

## Research on Child Victims of Trafficking in Nigeria

Given its legislation and policy (shown by a commitment to developing National Plans of Action and its national anti-trafficking agency, NAPTIP), compared to most West African countries, Nigeria appears proactive in its approach to prevention of child trafficking and protection of victims both within Nigeria and those who have been repatriated. Nigeria instituted an Anti-Trafficking Law in 2003, which led to the creation of a National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other related matters (NAPTIP), which effectively coordinates efforts to combat trafficking of children, though it is particularly focused on investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators. NAPTIP promotes international cooperation through collaboration with such organisations as UNICEF, ILO and UNODC, who have matured experience through regular assistance in planning and intervention against child trafficking in Nigeria. There is also the Child Rights Act 2003, implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, though unfortunately it has not been enacted in all Nigerian states.

Nigeria is part of regional anti-trafficking efforts through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Libreville Platform of Action. In particular, through ECOWAS' regular action plans, and its recent Joint Action Plan against trafficking in Persons with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Nigeria is committed to improving its own adherence to the Palermo Protocol (ratified in 2001) and further regional cooperation. In fact, Nigeria has bilateral agreements with Benin and Niger to assist child victims, and has more immigration-related agreements with European countries, such as Italy, Spain and the UK.

A National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons (NPA) was developed in 2006 for the period 2006-2009, on the impetus of NAPTIP who instituted (and currently leads) a joint taskforce with government departments and NGOs. It refers to children as a vulnerable category requiring particular attention under the following "clusters": Research and Assessment, Legislative Advocacy, Prevention and International Cooperation and Coordination. A notable exception is the lack of mention of children in Return and Reintegration Assistance. It does however prioritise the application of the specific Guidelines for the protection of the rights of child victims of trafficking and the Model of Child Trafficking Monitoring Systems for West and Central Africa, as well as many prevention activities linked to awareness raising particularly in schools and through the school curriculum.

From a national government perspective, prevention is linked to the underlying causes of child trafficking in Nigeria, being poverty and lack of access to education, though the policies developed on these issues, in particular for Universal Basic Education (UBE) in 2003, have not been adequately budgeted for, nor implemented. “Public Enlightenment” campaigns are the main prevention activity of NAPTIP as well as many local and international NGOs, such as the Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW), the International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group (IRRRAG), the African Women Empowerment Guild (AWEG), the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS), Idia Renaissance, Girls Power Initiative (GPI), Stepping Stones Nigeria (SSN), Women’s Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) and UNICEF. They range from airing jingles on radio and television, to sensitisation tours by NAPTIP and NGOs to communities and schools throughout the various states. UNICEF, however, have also opened Youth Resource Centres in 9 states.

Though there is no significant programme for the reintegration of child victims of internal or international trafficking, there are small interventions by NAPTIP and other local NGOs, often in conjunction with established international partners such as ILO-IPEC, UNICEF and Terre des Hommes. TdH, for example, operates mainly to support the rescue and repatriation of child victims of trafficking from Benin subject to labour exploitation in quarries in the Western states of Nigeria, together with the local community organisation, FEBEN and NAPTIP. Fruit of a specific plan of action developed by these partners, the intervention is mainly based on educational or vocational training and incentives for parents not to re-traffick their children. Other actions are implemented by IOM, for resettlement and rehabilitation of repatriated people or returnees and ILO-IPEC who has assisted child victims of labour exploitation through economic empowerment with WOCON and other local NGOs. AWEG has a similar initiative which focuses on the empowerment of women. WOTCLEF has intervened in Ondo State opening shelters for victims of child labour, and similar to COSUDOW, seeks to trace families of victims and prepare for their return, including counselling for both the child and their parents. In its programmes, UNICEF counted 757 victims rescued and counselled between February 2004 and December 2006.

Though a National Monitoring Center (NMC) to maintain and analyse trafficking data exists within NAPTIP, donated by the Italian Ministry of Justice, it is not yet operational for lack of usable digital information and training. On a regional level, as part of ECOWAS and its adherence to the Peer Review on the situation of children as part of the Decade of a Culture of Rights of the Child in West Africa (2001 – 2010), Nigeria is committed to mutual self-assessment and joint monitoring for a better understanding of the situation and progress related to children. This has been acknowledged in Nigeria’s NPA which includes Monitoring and Evaluation of all “clusters” of the NPA. To that end, UNICEF has been active in creating reporting matrices to facilitate the creation of a data base and establish a standardised monitoring mechanism for child trafficking in endemic states in the country.

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## **Methodology**

This research was conducted principally by desk review, as well as via phone interviews and email communication with non-governmental organisations, international organisations and institutions.