State government provided financial and in-kind resources to the CJTF, which recruited and used child soldiers.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NIGERIA:

Cease provision of financial and in-kind support to the CJTF until the group ceases the recruitment and use of children; investigate and prosecute all individuals suspected of recruiting and using child soldiers and allegedly perpetrating other trafficking abuses against women and children; continue to vigorously pursue trafficking investigations, prosecutions of trafficking offenses, and adequate sentences for convicted traffickers; take proactive measures to investigate and prosecute government officials suspected of trafficking-related corruption and complicity in trafficking offenses; ensure the activities of NAPTIP receive sufficient funding, particularly for prosecuting trafficking offenders and providing adequate care for victims; implement programs for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former child combatants that take into account the specific needs of child ex-combatants; continue to provide regular training to police and immigration officials to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable populations, such as women in prostitution and young females traveling with non-family members; fully integrate anti-trafficking responsibilities into the work of the Nigerian Police Force and the Ministry of Labor; and continue to increase the capacity of Nigerian embassies to identify and provide assistance to victims abroad, including through regular and specialized training for diplomatic and consular personnel.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained strong anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts. In March 2015, the government passed amendments to the 2003 Trafficking in Persons Law Enforcement and Administration Act, which increase the penalties for trafficking offenders. The law prohibits all forms of trafficking. It prescribes a minimum penalty of five years' imprisonment and a minimum fine of one million naira (\$5,470) for labor trafficking offenses. The law prescribes a minimum penalty of five years' imprisonment for sex trafficking offenses and a minimum fine of one million naira (\$5,470); the minimum penalty increases to seven years' imprisonment if the case involves a child. These penalties are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with other serious crimes, such as rape.

NAPTIP conducted 509 trafficking investigations, completed 56 prosecutions, and secured 30 convictions during the reporting period, compared with 314 investigations, 43 prosecutions, and 42 convictions in the previous reporting period. The decrease in convictions is likely a result of a three-month strike by the judiciary. An additional 150 prosecutions remained pending at the end of the reporting period. All prosecutions occurred under the 2003 anti-trafficking law, and prison sentences upon conviction ranged from three months' to 30 years' imprisonment. Of the 22 convictions, 17 resulted in imprisonment without the option of paying a fine. The government also collaborated with law enforcement agencies from Finland, Niger, Norway, and the United Kingdom on investigations involving Nigerian nationals during the reporting period. The government commenced an investigation against a Nigerian soldier who allegedly engaged in the forced labor of a child; the investigation remained ongoing at the close of the reporting period. In response to an NGO's report that Nigerian officials subjected children in IDP camps in northeast Nigeria to labor and sex trafficking, the government convened a multi-agency taskforce—including NAPTIP, security forces, and an international organization—to investigate the allegations; ultimately, the government concluded there was no evidence of child trafficking. The government did not report any other investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government officials complicit in trafficking offenses; however, corruption at all levels of the government remained a pervasive problem.

The government conducted extensive training sessions throughout the reporting period. NAPTIP, in collaboration with international partners, provided specialized training to approximately 159 government employees, including judges, prosecutors, and officials from NAPTIP, the Nigerian Police Force, the Nigerian Immigration Service, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps, the National Drug and Law Enforcement Agency, and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. These programs offered specialized training on victim identification, investigation of trafficking cases, and child protection. NAPTIP officials assisted Finland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and various African countries with their anti-trafficking efforts through training courses, joint intelligence sharing, and mutual legal assistance.

PROTECTION

The government increased efforts to protect trafficking victims. The government and NGOs identified 914 trafficking victims within the country, including 336 victims of sex trafficking, and 578 victims of labor trafficking, compared with 777 victims identified in the previous reporting period. NAPTIP provided initial screening and

assistance for all victims it identified and referred them to government-run care facilities for further medical care, vocational training, education, and shelter. The government has formal written procedures to guide law enforcement, immigration, and social services personnel in proactive identification of trafficking victims among high-risk populations. Police, immigration, and social services personnel received specialized training on how to identify victims of trafficking and direct them to NAPTIP. Additionally, the government's national referral mechanism provides formal guidelines for law enforcement, immigration officials, and service providers to improve protection and assistance to trafficking victims in Nigeria.

In 2014, the government allocated approximately 2.4 billion naira (\$13 million) to NAPTIP. NAPTIP spent roughly one-fifth of its operational budget, or 96.5 million naira (\$528,000), on victim protection and assistance during the reporting period. State governments also contributed an additional five million naira (\$27,300) to support state anti-trafficking efforts. NAPTIP operated nine shelters specifically for trafficking victims, with a total capacity of 313 victims. Through these shelters, NAPTIP provided access to legal, medical, and psychological services, as well as vocational training, trade and financial empowerment, and business management skills. Victims who required additional medical and psychological treatment were provided services by hospitals and clinics through existing agreements with NAPTIP. NAPTIP shelters offered short-term care, generally limiting victims' stays to six weeks, though victims were allowed to extend their stays under special circumstances. If victims needed longer-term care, NAPTIP collaborated with two shelters operated by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, as well as NGO-run shelters. Victims in NAPTIP shelters were not allowed to leave unless accompanied by a chaperone. NAPTIP provided funding, in-kind donations, and services to NGOs and other organizations that afforded protective services to trafficking victims.

Per provisions of the 2003 anti-trafficking law, Nigerian authorities ensured identified trafficking victims were not penalized for unlawful acts committed as a result of being subjected to trafficking. On rare occasions, authorities initially detained individuals involved in prostitution or other unlawful acts before they were identified as trafficking victims. Once identified, NAPTIP worked with security services to remove victims from custody and provide them care. Officials encouraged victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of trafficking cases, and NAPTIP reported 36 victims served as witnesses or gave evidence during trial in the reporting period. Trafficking victims were guaranteed temporary residence visas during the pendency of any criminal, civil or other legal action. All victims were eligible to receive funds from the victims' trust fund, which was financed primarily through confiscated assets of convicted traffickers. During the reporting period, the government disbursed 4.1 million naira (\$22,400) among 17 victims for various purposes, including vocational training and school tuition, although not necessarily in equal amounts.

PREVENTION

The government sustained efforts to prevent human trafficking. NAPTIP continued to conduct extensive national and local programming through radio and print media in all regions of the country to raise awareness about trafficking, including warning about fraudulent recruitment for jobs abroad. NAPTIP also carried out advocacy visits with community, traditional, and religious leaders, as well as government officials at both the local and national levels. The government increased coordination between NAPTIP and various relevant ministries through the establishment of an inter-ministerial presidential taskforce; this taskforce met twice during the reporting period. In October 2014, the government adopted a national policy and action plan on labor migration and instituted a licensing requirement for all private labor recruitment agencies managed by the Ministry of Labor. The government did not make any discernible efforts to decrease the demand for commercial sex acts. In January 2015, the attorney general issued an advisory notice reiterating the Nigerian government's stance against the use of child soldiers and warning anyone found to be using child soldiers would face prosecution. The Borno State governor also warned the CJTF that the recruitment and use of child soldiers was prohibited; however, state government support for the group continued. The government, with foreign donor support, provided anti-trafficking training to Nigerian troops prior to their deployment abroad on international peacekeeping missions. The government also provided anti-trafficking training for its diplomatic personnel.