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2020 Trafficking in Persons Report: Nigeria

NIGERIA: Tier 2 Watch List

The Government of Nigeria does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. These efforts included continuing efforts to train government officials and raise public awareness, collaborating with international organizations and NGOs to establish anti-trafficking task forces in Borno and Ekiti states, using new technologies to enhance collection of victim testimony, prosecuting three government officials complicit in human trafficking, and drafting memoranda of understanding (MOUs) to improve coordination between government agencies. However, the government did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period. Nigerian security forces recruited and used at least two children in support roles during the reporting period. In addition, there continued to be reports security officials sexually exploited, including through sex trafficking, IDPs in government-run camps in and around Maiduguri. The government did not hold criminally accountable any military officials for exploitation of IDPs in sex trafficking or recruitment and use of child soldiers. In addition, the government did not hold any Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) members criminally accountable for sex trafficking of IDPs or past recruitment and use of child soldiers. The Nigerian military did not always provide trafficking victim protections to female and child trafficking victims allegedly associated with insurgencies and the government convicted fewer traffickers. Therefore Nigeria was downgraded to Tier 2 Watch List.

PRIORITIZED RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cease Nigerian military recruitment and use of child soldiers, including in support roles, and refer all children to appropriate care. • Hold complicit officials, including security officials and CJTF members, accountable for trafficking offenses, including for the sex trafficking of IDPs and unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers. • 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. • Expand existing efforts to identify trafficking victims among vulnerable groups such as IDPs, returning migrants, children in domestic service, and any North Korean workers in Nigeria; investigate cases; and implement preventative measures. • 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. • Vigorously 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, confirm all children have been removed from the CJTFs ranks and, if they have not, cut provision of financial and in-kind support to CJTF. • Facilitate training for judges on the 2015 law, specifically the provision prohibiting the issuance of fines in lieu of imprisonment in collaboration with international partners. • Reevaluate the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons' (NAPTIP) closed shelter policy and ensure authorities take a victim-centered approach to victim care. • 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. • Strengthen international law enforcement cooperation to prevent and investigate child sex tourism.

PROSECUTION

The government maintained overall anti-trafficking law enforcement efforts, but there were continued reports of, and insufficient efforts to address, government officials' complicity in human trafficking offenses. However, the government initiated some prosecutions against allegedly complicit officials and improved some law enforcement capacities. 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 (\$690) 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. 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 one million naira (\$2,770) 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.

During the reporting period, NAPTIP received 943 cases for investigation, completed 210 investigations, prosecuted 64 suspects, and convicted 27 traffickers, compared with receiving 938 cases for investigation and completing 192 investigations, 64 prosecutions, and 43 convictions during the previous reporting period. However, conviction data from the reporting period may have included cases outside the international definition of trafficking. The decrease in convictions was likely a result of the seconding of many judges to electoral tribunals during the reporting period. In addition, the Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT) investigated 38 cases and initiated prosecutions in 22 cases, compared to investigating 56 cases and prosecuting 20 cases in the previous reporting period; since its establishment in 2018, the ETAHT has not convicted a trafficker. 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. The government did not report whether judges convicted all traffickers under the 2015 anti-trafficking law or the 2003 anti-trafficking law, which allowed the option of fines in lieu of imprisonment. Prison sentences ranged from two to 10 years’ imprisonment, although at least one convicted trafficker was given the option of fines in lieu of imprisonment despite a 2015 amendment that removed fines alone as an option; during the previous reporting period, judges penalized two traffickers with the option of fines alone. 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. In addition, the judiciary remained slow and corrupt generally, which impeded prosecutions and convictions of most crimes, including trafficking. The government convicted two labor traffickers, a decrease from nine labor trafficking convictions during the previous reporting period.

While enforcement of the anti-trafficking law remained weak in many parts of the country and insufficient resources hampered efforts, officials made some efforts to address trafficking and improve investigation, prosecution, and law enforcement capabilities in priority areas. The United Kingdom-Nigerian Joint Border Task Force (JBTF) launched a new satellite office in Kano with a team of seven NAPTIP officers who will develop joint operations with law enforcement officers in Niger. NAPTIP in Benin City launched a new custody facility and vulnerable witness suite, which includes two video interviewing rooms where victims could give evidence in privacy. NAPTIP 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. Prosecutors and investigators reported poor coordination between NAPTIP and other government agencies impeded prosecution efforts; NAPTIP and other law enforcement agencies often actively refused to coordinate with each other when mandates overlapped. During the reporting period, an international organization drafted MOUs between government agencies to improve coordination; the government did not report approving or implementing the MOUs at the end of the reporting period. The government collaborated with foreign governments on anti-trafficking cases, although international partners reported corruption and capacity issues at times hindered cooperation.

The government participated in joint investigations and provided technical assistance with countries in West Africa and Europe. Through the JBTF, NAPTIP supported law enforcement to make significant arrests and prosecutions in multiple European countries and improved investigative capacity domestically. In 2019, two European countries transmitted case files to NAPTIP to prosecute organized trafficking networks; at the end of the reporting period, those prosecutions were ongoing. The government, at times in partnership with foreign donors and other international partners, trained officials on identifying and investigating human trafficking.

During the reporting period, NAPTIP reported it investigated cases involving suspected officials complicit in trafficking, but it did not report the number or details of the cases compared with four investigations and seven prosecutions during the previous reporting period. The government reported three investigations of allegedly complicit officials initiated in the previous reporting period continued. In an improvement from prior reporting periods, the government prosecuted and convicted three mid-level and senior-level officials for trafficking offenses. The government prosecuted a mid-level official in Sokoto state under TIPLEAA and Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP) for procurement for sexual exploitation; the official was convicted under VAPP and was sentenced to life imprisonment. The government also prosecuted and convicted two officials in Delta state for attempted child trafficking; both were sentenced to one year and six months’ imprisonment. These prosecutions were a notable improvement over prior inaction; the government had previously only reported convicting one official for complicity in human trafficking despite 17 years of reports of human trafficking offenses and trafficking-related corruption.

Widespread and pervasive corruption affected all levels of government, including the security forces, and undermined accountability for trafficking offenses. Trafficking occurred in government-run detention centers and IDP camps. The government did not take adequate steps to investigate or prosecute military personnel or CJTF members complicit in trafficking—in particular sex trafficking of IDPs and female detainees—in the Northeast. During the reporting period, 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. The government did not report investigating or holding officials accountable for sexual exploitation in Giwa Barracks. Since 2016, several international organizations and media have consistently reported sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, of IDPs in camps—including government-run camps—settlements, and host communities around Maiduguri remained a pervasive problem. In more than 14 IDP camps, a March 2020 international organization report 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 exploitation in sex trafficking. During the reporting period, an international organization reported security officials transported IDPs to a hotel in Maiduguri allegedly for sex trafficking. NAPTIP did not initiate any investigations or prosecutions for sex trafficking of IDPs during the reporting period. The government did not publicly report any prosecutions or convictions for sexual exploitation or sex trafficking 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 sexually exploited IDPs, which impeded investigation of such reports.

An international organization verified the Nigerian military recruited and used at least two children under 15 years old in support roles during the reporting period. Between April and June 2019, the Nigerian military used six boys between 14 and 17 years old in Mafa, Borno state, in support roles fetching water, firewood, and cleaning. In October 2019, the same international organization verified the government used five boys between 13 and 17 years old to fetch water at a checkpoint in Dikwa, Borno state. 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; however, there were local government areas international organizations were unable to access due to insecurity and government-imposed restrictions. 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.

PROTECTION

The government maintained inadequate efforts to identify and protect trafficking victims; in addition, the Nigerian military continued to unlawfully detain children, including trafficking victims. NAPTIP identified 181 forced labor victims and 636 potential victims, compared with 126 forced labor victims and 1,028 potential trafficking in the previous reporting period. NAPTIP provided initial care for all trafficking victims, which could include referrals to government facilities for medical care, shelter, legal assistance, psychological services, vocational training, or education assistance. NAPTIP referred 71 victims to NGO shelters and directly provided support in some form to 1,009 victims at NAPTIP shelters some of whom were identified during the previous reporting period. During the reporting period, ETAHT assisted 428 returning migrants, of which 195 were trafficking victims. This is compared with assisting 1,030 returning migrants, some of whom were trafficking victims, during the previous reporting period; overall fewer migrants returned to Edo state during the reporting period. 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.

Nigerian law mandated NAPTIP to care for victims of crimes under both the 2015 anti-trafficking law and 2015 VAPP Act; as a result, NAPTIP had limited capacity to provide specialized 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 with a total capacity of 334. NAPTIP shelters offered six weeks of initial care. If there was not space in NAPTIP shelters, NAPTIP referred the victim to NGOs for care. An international organization reported there were significant protection gaps regarding specialized services available to adult male victims. NAPTIP staff did not permit victims to leave shelters without a chaperone, which limited victims'

freedom of movement and educational and work opportunities and may have re-traumatized trafficking victims and disempowered them to direct their own recovery. However, victims staying longer term were generally able to leave shelters 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, 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.

In response to continued reports of sexual exploitation of IDPs in the Northeast, NAPTIP continued partnering 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, these activities were generally restricted to areas in and around Maiduguri. During the reporting period, NAPTIP partnered with the Borno state government, international organizations, and NGOs to establish the Borno State Task Force. The government continued participating 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. The influx of irregular migrants returning on international organization-facilitated charter flights from Libya, some of whom were trafficking victims, stretched the capacity of the shelter and service system, including NAPTIP facilities. NAPTIP and an international organization screened all returnees arriving from Libya for trafficking indicators and referred the identified trafficking victims to NAPTIP facilities or NGOs. An international organization, NAPTIP, ETAHT, and other NGOs provided needs-based support. In addition, the ETAHT provided transportation, short-term housing, legal support, counseling and psychological support to victims who returned to Edo state. During the reporting period, the ETAHT began construction of a shelter for trafficking victims designed to have 100 beds for male and female trafficking victims in separate buildings. 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, as in past reporting periods, multiple credible international organizations reported the government continued to arrest and, in some cases, 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 had been forcibly married to or sexually enslaved by the insurgents. Authorities did not consistently screen the women and children for trafficking indicators. The military, in cooperation with an international organization, released approximately 334 children from detention between September 2019 and March 2020; however, reputable international organizations reported it was likely children remained inappropriately detained in military detention centers at the end of 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 and exploited them in sex trafficking rings during the reporting period. For the fifth consecutive year, the government continued working with an international organization to develop a handover protocol to refer children identified in armed conflict to civilian care providers; the government did not finalize or approve handover protocol by the end of 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 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. 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 de-radicalization 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 disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration for persons formerly associated with Boko Haram or ISIS-WA, including children in 2017.

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. During the reporting period, the JBTF expanded NAPTIP's use of video to collect testimony and allow witnesses in other jurisdictions to give evidence in Nigerian criminal trials. 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; 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 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; one convicted trafficker was ordered to pay restitution during the reporting period. Victims could also file civil suits against their traffickers. While NAPTIP prosecutors regularly sought restitution in trafficking cases, NAPTIP rarely reported successfully receiving restitution for victims in cases, largely because judges were unfamiliar with that provision of the anti-trafficking law.

PREVENTION

The government maintained efforts to prevent human trafficking. NAPTIP continued to lead national government efforts to combat trafficking. The inter-ministerial committee on trafficking met on an ad hoc basis and helped to develop national policies on trafficking. NAPTIP continued implementing the 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 churches, and transit centers, among other places to educate the public on the identification and dangers of human trafficking. In addition, NAPTIP began integrating anti-trafficking modules into school core curricula. After establishing state-level anti-trafficking task forces in Edo, Delta, and Ondo states during previous reporting periods, NAPTIP partnered with the Borno state governments and international organizations to establish an anti-trafficking task force in Borno State during the reporting period. The Ekiti state government also launched an anti-trafficking task force during the reporting period. 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 previous reporting periods, 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. During the reporting period, NAPTIP implemented some measures at the international airport in Lagos and coordinated with the aviation sector to raise awareness of human trafficking and available resources for trafficking victims. The Ministry of Labor and Employment regulated private employment agencies and instituted a licensing requirement for labor recruiters; the government did not revoke 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 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. Since the signing of the action plan in 2017, the international organization verified the CJTF separated 2,188 of an estimated several thousand children previously affiliated with the group. 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. Internal trafficking is prevalent with Nigerian traffickers recruiting victims from rural areas, especially the country's southern regions, for exploitation in commercial sex and forced labor in domestic work in urban cities such as Lagos, Aboekuta, Ibadan, Kano, Kaduna, Calabar, and Port Harcourt. Women and girls are victims of forced labor in domestic service 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. Rapid population growth drives the informal education sector, including Quranic schools known as *Almajiri*, where some teachers often abuse their students and coerce them to beg; in the latest available estimate from 2010, the government estimated as many as 9.5 million young boys were studying in Quranic schools. 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. 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. Gabonese authorities and NGOs reported Nigerian labor traffickers exploited Nigerian victims in mechanic shops in Gabon. 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. An NGO reported traffickers coerce Togolese victims to work in palm wine production in rural Nigeria. North Koreans working in Nigeria may have been forced to work by the North Korean government. 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. An NGO reported allegations that labor traffickers fraudulently recruited IDPs displaced by Middle Belt violence and exploited them in domestic service; there were also unconfirmed reports unknown perpetrators sexually exploited IDPs in the Middle Belt. As in past reporting periods, NGOs reported Nigerians traveled to Togo for child sex tourism. During the 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 forced labor in domestic service and, in some cases, sex trafficking; there were allegations some parents were involved in selling their children.

Authorities identified Nigerian trafficking victims—often exploited by Nigerian traffickers—in at least 36 countries in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East during the reporting period. Nigerian women and girls are subjected to sex trafficking within Nigeria and throughout Europe, including in France, Italy, Spain, Austria, and Russia; in 2017, an international organization estimated 80 percent of all female Nigerian migrants in Italy are or will become sex trafficking victims. NGOs reported that while Italy was primarily the destination for Nigerian trafficking victims, trafficking networks are shifting to other destinations such as France and Spain; in 2018, 48 percent of trafficking victims identified in France were Nigerian. 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. Historically, the majority of Nigerian trafficking victims in Europe have come from Edo State, via Libya; however, French authorities reported an increasing number of Nigerian trafficking victims originating from northern states. Media and an international organization reported traffickers recruited women and girls from IDP camps in Northeast Nigeria for ostensibly legitimate jobs in Europe but exploit them in commercial sex in Niger, North Africa, the Persian Gulf, and Europe. 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 in commercial sex, traffickers coerce them to stay in commercial sex 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 commercial sex 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. ISIS has captured Nigerian women and girls in Libya and exploited them in sexual slavery.

As in past years, reports continue to indicate government officials and security forces commit widespread sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking. 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. During the reporting period, an NGO reported at least 10 soldiers in Giwa Barracks coerced female detainees to perform sex acts in exchange for basic necessities such as food and soap.

Boko Haram and ISIS-WA continued to forcibly recruit, abduct, and use child soldiers as young as 12 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 with 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. An NGO reported that between January 2013 and March 2019, the Nigerian military unlawfully detained more than 3,600 children for alleged association with armed groups. An NGO reported children detained for association with armed groups in Maiduguri Maximum Security Prison in Borno state were detained with adult inmates; inmates in the prison allegedly exploited the children in commercial sex rings in the prison.

During the reporting period, Nigerian security forces recruited and used at least two boys between the ages of 13-17 years old in support roles fetching water, firewood, and cleaning, near Mafa and Dikwa in Borno state. In previous reporting periods, the Nigerian military unlawfully used children as young as 12 years old in support roles such as messengers and porters. In previous reporting periods, international organizations had reported Nigerian military personnel had used four boys between the ages of 14 and 16 years old in Giwa Barracks in support roles between May 2016 and March 2018. 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 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. There were no verified reports during the reporting period that the CJTF recruited or used child soldiers. However, 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 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.

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