



EASO Country of Origin Information Report

Nigeria Sex trafficking of women

October 2015



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The following expert has reviewed the report:

- Sine Plambech, social anthropologist (Ph.D) specialised in human trafficking, research fellow at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS).

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Disclaimer

This report was written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (2012) ⁽¹⁾. The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced. To the extent possible and unless otherwise stated, all information presented, except for undisputed or obvious facts, has been cross-checked.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

'Refugee', 'risk' and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not as legally defined in the EU Asylum Acquis and the Geneva Convention.

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The target audience are asylum caseworkers, COI researchers, policymakers, and decisionmaking authorities.

The drafting of this report was finalised in September 2015. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the methodology section of the introduction.

⁽¹⁾ The EASO methodology is largely based on the Common EU Guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI), 2008, and can be downloaded from the EASO website: <http://www.easo.europa.eu>.

Glossary and Abbreviations

AVR	Assisted Voluntary Return program
AWEG	African Women Empowerment Guild
Bini(s)	Alternative term for Edo people. Derived from 'Benin', the name of the Edo state capital.
Boss	Synonym of male assistant to the madam
COI	Country of Origin Information
COSUDOW	Committee for the Support of Dignity of Women
Courier	Person who mediates between traffickers and victim
DIDR	Division de l'information, de la documentation et des recherches (OFPPA, France)
DIIS	Danish Institute for International Studies
DIS	Danish Immigration Service
DoS	Department of State (US)
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
ECPAT UK	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
ENCATIP	Edo State NGO Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons
ERF	European Refugee Fund
EU	European Union
Factotum	Assistant to the madam
FRONTEX	European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union
GPI	Girls' Power Initiative
Guideman	Synonym of person who arranges travels to Europe
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRRRAG	International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group
Italo	Nigerian madam in Italy
JRP	Joint Return Program
Juju	Voodoo or witchcraft, in the West African context
Madam	Woman who organises the trafficking, often also the sponsor
Mama Lola	Synonym of madam
Maman	Synonym of madam
Master	Synonym of male assistant to the madam
Middleman	Synonym of person who arranges travels to Europe

Naira	Currency of Nigeria
NAPTIP	National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other related Matters
NCWS	National Council of Women Societies
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
Nollywood	Used to refer to the cinema of Nigeria
OCILA	Office for Country Information and Language Analysis (The Netherlands)
OFPRA	Office français de protection des réfugiés et apatrides (France)
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
Racketeer	Synonym of person who arranges travels to Europe
SMA	Swedish Migration Agency
Sponsor	Person who pays travel to Europe, often the madam
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
TIP (report)	Trafficking in Persons report
Trolley	Synonym of person who escorts the women to Europe
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UK	United Kingdom
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes
USD	United States Dollar
Vice-maman	Female assistant to the madam
WACOL	Women Aid Collective
WOCON	Women’s Consortium of Nigeria
WOTCLEF	Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation

Introduction

Scope of the report

Not all migration of Nigerian sex workers to Europe involves human trafficking. However, the present report focuses on the *modus operandi* of the trafficking of Nigerian women to Europe for the purpose of prostitution and on the situation of the victims of trafficking returned to Nigeria. To some extent, and insofar as it relates to the *modus operandi* of trafficking, the report looks into the situation of Nigerian trafficked women once they have reached Europe. The report does not examine the trafficking of Nigerian women within Nigeria, nor does it examine the trafficking of Nigerian women to non-European countries (Africa, Middle East, Central Asia). Moreover, the report does not purport to cover human trafficking for purposes not related to prostitution, such as domestic servitude and forced labour ⁽²⁾. While the underlying causes of human trafficking in Nigeria are outside the scope of this report, they are briefly touched upon in Chapter 1.

Methodology

At the basis of this EASO report lies a topical report drafted by the Country Information Service of the Finnish Immigration Service as part of the European Refugee Fund (ERF)-funded 'Suuntaus project' ⁽³⁾. This initial report, entitled *Human Trafficking of Nigerian Women to Europe*, was finalised in March 2015.

To meet the information needs of a wider number of countries and maximise the added value at EU level, it was decided to include additional and up-to-date sources of information as well as new subsections and a new chapter on travel to Europe.

Two rounds of peer review were carried out in August and September 2015 by experts listed as reviewers in the 'Acknowledgement section' and by EASO. Contributors provided additional sources of information and advice, included new sections and restructured part of the report. A social anthropologist specialised in the issue of human trafficking, and in particular in the Nigerian context, provided expert opinion.

It should be noted that data (see 1.2) and information on sex trafficking from Nigeria to Europe are not abundant. While the media provides numerous accounts of Nigerian victims of sex trafficking, information is often too anecdotal to be used. Comprehensive and scientific research on the topic is far less common. In order to provide as balanced a picture as possible, the present report uses information from academic researchers, United Nations (UN) organisations, European Union (EU) agencies, non-governmental organisations and governmental agencies. Information from these sources appears at times contradictory as regards the extent to which sex trafficked women are aware of the purpose of migration to Europe and capable of emancipating themselves from sex trafficking. Contradictions may simply point to different profiles of women being trafficked, but also to many nuances in the process of becoming victims.

Core concepts

Below are definitions of key concepts that are used throughout the report:

Trafficking in persons (Human trafficking, Trafficking in Human Beings or THB):

'shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

⁽²⁾ For more information on internal trafficking, trafficking to non-European countries or other forms of human trafficking, see: US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015.

⁽³⁾ This project aimed to identify the most significant country information themes and to better anticipate future information needs. The method consisted in systematically reviewing asylum interview protocols from specific caseloads (Nigeria, Iran, Iraq, Russia, stateless persons) by using a form designed for the purpose. An analysis of the asylum interview protocols allowed to identify the most recurrent grounds for seeking international protection, which in turn determined the themes of topical COI reports. The reports do not contain references to individual records.

Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs' (4).

Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (5 April 2011) on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims provides a very similar definition (5), but lists additional forms of exploitation, such as begging and the exploitation of criminal activities (6).

According to the UN and EU definitions, there are three distinct 'constituent elements' of trafficking in persons: the act, the means and the purpose. All three elements must be present in order for a case to be defined as a trafficking in persons offence (7). Sine Plambech notes that while it is a widely used concept, 'trafficking in persons' may not capture 'the multiple experiences and processes in which migrants are involved'. According to Plambech, a rigid use of this definition in practice results in two categories of migrants: '...those with the "correct" trafficking narrative, which fits the definition, and those migrants, the majority, who do not have such clear-cut narratives, but rather are defined as undocumented migrants' (8).

Trafficking in human beings takes place both across international borders (**international trafficking** or **cross-border trafficking**) and within the borders of their own countries (**internal trafficking**).

Re-trafficking:

'...shall mean a situation in which a person has been trafficked on one occasion as set forth in the definition provided in the United Nations Palermo Protocol; has then exited that trafficking situation by any means; and has then later re entered another trafficking situation, again as stated in the United Nations definition' (9).

Sex trafficking: 'Trafficking that involves moving people within and across local or national borders for the purpose of sexual exploitation' (10).

Terminology used in the report

In the report, the terms 'Trafficking in Human Beings' (THB), 'human trafficking', 'sex trafficking' and 'trafficking' are used interchangeably, in an effort to avoid repetition. When sources refer to a different term, this same term is used to remain faithful to the original source. It should be kept in mind, however, that the report focuses exclusively on sex trafficking of Nigerian women and girls. Although the report does not focus specifically on minors, some of the sources consulted make reference to the trafficking of girls under 18.

The present report utilises the term 'prostitution' as referred to in the relevant EU Directive (Directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims) (11) and in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports (12). 'Sex work' is used as well. The report acknowledges however that neither the terms 'prostitution' nor 'sex work' are neutral terms or cover the range of experiences sex trafficked women may have encountered.

(4) UN, *The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*, 15 November 2000.

(5) European Commission, *Trafficking Explained*, n.d..

(6) European Union, *Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims*, 5 April 2011. For more information on EU policy on human trafficking, see the European Commission website: *Together Against Trafficking in Human Beings*, n.d.

(7) UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, 2014, pp. 56-57.

(8) Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, pp. 20-21.

(9) IOM, *The causes and consequences of re-trafficking*, 2010, p. 17.

(10) Braimah, T.S., 'Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria', 1 June 2013, p. 6 (source: Territo L., Kirkham, G., *International sex trafficking of women & children*, 2010).

(11) European Union, *Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims*, 5 April 2011.

(12) UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014*, November 2014. Note that the Associated Press has been urged to change the terminology in its stylebook from 'prostitution' to 'sex work'. Daily News, *Campaign urges AP Stylebook to replace use of 'prostitute' with 'sex worker'*, 15 October 2014.

Despite the fact that not all Nigerian trafficked women identify themselves as victims ⁽¹³⁾ the term ‘victim’ (in addition to ‘women’) is used in the report to be consistent with the terminology used by the aforementioned EU directive ⁽¹⁴⁾ and the UNODC ⁽¹⁵⁾.

Map of Nigeria



United Nations Map No. 4228 Rev. 1 August 2014 ⁽¹⁶⁾.

⁽¹³⁾ Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 10; Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, footnote 18; Baye, E. M.-O. & S. Heumann, 'Migration, Sex Work and Exploitative Labor Conditions', 2014, p. 88.

⁽¹⁴⁾ European Union, *Directive 2011/36/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims*, 5 April 2011.

⁽¹⁵⁾ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014*, November 2014.

⁽¹⁶⁾ UN, *Map No. 4228 Rev. 1*, [map], August 2014.

1. Sex Trafficking in Nigeria

1.1 Causes

While exploring the causes of trafficking in Nigeria is not the aim of this report, as stated previously, it seems important to briefly evoke the various push and pull factors documented by relevant sources to shed light on the context of human trafficking in Nigeria. It should be noted that some of the factors described below, such as the desire to obtain a better life, apply to the migration of Nigerians in general and not exclusively to trafficked women.

Amongst the factors which initially spurred the trafficking of women towards Europe were a demand for labour in Southern Europe (pull factor) combined with the drastic impact of the Structural Adjustment Programme⁽¹⁷⁾ on the Nigerian employment market (push factor)⁽¹⁸⁾. While economic hardship and limited employment opportunities⁽¹⁹⁾ remain important determinants in today's sex trafficking in Nigeria, sources emphasise the role of multiple co-existing⁽²⁰⁾ factors, such as: illiteracy, the discrimination and violence faced by women in Nigerian society⁽²¹⁾, the disruption of support systems (loss of family members, for example)⁽²²⁾, but also the desire to support one's family⁽²³⁾ or 'the desire for greater autonomy and adventure, divorce, love, and familial expectations'⁽²⁴⁾. Other factors that have contributed to the growth of the trafficking phenomenon are restrictive migratory policies in Europe, corruption, and to a certain extent a 'strong hold and belief in certain aspects of traditional African religion'^(see 2.5)⁽²⁵⁾.

The size of the European sex market and the high demand for sex workers in Europe, but also the increased social acceptance of prostitution⁽²⁶⁾, the success stories of trafficked victims and the social and economic power gained by madams⁽²⁷⁾ have served as pull factors.

The high profit generated by human trafficking in Nigeria for traffickers, the low risks involved, and the well-structured and adaptable nature of the Nigerian trafficking networks, are amongst the reasons for its endurance⁽²⁸⁾.

1.2 Size/scope of the phenomenon

According to the United States Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2015⁽²⁹⁾: 'Nigeria is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking'⁽³⁰⁾.

While the EASO report at hand will focus on cross-border trafficking, it should be emphasised that a much greater proportion of trafficking for various purposes (prostitution, domestic servitude, forced labour, street begging and

⁽¹⁷⁾ In Nigeria, the structural adjustment programme was introduced in 1986. It consisted of 'reduced government spending on critical services, such as health, education and housing which created substantial unemployment within the governmental sector and a greater tendency to migrate, in particular among women'. See Plambech, S. *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 34 (source: Afolayan, Ikwuyatun, and Abejide 2008).

⁽¹⁸⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 34.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 62; BBC, *Human trafficking: The lives bought and sold*, 28 July 2015; UNESCO, *Human Trafficking in Nigeria: Root Causes and Recommendations*, 2006, pp. 33-34.

⁽²⁰⁾ Braimah, T.S., 'Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria', 2013, p. 16.

⁽²¹⁾ Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, pp. 4, 6; Braimah, T.S., 'Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria', 2013, pp. 16-17, 20-21, 29; UNESCO, *Human Trafficking in Nigeria: Root Causes and Recommendations*, 2006, p. 37; NAPTIP, *Factsheet, Factsheet 2 – What is human trafficking?*, n.d.

⁽²²⁾ NAPTIP, *Factsheet, Factsheet 2 – What is human trafficking?*, n.d.

⁽²³⁾ Kastner, K., 'Moving relationships', January 2010, p. 17.

⁽²⁴⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 35.

⁽²⁵⁾ Braimah, T.S., 'Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria', 2013, pp. 13, 21-22; UNESCO, *Human Trafficking in Nigeria: Root Causes and Recommendations*, 2006, p. 41; NAPTIP, *Factsheet, Factsheet 2 – What is human trafficking?*, n.d.

⁽²⁶⁾ Braimah, T.S., 'Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria', 2013, pp. 28-29.

⁽²⁷⁾ NAPTIP, *Factsheet, Factsheet 2 – What is human trafficking?*, n.d.

⁽²⁸⁾ Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 62; UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014*, p. 56; UNESCO, *Human Trafficking in Nigeria: Root Causes and Recommendations*, 2006, p. 37; NAPTIP, *Factsheet, Factsheet 2 – What is human trafficking?*, n.d.

⁽²⁹⁾ The US DoS TIP report covers the period from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

⁽³⁰⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 265.

organ harvesting), occurs within the borders of Nigeria. In many cases, internal trafficking will constitute a first step to trafficking out of Nigeria⁽³¹⁾. Moreover, although Europe is the main destination of trafficking from Nigeria, it should be noted that sex trafficking to Western Africa, Central Asia, the Middle East or North Africa also takes place⁽³²⁾.

Estimating the number of victims of sex trafficking from Nigeria to Europe remains a difficult task. Although sources refer to significant numbers⁽³³⁾, Sine Plambech, in an extensive Ph.D dissertation on ‘Migration Control and Anti-Trafficking in the Lives of Nigerian Sex Worker Migrants after Deportation from Europe’, does not estimate the number of Nigerian women selling sex in Europe, ‘simply because there are really no reliable or credible statistics in this specific area’⁽³⁴⁾.

In its first working paper on trafficking in human beings, Eurostat analysed EU-wide statistical data gathered and submitted by national authorities and recognised the complexity of comparing and assessing trends across EU States due to differences in the process of recording data, as well as variations between national legal definitions⁽³⁵⁾.

In 2009, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) estimated at 3,800-5,700 per year the number of victims of sex trafficking from West Africa, of which Nigeria constituted the main source country⁽³⁶⁾.

More recently, in the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014, the UNODC reports that:

‘Trafficking of young women from Nigeria to Europe for the purpose of sexual exploitation is one of the most persistent trafficking flows. During the 2007-2012 period, Nigerian victims constantly accounted for more than 10 per cent of the total number of detected victims in Western and Central Europe, making this the most prominent transregional flow in this subregion’⁽³⁷⁾.

During the reference period 2010-2012 (3 years), Eurostat estimates that in terms of absolute numbers of registered victims of human trafficking in the European Union (EU), Nigerians were amongst the top five non-EU citizenships⁽³⁸⁾. According to the same statistical study, Nigerian victims were most often reported in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and France⁽³⁹⁾.

Italy and Spain appear as the primary destinations of trafficked Nigerians but, as described in Chapter 3, women are also trafficked to northern, central, and eastern European countries⁽⁴⁰⁾.

Eurostat identifies Nigerian organised crime related to trafficking in persons as one of the greatest law enforcement challenges to European governments⁽⁴¹⁾.

1.3 Regions of recruitment

Edo State

Recruitment for human trafficking to Europe is strongly concentrated in Edo State⁽⁴²⁾. According to Beatrice Jedy-Agba⁽⁴³⁾, Executive Secretary of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP)⁽⁴⁴⁾, it appears that the first persons that made it across to Europe and were successful in human

⁽³¹⁾ Cherti et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 24.

⁽³²⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015; Cherti et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 24.

⁽³³⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015. UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2014*, p. 45.

⁽³⁴⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, pp. 27-28.

⁽³⁵⁾ Eurostat, *Trafficking in Human Beings, Statistical Working Papers*, 2015.

⁽³⁶⁾ UNODC, *Transnational Trafficking and the Rule of Law in West Africa*, July 2009, p. 41.

⁽³⁷⁾ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014*, pp. 56-57.

⁽³⁸⁾ The other countries of citizenship for registered victims were: Brazil, China, Viet Nam and Russia. See: Eurostat, *Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015.

⁽³⁹⁾ Eurostat, *Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Mberu B. U. and Pongou R., *Nigeria: Multiple Forms of Mobility in Africa's Demographic Giant*, 30 June 2010; Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, p. 12.

⁽⁴¹⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 265.

⁽⁴²⁾ Braimah, T.S., ‘Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria’, 2013, pp. 2, 10-11; UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, pp. 77, 80; Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, pp. 24-25. (sources: Attoh 2009, Buker 2007).

⁽⁴³⁾ In June 2014, the United States government conferred the award of 2014 Trafficking in Persons Report Hero to the Executive Secretary of NAPTIP, Mrs. Beatrice Jedy-Agba. NAPTIP, *NAPTIP Boss Emerges 2014 Trafficking in Person's Hero*, 20 June 2014.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ For more information on NAPTIP, see section 1.4.

trafficking were from Edo State. Sister Florence (Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women, COSUDOW), interviewed during a fact-finding mission conducted in 2006 by Landinfo (Norway), reports: ‘Edo girls went to Italy on visas to work picking tomatoes, but ended up in prostitution. Some came back rich, and became examples of success.’⁽⁴⁵⁾

Cole and Booth, in a book dedicated to ‘Immigrants in Domestic Service, Agriculture, and Prostitution in Sicily’, state that modern sex trafficking associated with Edo State is estimated to have begun in the late 1980s, making women from Edo State the first generation of Nigerian prostitutes in Italy⁽⁴⁶⁾. In an article on the causes and solutions of sex trafficking in Edo State, Braimah notes:

‘The first generation of Edo women and girls who went to Italy initially went abroad to conduct legitimate business such as the buying and selling of goods which included clothes and jewelries. However, in the process of engaging in such business, a lot of women became compromised and augmented their business with prostitution’⁽⁴⁷⁾.

These women then started to bring their relatives, friends and other individuals into the trade, and these activities started to gain strength from the 1990s onwards⁽⁴⁸⁾.

Benin city and nearby villages (Edo State)

Most victims come from Benin City, the capital of Edo State⁽⁴⁹⁾, as well as from the nearby villages⁽⁵⁰⁾. Recruitment from rural areas seem to be more common nowadays than in the early days of trafficking. In the rural poverty-stricken areas around Benin city, parents may be more inclined to put pressure on their young daughters to take care of their families⁽⁵¹⁾. After recruitment from rural areas, women report that they were then taken to major cities, particularly Lagos and Benin City⁽⁵²⁾. Areas of recruitment include the markets where women work, churches or schools⁽⁵³⁾ (see also 2.2).

Plambech specifies the following:

‘It is estimated that up to 85 percent of Nigerian women selling sex in Europe travelled from, but did not necessarily originate in, Benin [City] (Carling 2005; Kastner 2009; IOM 2011b). Indeed, in certain areas of Benin [City], a city of approximately one million people, it is difficult to find an extended family that does not have a family member, mostly women, who migrated to Europe (Kastner 2009)’⁽⁵⁴⁾.

Other states and cities

Women may also be recruited from other states, especially Delta State, but also from other southern states of Abia, Anambra, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Enugu, Lagos, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, Imo or from the more central states of Kaduna and Plateau⁽⁵⁵⁾.

Apart from Benin, women are also trafficked from other important cities in Nigeria, such as Lagos, Ibadan, and from the Delta State cities of Sapele and Warri⁽⁵⁶⁾.

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Sister Florence was interviewed during the Landinfo (Country of Origin Information Centre, Norway) fact-finding trip to Nigeria in March 2006. See: Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 13. For information on COSUDW see its website at: <http://cosudowlagos.org/home/> and section 4.4 of this report.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Cole, J., E. & S.S. Booth, *Dirty Work: Immigrants in domestic service, agriculture, and prostitution in Sicily*, 2007, p. 123.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Braimah, T.S., ‘Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria’, 2013, pp. 2, 10-11; UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 41.

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005.

⁽⁴⁹⁾ S. Plambech, *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 37; US DoS, *2014 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, June 2014, p. 297; Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 62; Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 42; Carling J., *Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe*, 2006, p. 8.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 80. Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 68. It should be noted that Benin City has become a migration hub for West Africa in general, not only for trafficking. See S. Plambech, *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 187.

⁽⁵¹⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 40.

⁽⁵²⁾ Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, p. 12.

⁽⁵³⁾ Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 68.

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 39.

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 62.

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Buker, H., ‘Transporting Women Sex Workers From Nigeria to Europe’, 2007; Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 25.

1.4 Profiles of trafficked women

The profiles of trafficked women are diverse and change over time. While it is impossible to draw a specific profile, the consulted sources identify some similarities. Note that some of these elements may not be unique to victims of trafficking in Nigeria.

Ethnicity

The great majority of victims trafficked to Europe for prostitution belong to the Edo ethnic group (also called Bini(s))⁽⁵⁷⁾. Yorubas, Igbos, as well as women from ethnic groups of the Niger Delta, have also been registered as victims of human trafficking⁽⁵⁸⁾.

The majority of Nigerian traffickers are also Edos from Edo State⁽⁵⁹⁾.

Age

Initially, in the 1980s, the women who were trafficked were mainly married or separated women searching for incomes to support their families⁽⁶⁰⁾. More recent studies showed that recruited girls are between the age of 17 and 28 years, with a large proportion being 18-20 years old⁽⁶¹⁾.

Recruitment of minors has been on the increase however because adult women, especially in cities, tend to be more aware of the risks to which human trafficking exposes them. Young girls are more easily lured into the promises of fast success by recruiters⁽⁶²⁾.

The age declared by girls or women may not be accurate however. UNICRI points out that:

‘Generally speaking, there is a tendency to rise the potential victim’s age during the journey to Italy thus stressing the consensual and voluntary aspect of the journey. Contrary to this, there is a tendency to lower the age when the woman is working as a prostitute since this may attract a broader clientele. Once the women detach themselves from the exploitation rings and start their relationship with the social services, the possibility to lower or rise their age depends on basic needs (when the age is uncertain): on the one hand, be under 18 years old may be an important factor for receiving better protection but, on the other hand, it may be an obstacle in job hunting’⁽⁶³⁾.

Family/Marital status

A loss in family or community support seems to be common to many trafficked women. In a study carried out in the United Kingdom (UK) and Nigeria on the subject of trafficking of Nigerian women (2012), Cherti et al. note:

‘The lives of the trafficked people in our sample were diverse but were commonly marked by a trigger or childhood experience, such as being orphaned, which led to them being without family or community support. Due to limited access to education, employment or safe refuge from violence, they were unable to support themselves and were vulnerable to offers of “help” provided by traffickers’⁽⁶⁴⁾.

⁽⁵⁷⁾ When using English, Edos may call themselves ‘Binis’. ‘Bini’ is an alternative way of spelling ‘Benin’, the name of the state capital. Akor, L., ‘Trafficking in Women in Nigeria – Causes, Consequences and the Way Forward’, 2011, pp. 97-98; Aghatise, E., *Trafficking for prostitution in Italy*, 8 November 2002, p. 7; Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 9; Osezua, C., ‘Changing Status of Women and the Phenomenon Trafficking of Women for Transactional Sex in Nigeria’, 2013, p. 15.

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 9.

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Okojie, C. et al., *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy*, 2003, p. 108; Baye, E.M.-O., *Experiences of Nigerian Trafficked Women*, December 2012, p. 25; Aghatise, E., *Trafficking for prostitution in Italy*, 8 November 2002, p. 4.

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Aghatise, E., *Trafficking for prostitution in Italy*, 8 November 2002.

⁽⁶¹⁾ Pascoal, Rafaela, *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 23; Kastner, K, ‘Moving relationships: family ties of Nigerian migrants on their way to Europe’, January 2010, p. 20.

⁽⁶²⁾ Okojie, C. et al., *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy*, 2003, p. 9; UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 40.

⁽⁶³⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian girls in Italy*, April 2010, pp. 41-42.

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Cherti et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 5.

In its study of trafficked Nigerian Women and Girls (2015), the organisation Women’s link Worldwide⁽⁶⁵⁾ also notes that with polygamy being frequent in Edo State, women and their children are often abandoned by their husbands who are unable to support multiple families. This situation makes women, but also minors, more vulnerable to trafficking⁽⁶⁶⁾.

Economic situation

Typically, trafficked women originate from large, poor, unemployed or underemployed families, and face economic hardship⁽⁶⁷⁾.

Kastner notes, however, that the women she encountered in her study (2009) did not belong to the ‘poorest of the poor’, but rather to the lower-middle class⁽⁶⁸⁾.

Education

Sources note that victims tend to be illiterate or have basic education such as primary or secondary school⁽⁶⁹⁾.

1.5 Awareness of human trafficking in Nigeria/Benin city

1.5.1 General awareness

As the trafficking of women to Europe is common in Edo State nowadays many people are aware that women go to Europe to work as prostitutes⁽⁷⁰⁾.

It should be emphasised however that Edo people do not traditionally accept prostitution or promiscuous behaviour. Women have been ostracised for this, both by their family and society⁽⁷¹⁾. Thus while women’s migration to Europe to enter the sex industry has become relatively common among some families in Benin City⁽⁷²⁾, prostitution is not viewed as a morally acceptable type of work⁽⁷³⁾. If women are able to remit money back to their families, it is nonetheless difficult for families not to accept this type of work as there are so few other opportunities to earn money. According to Braimah: ‘In Edo State, particularly in Benin City, prostitution abroad has been normalised by portraying prostitution as glamorous and as a way to make hard currency which represents a lot of money’⁽⁷⁴⁾.

Women who return from Europe wealthy do not necessarily hide the fact that the money stems from prostitution⁽⁷⁵⁾. The success of many women who went to Europe is visible, for instance, in the form of grand houses or newly built houses, and this tempts others to leave for Europe⁽⁷⁶⁾. These successful women easily become role models for young girls⁽⁷⁷⁾.

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Most information provided in Women’s Link Worldwide’s report was gathered in the context of the organisation’s work with Sub-Saharan migrant women, which started in 2005. It also includes information gathered during two site visits conducted by Women’s Link Worldwide from 19 to 25 February 2011, in Nigeria, as well as information collected during a trip to Paris in October 2012 (interviews with Foyer AFJ/Fondation Amaranta and the association Les Amis du Bus des Femmes).

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 7.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Cherti et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 5; Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 54. Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 66.

⁽⁶⁸⁾ Kastner, Kristin, ‘Moving relationships’, January 2010, p. 20.

⁽⁶⁹⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 54; Braimah, T.S., ‘Sex Trafficking in Edo State’, 2013, pp. 20-21; Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 66. UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, 4 April 2010, pp. 83-84.

⁽⁷⁰⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 31; Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005; Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 22; Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 9; Skilbrei, M.-L. & Tveit, M., *Facing return*, 2007, p. 5; Plambech S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 389.

⁽⁷¹⁾ Aghatise, E., *Trafficking for prostitution in Italy*, 8 November 2002, p. 7; Braimah, T.S., ‘Sex Trafficking in Edo State’, 2013, pp. 23-24.

⁽⁷²⁾ Plambech S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, pp. 127-129; Kastner, K., ‘Moving relationships’, January 2010.

⁽⁷³⁾ Braimah, T.S., ‘Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria’, 2013, p. 24.

⁽⁷⁴⁾ Braimah, T.S., ‘Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria’, 2013, p. 28.

⁽⁷⁵⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 6; Independent (The), *The curse of ‘juju’ that drives sex slaves to Europe*, 7 April 2011.

⁽⁷⁶⁾ Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005; Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 30.

⁽⁷⁷⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p.31.

According to one of the women interviewed by Skilbrei and Tveit, stories about prostitutes being deported from Europe have been shown on the news and the television, and consequently ‘everybody knows what is going on’⁽⁷⁸⁾. The Nigerian media and film industries (Nollywood) have covered this issue extensively⁽⁷⁹⁾.

1.5.2 Women’s awareness

Sources depict several possible scenarios: Women may know that they will work as prostitutes, but may not understand the work conditions and the actual size of the debt; other may be peer-pressured, while others are duped or deceived.

In interviews conducted by Plambech, Skilbrei and Tveit, and Kastner, Nigerian girls and women being trafficked were aware that they would work as prostitutes and aspired to improve their own lives as well as their families’ lives⁽⁸⁰⁾. Women interviewed by Plambech for her research knew before their departure that they would have to work hard for 2-3 years as prostitutes in order to repay their debt and hoped that after the repayment, they could finally start earning money for themselves and their families⁽⁸¹⁾. Braimah considers that

‘although a minority of Edo girls are deceived into being trafficked, the majority are aware of the nature of their jobs abroad (...) many Edo girls willingly submit themselves to be trafficked because they see prostitution as a short period of their lives which can lift them and their families out of poverty’⁽⁸²⁾.

Nigerian women involved in sex trafficking, in the words of Kastner, take opportunities where they can, although they are also often limited in their spheres of action. According to Kastner: ‘Neither merely passive victims nor exclusively creative actors, they are both at the same time’⁽⁸³⁾.

Even if the nature of the work is known in advance, some may be duped about actual earning opportunities and others are lied to about the legality of residence in the country⁽⁸⁴⁾. Many of those leaving do not necessarily know or understand the actual size of the debt, the working conditions (harsh weather conditions, the length of working days), the duration of the work and the violence they may face. Some girls also believe they can trick the traffickers and have a different life⁽⁸⁵⁾. Skilbrei and Tveit indicate that ‘though many of the women we interviewed knew about the possibility of ending up in prostitution in Europe before leaving Nigeria, they did not seem to have enough information or knowledge to assess the realities and conditions of the work’⁽⁸⁶⁾.

However, despite increased awareness, not everyone knows what kind of work awaits them in Europe⁽⁸⁷⁾. Due to lack of economic capacity or lack of education, some do not have the capacity to question offers made, even if they are suspicious⁽⁸⁸⁾. Some victims were assured that the work would not involve prostitution, so convincingly that the victims did not suspect this⁽⁸⁹⁾. Some of the victims of human trafficking interviewed by Skilbrei and Tveit (2007) did not believe, before gaining personal experience, that Nigerian women really worked as prostitutes in Europe⁽⁹⁰⁾.

The UNODC, in its Global report 2014 on Trafficking in Persons, notes that ‘typically, during the recruitment phase, the victims are convinced to migrate by means of deception or by peer pressure’⁽⁹¹⁾. Girls have been promised studying opportunities⁽⁹²⁾, modelling careers, education and a better life⁽⁹³⁾, work as housekeepers or nannies and

⁽⁷⁸⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & Tveit, M., *Facing return*, 2007, p. 26.

⁽⁷⁹⁾ Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 16

⁽⁸⁰⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 5; S. *Points of Departure*, 2014, p 57; Kastner, Kristin, ‘Moving relationships’, January 2010, p. 31.

⁽⁸¹⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 144.

⁽⁸²⁾ Braimah, T.S. ‘Sex Trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria’, 2013, p. 28.

⁽⁸³⁾ Kastner, Kristin, ‘Moving relationships’, January 2010, pp. 31.

⁽⁸⁴⁾ Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 9.

⁽⁸⁵⁾ Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 22; Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005; Skilbrei, M.-L. & Tveit, M., *Facing return*, 2007, p. 5; Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 389.

⁽⁸⁶⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 5.

⁽⁸⁷⁾ BBC, *Human trafficking: The lives bought and sold*, 28 July 2015; Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 9.

⁽⁸⁸⁾ CORI, *Thematic Report Nigeria: Gender and Age*, December 2012 p. 92; UNODC, *Abuse of a position of vulnerability and other “means” within the definition of trafficking in persons*, April 2013, p. 39.

⁽⁸⁹⁾ Okojie, C., et al., *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy*, 2003, p. 57, 64.

⁽⁹⁰⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & Tveit, M., *Facing return*, 2007, p. 26.

⁽⁹¹⁾ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014*, November 2014, pp. 56-57.

⁽⁹²⁾ BBC, *Human trafficking: The lives bought and sold*, 28 July 2015.

⁽⁹³⁾ ECPAT UK, *Victims’ courage helps to convict trafficker over Nigerian child sex ring*, 29 October 2012.

maids, trading in African products and attires, hairdressing, work in factories, farms, industries and restaurants⁽⁹⁴⁾. Alleged recruitment in musical troupes, sports competitions and religious festivals abroad have been used to lure the victims⁽⁹⁵⁾. Young girls have also been deceived by promising success in the fashion industry, in show business or in well-paid jobs⁽⁹⁶⁾. Carling, in an extensive article on Nigerian trafficking to Europe notes that ‘in anticipation of leaving Nigeria and helping one’s family out of poverty, it is tempting for these women to believe in promises about good jobs. Whether this means being duped, or deceiving one’s self, is not obvious’⁽⁹⁷⁾.

Various sources indicate that few Nigerian trafficked women identify themselves as victims⁽⁹⁸⁾. The fact that considerable sums of money must be paid to reach Europe is considered a normal practice, not exploitation⁽⁹⁹⁾. The women perceive themselves as immigrants who must repay a debt to their facilitators⁽¹⁰⁰⁾.

1.6 Role of the state in fighting/preventing THB

The Nigerian government has developed several sets of measures to address the issue of trafficking in women, including:

- the ratification, in 2000 and 2001 respectively, of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized crime and its supplementing protocol on trafficking in persons⁽¹⁰¹⁾;
- the introduction, in 2003, of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act which was amended in 2005 and 2015 to increase penalties for trafficking offenders⁽¹⁰²⁾; this Act is a Federal Legislation and applies to all the 36 States, including the Federal Capital Territory Abuja⁽¹⁰³⁾;
- the creation in August 2003 of a specialised anti-trafficking agency, the National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other related matters (NAPTIP)⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ whose mandate encompasses investigation, prosecution, monitoring, counselling, rehabilitation, awareness raising, research, and training⁽¹⁰⁵⁾;
- the adoption of a national action plan on trafficking in persons⁽¹⁰⁶⁾.

In 2009, NAPTIP, along with its partners, developed a National Plan of Action (2009-2012) structured on the four thematic areas of Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnership, the so-called 4 Ps Strategy⁽¹⁰⁷⁾. This plan was followed by a Strategic Plan (2012-2017) aimed to tackle human trafficking in five broad areas:

- Strengthening law enforcement and prosecutorial response;
- Reinforcing public enlightenment, using various mediums, including movies, drama and documentaries to create greater awareness on the real impact of trafficking;
- Expanding platforms for victim protection and assistance and addressing factors which increase vulnerability;
- Strengthening partnerships at national, regional and international levels;
- Improving organisational development⁽¹⁰⁸⁾.

The United States Department of State 2015 Trafficking in Persons Report acknowledges that:

⁽⁹⁴⁾ Okojie, C., et al., *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy*, 2003, p. 57; Baye, E. M.-O., *Experiences of Nigerian Trafficked Women*, December 2012, p. 33; Voice of America, *Bound By Magic, Nigerian Women Enslaved*, 21 November 2012; Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, p. 11; Global Post, *I was a slave, Nigerian women escape sexual bondage in Italy*, 14 July 2015; Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 68.

⁽⁹⁵⁾ Okojie, C., et al., *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy*, 2003, pp. 57, 113.

⁽⁹⁶⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, 4 April 2010, p. 40.

⁽⁹⁷⁾ Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005.

⁽⁹⁸⁾ Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 10; Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, footnote 18; Baye, E. M.-O. & S. Heumann, ‘Migration, Sex Work and Exploitative Labor Conditions’, 2014, p. 88.

⁽⁹⁹⁾ Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 10

⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ Europol, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union*, 1 September 2011, p. 12.

⁽¹⁰¹⁾ UNODC, *Signatories to the CTOC Trafficking Protocol, Status as at : 26/09/2008 11:45:00*.

⁽¹⁰²⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015.

⁽¹⁰³⁾ Kigbu, S.K. and Hassan, Y.B., ‘Legal Framework for Combating Human Trafficking In Nigeria’, 2015, p. 206.

⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ GAATW, *Collateral Damage - The Impact of Anti-Trafficking Measures on Human Rights around the World*, 2007, p. 157.

⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ Kigbu, S.K. and Hassan, Y.B., ‘Legal Framework for Combating Human Trafficking In Nigeria’, 2015, p. 206.

⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, February 2009.

⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ NAPTIP, *Nigeria, Finland collaborate against human trafficking – Press release*, 13 January 2015; Famakin, J., *A paper on “sex-work and human trafficking of women and girls”*, 31 July 2013.

⁽¹⁰⁸⁾ NAPTIP, *National Rapporteurs on Trafficking in Persons and Equivalent Mechanisms in Addressing Trafficking in Persons (NREM)*, 21 – 22 May 2014.

‘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 interministerial presidential taskforce’⁽¹⁰⁹⁾.

The report further specifies that NAPTIP, in collaboration with international partners, provided training to various categories of government employees (judges, prosecutors, NAPTIP officials, police force, immigration service...). The training involved identification, investigation of trafficking cases and child protection⁽¹¹⁰⁾.

Yet, despite these efforts, it is estimated that government spending in this area is insufficient, in particular in responding to demand for NAPTIP services⁽¹¹¹⁾.

Moreover, the issue of trafficking in Nigeria touches on many areas of the country’s development. Addressing trafficking therefore requires to also tackle, amongst others, poverty, gender and other social inequalities as well as corruption⁽¹¹²⁾.

While this chapter does not look into other actors of anti-trafficking in Nigeria, it should be mentioned that nongovernmental⁽¹¹³⁾ and international organisations, the European Union as well as a number of donor countries have been active in the domain⁽¹¹⁴⁾(see [Chapter 4](#)).

Prosecution of traffickers

According to the 2015 US DoS Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, officials encourage victims to assist in the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking offences. During the reporting period (April 2014- March 2015), it further notes:

‘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’⁽¹¹⁵⁾.

Between January and June 2014, NAPTIP arrested 274 traffickers⁽¹¹⁶⁾. Between April 2014 and March 2015, NAPTIP and NGOs identified 914 trafficked victims of whom 336 were victims of sex trafficking, an increase compared to the previous period⁽¹¹⁷⁾. In the first quarter of 2015 alone, NAPTIP reported to have received 30 cases of external sex trafficking, rescued 38 victims of human trafficking and apprehended 30 suspected traffickers⁽¹¹⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 267.

⁽¹¹⁰⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 267.

⁽¹¹¹⁾ Nwogu V., ‘Anti-Trafficking interventions in Nigeria and the Principal-Agent Aid Model’, 2014, pp. 41-63.

⁽¹¹²⁾ Nwogu, V., ‘Anti-Trafficking Interventions in Nigeria and the Principal-Agent Aid Model’, 2014, p.2.

⁽¹¹³⁾ NAPTIP provides a list of NGOs involved in anti-trafficking on its website. NAPTIP, *NGO’s that meet NAPTIP criteria*, n.d.

⁽¹¹⁴⁾ Nwogu, V., ‘Anti-Trafficking Interventions in Nigeria and the Principal-Agent Aid Model’, 2014, p.3.

⁽¹¹⁵⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 266.

⁽¹¹⁶⁾ PM news, *Naptip arrests 274 human traffickers*, 4 November 2014.

⁽¹¹⁷⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 266.

⁽¹¹⁸⁾ NAPTIP, *2015 First Quarter Report*, n.d..

2. Modus operandi of sex trafficking in Nigeria

This chapter is dedicated to the *modus operandi* of sex trafficking and the actors involved. Trafficked women, a crucial part of the *modus operandi*, are discussed in [section 1.4](#).

In this chapter, the following English terms, among others, are mentioned to refer to persons related to human trafficking: madam (*maman/mama*, mama Lola), agent, trafficker, trolley, middleman, guideman, racketeer, sponsor (often used in Benin City) ⁽¹¹⁹⁾. Plambech notes that women usually name the individuals who arrange their travels to Europe ‘sponsors’, ‘guides’ or ‘madams’. Only rarely do they use the term ‘traffickers’; this term is primarily used by women enrolled in NGO programs ⁽¹²⁰⁾.

All the above terms and definitions are listed in the glossary.

2.1 Structure and size of Nigerian trafficking networks

2.1.1 Networks

Nigerian groups, organisations or networks active in human trafficking vary considerably in type, size and structure. The size and degree of organisation of networks depends on the size of the operation and the number of women being trafficked, the financial strength of the groups and how well connected they are with officials. Some groups operate a loose network using mostly family members to recruit victims. A loose and flexible structure often makes the network very effective and, at the same time, more difficult for the police to disperse. Other groups are well structured and employ a variety of actors; from recruiters and travel agents to law enforcement agencies, professional forgers, financiers and exploiters ⁽¹²¹⁾. The UNODC noted already in 2005 and again in 2011 that most networks were not temporary but were well-organised and relatively solid and durable ⁽¹²²⁾.

The Koolvis case in the Netherlands illustrates the high level of organisation of Nigerian networks. 140 Nigerian victims of human trafficking were identified, which led to large-scale international operations in October 2007 and January 2008. The arrests following these operations revealed the composition of the networks: Nigerian madams who ordered the trafficked women, people who housed them, a Nigerian travel agent who provided false documents, and three ‘leaders’, residing in the UK, Ireland and the United States of America ⁽¹²³⁾. A UNODC report adds: ‘In this case, police investigations established that a highly organized trafficking ring was run by a circle of professional smugglers of migrants with roots in Edo State. Not coincidentally, the leader of this group had a travel agency that served as a legal front for his criminal business.’ ⁽¹²⁴⁾

In March 2014, Italian authorities arrested 34 persons after concluding an investigation named ‘Cults’. The arrested persons were all members of two Nigerian groups, the Eiyé and Aye confraternities, active in Italy since at least 2008. The investigation showed a strict hierarchical structure and a high level of organisation, violence and intimidation (similar to mafia organisations). These confraternities acted through a system of cells (called ‘forum’) operating locally but connected to cells in other countries. There were strong connections with other criminal organisations in the same region, for example those active in the drugs trade ⁽¹²⁵⁾.

⁽¹¹⁹⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 21; Achebe, N., ‘The Road to Italy: Nigerian Sex Workers at Home and Abroad’, 2004, p. 178; Carling, J. *Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe*, 2006, p. 27.

⁽¹²⁰⁾ Plambech, Sine, ‘Between “Victims” and “Criminals”’, Fall 2014, pp. 382-402.

⁽¹²¹⁾ Cherti, M., et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 5; UNODC, *Organized crime involvement in trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants*, 2010, p. 7.

⁽¹²²⁾ UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime in the West African Region*, 2005, p. 27; UNODC, *The role of organized crime in the smuggling of migrants from West Africa to the European Union*, 30 May 2011.

⁽¹²³⁾ UNODC, *Organized crime involvement in trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants*, 2010, p. 44; Torremans, S.J.C.M., *Met onbekende bestemming*, 2009 (restricted).

⁽¹²⁴⁾ UNODC, *The role of organized crime in the smuggling of migrants from West Africa to the European Union*, 30 May 2011.

⁽¹²⁵⁾ UNODC, ‘Do confraternities control the trafficking of Nigerians to Europe?’, November 2014, pp. 56, 57; (source: Lo Iacono, E., 2014).

According to Europol, Nigerian trafficking groups often have cellular structures. This allows them to work in a very effective manner, as they operate independently while drawing on an extensive network of personal contacts. Women (madams) play a very important role in these groups, and closely monitor the trafficking process from recruitment to exploitation ⁽¹²⁶⁾.

Apart from the hierarchically-structured organised crime groups, loosely connected networks of ‘specialists’ dominate the trafficking trade, according to the UNODC (2010). These ‘specialists’ are persons with specific skills such as forging documents, convincing and deceiving girls to travel abroad with them, identifying the proper routes to transport people via weakly guarded border crossing points, establishing essential connections with corruptible officials, etc. ¹²⁷ There are many more individuals who facilitate operations, such as transporters, receivers, brothel keepers, forgers of documentation as well as corrupt border guards and embassy officials ⁽¹²⁸⁾.

Some of the young male traffickers are businessmen who travel through the region while others are deportees who use their previous travel experience to become ‘migration facilitators’ or to forge false documents (also called ‘guidemen’ ⁽¹²⁹⁾). Plambech notes that ‘the facilitation economy in Benin [City] is generated by a mixed group of men and women who make a business out of migration’ ⁽¹³⁰⁾.

2.1.2 Madams

A madam (also called *maman*) is the most important person in Nigerian sex trafficking and often also the sponsor financing the journey. Madams order the girls and sometimes recruit them. They often lead the trafficking organisations and monitor the trafficking process closely, from recruitment to exploitation ⁽¹³¹⁾. According to Europol, the number of women operating as traffickers is increasing ⁽¹³²⁾.

According to information dated 2005, madams in Italy were between 25 and 30 years old ⁽¹³³⁾. In contrast, a 2007 study of Nigerian madams involved in the trafficking to the Netherlands showed that they were on an average 45 years old, had legal residence in the Netherlands, or were awaiting a residence permit based on a relationship or marriage to a Dutch partner. All had worked in prostitution in Nigeria and the Netherlands and had worked their way up to the role of madam. The women played a key role, if not the main one, in the trafficking organisation, planning and controlling the entire process ⁽¹³⁴⁾.

Some of the madams have themselves been victims and became madams after repaying their debt ⁽¹³⁵⁾. According to Europol, ‘victims often become members of the criminal groups exploiting them, ultimately assuming the role of “madam” in the exploitation of others. In turn, this cultural novelty reduces the likelihood that victims will cooperate with law enforcement’ ⁽¹³⁶⁾. Carling designates this system a ‘self-reproducing organisation’ ⁽¹³⁷⁾.

Interlocutors interviewed in 2007 by the Danish Immigration Service during a mission to Nigeria confirmed that most madams started as prostitutes. Some victims returned voluntarily to Nigeria after the debt was paid and some of them ended up as traffickers themselves. These ex-victims were known as the most brutal and vindictive traffickers ⁽¹³⁸⁾.

Madams are often found both in Nigeria and in the destination country. The madam in the destination country is responsible for the victims after their arrival, and victims usually live and work under her control. Madams in Nigeria and in the destination country are closely connected and often related ⁽¹³⁹⁾. Some Nigerian women who had been

⁽¹²⁶⁾ Europol, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union*, 1 September 2011, pp. 15-16

⁽¹²⁷⁾ UNODC, *Organized crime involvement in trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants*, 2010, p. 34.

⁽¹²⁸⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 40.

⁽¹²⁹⁾ Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 9.

⁽¹³⁰⁾ Plambech, Sine, *Point of departure*, 2014, p. 194.

⁽¹³¹⁾ Carling, J., *Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe*, 2006, p. 27; UNODC, *Organized crime involvement in trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants*, 2010, pp. 44, 55; Europol, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union*, 1 September 2011, p. 12; Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 9.

⁽¹³²⁾ Europol, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union*, 1 September 2011, p. 11.

⁽¹³³⁾ Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005.

⁽¹³⁴⁾ Siegel, D., ‘Nigeriaanse madams in de mensenhandel in Nederland’, 2007, p. 44.

⁽¹³⁵⁾ Baye E.M.-O., *Experiences of Nigerian Trafficked Women*, December 2012, p. 25.

⁽¹³⁶⁾ EUROPOL, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union*, 1 September 2011, pp. 15-16.

⁽¹³⁷⁾ Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005.

⁽¹³⁸⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 21.

⁽¹³⁹⁾ Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005; Carling, J., *Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe*, 2006, p. 27.

trafficked to Spain were ‘bought’ by Nigerian madams based in that country. The madam had placed an order with a trafficker based in Morocco who then went to Nigeria to recruit them. The madam had paid between EUR 2,000 and EUR 3,000 per woman or girl⁽¹⁴⁰⁾.

The madams in the destination country are often in strict control of each step of the trafficking process. They control and organise the groups, comprising usually 10–15 women, and collect their profits⁽¹⁴¹⁾. In Nigeria, Italian madams are also called ‘Italos’ because they organise everything for their victims when they arrive in Italy⁽¹⁴²⁾.

However, a recent analysis of trafficking networks shows that not all madams play a central role in the human trafficking process. According to this analysis, there are two types of madams: the first type has a high hierarchical position in the network. Thanks to her financial means and network connections, she is able to plan all steps in the trafficking and thus has an important brokerage role. The second type of madam, usually involved in the trafficking of only a few close relatives, only arranges the sex work and the distribution of the earnings⁽¹⁴³⁾.

The partner of the madam may not necessarily be involved, on a daily basis, in the exploitation. The madam may also receive help from her so-called *factotum*, when needed⁽¹⁴⁴⁾. A madam may be assisted by a single person who undertakes several different tasks, or she may have several different assistants, each of whom has his/her own dedicated tasks. These assistants can be women who are among the ones being exploited by the madam through prostitution – a way to repay the debt through other services to the madam (‘victims-madams’ in Mancuso’s words)⁽¹⁴⁵⁾. The madam’s *factotum* and the courier can be either a man (‘master’ or ‘boss’) or a woman (*vice-maman*)⁽¹⁴⁶⁾.

2.2 Means of recruitment for sex trafficking

In this paragraph, the focus is on recruitment in Nigeria. Recruitment strategies, the debt system, the travel, and the use of *juju*/voodoo are examined.

2.2.1 Recruitment strategies

Sources refer to several recruitment strategies.

According to Plambech, many young women themselves initiate the contact with young men to seek migration opportunities to Europe. In turn, these men contact their own family members, often women already living in Europe who work as madams, and organise the journey to Europe through their networks⁽¹⁴⁷⁾. Some women actively seek information about migrating to Europe as well as financing for the journey⁽¹⁴⁸⁾. In Benin City, for example, girls can visit two nightclubs when seeking means to get to Europe. They are called ‘Italy’ and ‘Spain’, in reference to the destinations of the girls⁽¹⁴⁹⁾.

Women often meet the ‘travel agent’ (i.e. the trafficker/agent/madam), through family members, relatives, friends or other personal networks. Recruitment usually takes place in an environment familiar to the victim, such as their home, their neighbourhood, at school or at the workplace⁽¹⁵⁰⁾. The research by Cherti et al. shows that 29 out of 40 interviewed women (72 %) had been recruited by someone they or their family knew quite well. 15 % of the interviewees (6 women) had been recruited by a family member, a partner or an associate such as a former school

⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ UNODC, *The role of organized crime in the smuggling of migrants from West Africa to the European Union*, 30 May 2011, p. 13.

⁽¹⁴¹⁾ UNODC, *Measures to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in Benin, Nigeria and Togo*, September 2006, p. 57; DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, pp. 20–21.

⁽¹⁴²⁾ Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims’ and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 6.

⁽¹⁴³⁾ Mancuso, M., ‘Not all madams have a central role: analysis of a Nigerian sex trafficking network’, June 2014, p. 14.

⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 48.

⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 49; Mancuso, M., ‘Not all madams have a central role: analysis of a Nigerian sex trafficking network’, June 2014, p. 16.

⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 45.

⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 39.

⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 27.

⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims’ and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 6.

⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 27; DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 30; Carling, J., *Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe*, 2006, p. 27; Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 14; Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, pp. 38–39.

friend. 18 % (7 women) were trafficked by an employer or guardian. 22 % (9 women) were recruited by an associate of their family and 17 % (7 women) were recruited by a contact of a family friend or associate. Only 28 % (11 women) of the interviewed women had been approached and recruited by strangers ⁽¹⁵¹⁾.

Women may also be recruited by a total stranger who approaches them on the street, and who, in many cases, is a person who was once part of the community but has migrated and returned with wealth ⁽¹⁵²⁾. Recruiters scout in the streets of Benin City for girls wanting to travel, luring them with promises of work and education ⁽¹⁵³⁾. Parents are approached as well and are offered to take their daughters abroad to work. Usually, a family sending a daughter abroad enjoys a higher status in the local community. Sometimes, families are deceived about their daughter's occupation in Europe, by invoking prospective work in a beauty salon, in childcare or as a housecleaner ⁽¹⁵⁴⁾.

After the initial contact with the agent, the woman is put in contact with a madam, the most important person in the human trafficking network in Nigeria and often also the sponsor financing the journey (see 2.1) ⁽¹⁵⁵⁾.

When the phenomenon of Nigerian sex trafficking started, victims were recruited through audiocassettes or letters purportedly written by relations or acquaintances already in destination countries, often describing life as being very promising and inviting victims to come and join them. Alleged recruitment in musical troupes, sports competitions and religious festivals abroad have been used to lure the victims (see 1.3). Furthermore, traffickers residing in Europe legally adopted teenage girls with the consent of their biological parents to facilitate the procurement of visas for the girls ⁽¹⁵⁶⁾.

It is worth noting that, during an operation conducted by the Portuguese police forces to dismantle an organised criminal group of West African and Portuguese traffickers in 2014, a number of mobile phones, computers, and tablets were seized ⁽¹⁵⁷⁾.

2.2.2 Payment and sealing of the agreement

After the decision to travel to Europe is taken, transportation and financing of the journey have to be planned. Illegal migration is usually the only option as visa for Nigerians is out of reach and Nigeria is considered a 'risk country' in terms of document fraud, meaning that Nigerians have problems to get legal access to Schengen countries ⁽¹⁵⁸⁾.

The information and services provided by traffickers in Nigeria differ. Some arrange the whole journey, including transport and documents, while others only offer information on how to migrate to Europe. The traffickers may contact girls' parents directly and offer help for their daughters to migrate abroad for a fee (10,000 or 20,000 naira, for instance) ⁽¹⁵⁹⁾.

Often, the families need to borrow money or sell their assets to pay the fee requested by the agent for the journey. If the women make the deal themselves, they have to put themselves into debt ⁽¹⁶⁰⁾.

Borrowing money, outside the formal banking system, is very common in Benin City, as banks are out of reach for most people – including the educated middle class. The money is used to buy anything from food to cell phones and cars and to migrate. Money is often borrowed from a combination of local money lenders, family members, social networks and criminal networks ⁽¹⁶¹⁾.

To seal the agreement, the victim, often accompanied by a family member, and the trafficker or the madam, often go to a shrine (see 2.5).

⁽¹⁵¹⁾ Cherti., M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, pp. 5, 39.

⁽¹⁵²⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 27; Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 39.

⁽¹⁵³⁾ Cherti., M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, pp 5, 39. See for anecdotal evidence: BBC, *Human trafficking - The lives bought and sold*, 28 July 2015.

⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 11.

⁽¹⁵⁵⁾ Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005.

⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ Okojie, C., et al., *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy*, 2003, pp. 55, 113.

⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ Europol, *Human trafficking ring dismantled in Portugal*, 16 July 2014.

⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 27.

⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ In 2006, when this information was gathered, 10,000 naira was about 61 euro. Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 27.

⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, pp. 27–28.

⁽¹⁶¹⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of departure*, 2014, p. 196.

2.2.3 Travel

In this section, information on the organisation and on the main players of the travel to Europe is provided ⁽¹⁶²⁾. More detailed elements on the journey (travel routes, means of transportation, etc.) are available in [Chapter 3](#).

Kastner differentiates between two migration patterns: in the first case, women proceed with their journey autonomously, either without any financial help from their families or with interest-free loans ⁽¹⁶³⁾. In the second and most common case, migration takes place with limited financial means, with women dependent on ‘sponsors’ who demand high interest on the considerable amount of money borrowed ⁽¹⁶⁴⁾.

According to interlocutors of the Danish Immigration Service (fact-finding mission to Nigeria, 2007), the typical procedure was for traffickers to bring the victim from Benin City to Lagos and to hand her over to another trafficker who was responsible for the next step. The entire journey might last up to two years (see [Chapter 3](#)). Within this string of traffickers the network was very strong. Contacts with other madams and their traffickers were rare ⁽¹⁶⁵⁾.

In some cases, as reported in 2007, women bought information from traffickers on how to migrate but took care of their own travel. In this case, the trip may take years and may be more risky for women. In other instances, women bought the entire trip, including air ticket, false passport and visa ⁽¹⁶⁶⁾. In many trafficking transit countries, there are migrant ‘camps’, used by several agents from different groups. In these countries, local people assist traffickers in their operations. Some women may have to stay in these camps for years, waiting for a possibility to reach Europe. Life conditions in the camps in North Africa are harsh, especially for female migrants who may have to trade sex in exchange for food. Many are traumatised and unable to contact their families (see [Chapter 3](#)) ⁽¹⁶⁷⁾.

2.3 The ‘debt system’

A UNHCR research paper dedicated to trafficking in Europe (2013) notes:

‘One characteristic of African sex networks is the debt system. These debts are typically quite high, taking between one to four years to repay, and [women] are released once the debt is repaid. However, they remain vulnerable because they are left without money, skills, legal status, or a support network. Another characteristic of these sex trafficking networks is the use of voodoo as a means of exerting pressure over their victims’ ⁽¹⁶⁸⁾.

Most victims expect to get into debt with traffickers, but they are informed of the size of the debt only once they arrive in Europe ⁽¹⁶⁹⁾. Some know the actual size of the debt from the beginning but do not necessarily understand how much money it represents or what they must do to repay it ⁽¹⁷⁰⁾. Many women think that the debt amount announced in Nigeria is in Nigerian naira. Only in the destination country do they realise that the debt is in euro. They may not know or understand the exchange rate of the euro either ⁽¹⁷¹⁾. Often the victims do not have advance knowledge about how long it takes to repay the debt ⁽¹⁷²⁾, and they have been given the impression that the sum can be easily earned in a few months ⁽¹⁷³⁾.

⁽¹⁶²⁾ For information on the travel routes, conditions and destination countries, see [Chapter 3 Travel to Europe](#).

⁽¹⁶³⁾ In 2003, it was reported that lawyers in Nigeria drew up so-called “friendly loan agreements” that secured the victims’ consent to debt bondage with their traffickers. The loan was “friendly” because it was interest-free; in Edo State only licensed moneylenders were entitled to lend money with interest. It is not exactly known how the present situation is. Okojie, C., et al., *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy*, 2003, p. 108.

⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ Kastner, K., ‘Moving relationships: family ties of Nigerian migrants on their way to Europe’, January 2010, p. 20. See also Plambeck, Sine, *Point of departure*, 2014, pp. 189, 196.

⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, pp. 20-21.

⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007.

⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 28.

⁽¹⁶⁸⁾ Ana Dols Garcia, *Voodoo, Witchcraft and Human Trafficking in Europe*, October 2013.

⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 9.

⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005.

⁽¹⁷¹⁾ Voice of America, *Nigerian Sex Trafficking Victims Abandoned*, 26 November 2012; Baye, E.M.-O., *Experiences of Nigerian Trafficked Women*, December 2012, p. 20; Baye, E. M.-O. & S. Heumann, ‘Migration, Sex Work and Exploitative Labor Conditions’, 2014, p. 88; Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 9.

⁽¹⁷²⁾ Baye, E.M.-O., *Experiences of Nigerian Trafficked Women*, December 2012, p. 20; UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime in the West African Region*, 2005, p. 27; Baye, E. M.-O. & S. Heumann, ‘Migration, Sex Work and Exploitative Labor Conditions’, 2014, p. 88

⁽¹⁷³⁾ Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 18.

The debt sometimes increases with punishment for ‘bad’ behaviour, such as abortions and pregnancies, with a fine of EUR 10,000 or more ⁽¹⁷⁴⁾.

Travelling by air is more expensive than by sea due to the travel document procurement costs and airline ticket prices ⁽¹⁷⁵⁾. The price for a plane ticket and a forged passport, plus visa, ranges between USD 6,500 and 12,000. The debt further increases when entering Europe due to high interest rates and more expenditure ⁽¹⁷⁶⁾. In June 2015, the price for the passage from Nigeria to Europe varied between EUR 40,000 and 60,000, depending on the mode of transport ⁽¹⁷⁷⁾.

2.3.1 Repayment of the debt

The repayment of a EUR 35,000–50,000 debt would take two to five years ⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ although Plambech’s sources mention two to three years of sex work to repay the debt ⁽¹⁷⁹⁾. Women may try to repay the debt through savings, or other type of work such as selling, cleaning, or agricultural work. However, women rapidly become aware that sex work is the quickest way to earn money. In the meantime, the family in Nigeria also expects to receive regular remittances from the daughter abroad ⁽¹⁸⁰⁾.

Usually the victims are not allowed to send money home until the entire debt is repaid. Some try to hide part of their earnings in different places to send some money back home secretly ⁽¹⁸¹⁾. If they get caught, a fine may be added to their initial debt ⁽¹⁸²⁾. Plambech’s interlocutors managed to remit some money to their families to meet their most urgent demands, despite the cost of living as undocumented prostitutes and their debts ⁽¹⁸³⁾.

It is the madam who finally determines when the victim has settled her debt ⁽¹⁸⁴⁾. Some madams report their victims to the police just before they finish repaying their debt. In this way, they can remove these victims from the market, and prevent them from competing with new victims earning money for the madam ⁽¹⁸⁵⁾.

Even after the repayment of the debt, victims may feel obliged to continue sex work, as earnings from any other type of work may not be sufficient to provide for both themselves and their family in Nigeria ⁽¹⁸⁶⁾. Victims therefore often continue working for the madam after repaying their debt, and some of them eventually try to become madams or traffickers themselves, as indicated previously. Indeed, as Carling notes, a self-producing organisational structure is a typical feature of Nigerian human trafficking ⁽¹⁸⁷⁾.

Some women may stop paying their debt as they consider it unreasonably large and the working conditions unbearable, or both ⁽¹⁸⁸⁾. Women who do not pay money back in the amount and timeframe set by the madam are confronted with threats, coercion and physical violence. IOM notes that in such cases, ‘juju doctors’ may threaten the women with physical harm, madness, impotency or death (their death or relatives deaths), thereby terrifying the women in order to bring them back into the network. Threats are also directed towards their families and minor children back home ⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ (See 2.5).

⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, pp. 17, 26.

⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005; Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return* 2007, p. 27-28; Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 17.

⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ Baye, E.M.-O., *Experiences of Nigerian Trafficked Women*, December 2012, p. 20; Baye, E. M.-O. & S. Heumann, ‘Migration, Sex Work and Exploitative Labor Conditions’, 2014, p. 88; Bonetti, Sr. E., ‘“Women Helping Women”’, 2011, pp. 266-267; Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007 pp. 27-28; Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 17.

⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ Plambech, S., ‘Violence in the safety of home’, 12 August 2015.

⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ Baye, E. M.-O. & S. Heumann, ‘Migration, Sex Work and Exploitative Labor Conditions’, 2014, p. 91; Baye, E.M.-O., *Experiences of Nigerian Trafficked Women*, December 2012, p. 22; Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 18.

⁽¹⁷⁹⁾ Plambech, S., ‘Between “Victims” and “Criminals”’, Fall 2014, p. 389.

⁽¹⁸⁰⁾ Plambech, S., ‘Between “Victims” and “Criminals”’, Fall 2014, p. 389.

⁽¹⁸¹⁾ Baye, E. M.-O. & S. Heumann, ‘Migration, Sex Work and Exploitative Labor Conditions’, 2014, p. 91.

⁽¹⁸²⁾ Baye, E. M.-O., *Experiences of Nigerian Trafficked Women*, 14 December 2012, p.22.

⁽¹⁸³⁾ Plambech, S., ‘Between “Victims” and “Criminals”’, Fall 2014, p. 389.

⁽¹⁸⁴⁾ Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 21.

⁽¹⁸⁵⁾ Okojie, C., et al, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy*, 2003, p. 67; Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 10; Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 12.

⁽¹⁸⁶⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 35

⁽¹⁸⁷⁾ Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005.

⁽¹⁸⁸⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 34

⁽¹⁸⁹⁾ Interviewed by Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 21.

2.4 Role of women’s relatives in sex trafficking

One of the reasons for migrating to Europe, as mentioned by Nigerian women, is their desire – or family pressure – to support their relatives in Nigeria. Kastner, during research she conducted in 2007 in Benin City, observed: ‘practically every family I encountered was supported by a child living in Europe or in the United States’⁽¹⁹⁰⁾. The family in Nigeria remains a source of deep concern for many trafficked women, putting them under pressure to pay back their debts in time (see 2.5.4).

Braimah notes that families in Edo State whose daughters are involved in sex trafficking are driven by illiteracy and poverty. There is considerable pressure on the girls to earn money for their poverty-stricken families. Sometimes the families – and the girls themselves – do know about the activities their daughters are going to perform. However, they may not fully understand the risks involved in sex trafficking and in prostitution abroad⁽¹⁹¹⁾.

As indicated above, the decision resulting in a woman leaving to work in Europe may be, in certain cases, a family decision. According to a study carried out in the UK and Nigeria on the subject of trafficking (2012), few women are in a position to play a role in the decision to accept a (misrepresented) offer to travel to Europe⁽¹⁹²⁾. Parents may encourage their daughters to do this⁽¹⁹³⁾ and sacrifice one or more family members, as this is seen as an investment for the whole family⁽¹⁹⁴⁾. Many families pride themselves on having their daughter, sister or other relation in Europe earning money, pointing to things acquired with the money sent by these women⁽¹⁹⁵⁾. Sending daughters abroad has become a sort of status symbol for some families⁽¹⁹⁶⁾.

2.5 Use of *juju* in sex trafficking

2.5.1 Critical approach

Plambech defines *juju* as ‘a popular term for various forms of “traditional” medicine and black magic’⁽¹⁹⁷⁾. In literature and media reports devoted to sex trafficking in Nigeria, much emphasis has been placed on the coercive and enslaving role of *juju*. However, researchers object to this sensational and victimizing approach, in which *juju* or voodoo in itself became an explanation for women’s behaviour as if they were bewitched and deprived of their free will. Such an approach may overlook situations in which women choose to engage in sex work and does not contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon⁽¹⁹⁸⁾. As Carling observes:

‘In all the European countries concerned, the combination of voodoo, sexuality, “slave trade” and organized crime appealed to the media. Whereas references to voodoo have been made frequently in the coverage of Nigerian trafficking, it has mostly been characterized by recreating Western clichés rather than presenting any nuanced understanding’⁽¹⁹⁹⁾.

Cherty et al. note that *juju* may not always be experienced by victims, at the time of the ceremony, as a tool of intimidation and control. *Juju* is rather a ‘secondary’ form of coercion, experienced by persons who have already entered situations of trafficking. It may nonetheless facilitate the travel and the trafficking in the UK. *Juju* only becomes a threat once the woman enters a situation of exploitation⁽²⁰⁰⁾. Indeed, not all victims use the term ‘voodoo’ when describing their experiences of *juju* ceremonies at shrines, and the rituals are not necessarily experienced as

⁽¹⁹⁰⁾ Kastner, K., ‘Moving relationships’, January 2010, p. 19.

⁽¹⁹¹⁾ Braimah, T. S., ‘Sex trafficking in Edo State, Nigeria’, 2013, p. 24.

⁽¹⁹²⁾ Cherti, M. et al, *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 34.

⁽¹⁹³⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy*, 2003, p. 83; Skilbrei, M.-L. & Tveit, M., *Facing return*, 2007, p. 25; Attoh, F., *Chattels of their families*, 2010, p. 7; Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, p. 10; Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 66; BBC, *Human trafficking: The lives bought and sold*, 28 July 2015.

⁽¹⁹⁴⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & Tveit, M., *Facing return*, 2007, p. 25; DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p.31, 48.

⁽¹⁹⁵⁾ Attoh, F., *Chattels of their families*, 2010, p. 7.

⁽¹⁹⁶⁾ Aghatise, E., *Trafficking for prostitution in Italy*, 8 November 2002, p. 7; Cherti, M., et al. *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p.41. (source: Okojie, C., 2009, Carling, J., 2006).

⁽¹⁹⁷⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of departure* 2014, p. 161.

⁽¹⁹⁸⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of departure* 2014, p.21; Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005; Carling J., *Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe*, 2006, pp. 52-53.

⁽¹⁹⁹⁾ Carling J., *Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe*, 2006, p. 52.

⁽²⁰⁰⁾ Cherti, M., et al., *Human Trafficking from Nigeria to the UK*, January 2013, p. 43.

intimidating and coercive as such ⁽²⁰¹⁾. According to Carling, voodoo only becomes an oppressive part of the pact if the woman tries to break the pact. If the victim wants to leave the prostitution network, she may face physical violence and be threatened with the consequences of *juju* ⁽²⁰²⁾.

According to Plambech, the strong focus of the media and anti-trafficking aid on *juju* practises puts the women in a position of victim of a backward culture:

‘When the oath-taking of Nigerian women emerged in Europe in the late 1990s, *juju* caused a moral panic among several Western anti-trafficking institutions as well as among authorities and popular media, as an exotic and foreign practice. Some even concluded that *juju* was the driving force of trafficking (...) Whether as rumors or concrete practices, discourses of *juju* provide insight into understanding the mechanisms of trafficking, sex work migration and deportation. One could say that the focus on *juju* reveals little about ‘trafficking’ but quite a bit about the world in which it takes place. Furthermore, most of the women concerned would not use the word *juju*, but rather talk about their devotion for spirits; and while some women sincerely believe in the power of spirits and oath-taking, others consider it a mere contract ritual with no magical power’ ⁽²⁰³⁾.

2.5.2 *Juju* oaths

Voodoo—referred to locally as *juju*—is a traditional religion in West Africa where it has been practised for centuries. Spirits or gods are believed to govern the earth and every aspect of human existence. They may protect people or punish them ⁽²⁰⁴⁾. *Juju* is deeply ingrained in society in Edo State, and many Nigerians, regardless of social class or education level, believe in it. Many Nigerians carry amulets to ward off evil spirits and bad luck. However, only a *juju* priest can use the powers of *juju* ⁽²⁰⁵⁾.

Victoria Nwogu, in an article on the use of voodoo in human trafficking, underlines the necessity of differentiating between voodoo and ritual oaths:

‘Voodoo is a religion (which includes ritual oaths in its practices) while a ritual oath is a seal placed on an agreement through rituals binding both parties to the terms of the agreement on pain of supernatural retaliation.

Oaths as part of traditional religious beliefs are often administered in a ritual ceremony and their potency relies on securing an item of clothing or body part from the person on whom the oath is being administered and placing them in a concoction of other ‘magical’ items such as the blood of animals, kola nuts, water, palm oil, earth taken from a graveyard, alcohol and herbs. Some favoured body parts include hair, blood, nails and teeth; to make the ritual more ominous, items could be taken from intimate parts of the body’ ⁽²⁰⁶⁾.

A UNHCR research paper dedicated to the question of THB in Europe and voodoo emphasises the contractual aspect of the *juju* oath:

‘These oaths seal the pact between women who want to move to Europe and traffickers. Traffickers commit to pay all costs of the journey, while the women promise to repay the money, be respectful to the traffickers and engage not to denounce the traffickers to the police’ ⁽²⁰⁷⁾.

Ritual oaths (called *juju* by Nigerian women) became used in Nigerian human trafficking as a tool of coercion to control the victims. A *juju* oath works as a form of psychological control as the fear of consequences of breaking the oath, i.e. punishment by the gods, is extremely strong ⁽²⁰⁸⁾. The purpose of the oath is to prevent victims from revealing the identity of the traffickers or the details of the *juju* ritual and to ensure they pay their debt as agreed

⁽²⁰¹⁾ Dijk, van, R., ‘Voodoo’ on the doorstep. Young Nigerian prostitutes and magic’, 2001, p. 571.

⁽²⁰²⁾ Carling, J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005.

⁽²⁰³⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of departure*, 2014, pp. 194-197.

⁽²⁰⁴⁾ Ana Dols Garcia, *Voodoo, Witchcraft and Human Trafficking in Europe*, October 2013.

⁽²⁰⁵⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 23.

⁽²⁰⁶⁾ Nwogu, V., ‘Human trafficking from Nigeria and voodoo. Any connections?’, June 2008.

⁽²⁰⁷⁾ Ana Dols Garcia, *Voodoo, Witchcraft and Human Trafficking in Europe*, October 2013; Nwogu, V. ‘Human trafficking from Nigeria and voodoo. Any connections?’, June 2008.

⁽²⁰⁸⁾ US DoS, *2014 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, June 2014, p. 297; Think Africa Press, *A Bewitching Economy: Witchcraft and Human Trafficking*, 17 September 2012; Europol, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union*, 1 September 2011, p. 6; Cherti, M., et al, *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 43; Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 18.

without creating problems. For their part, traffickers pledge to take the victim to the destination. Many traffickers require their victims to swear the oath ⁽²⁰⁹⁾. It is believed that breaking the oath can anger the deities, which may lead to severe illness, madness or death of the oath breaker or their relatives ⁽²¹⁰⁾.

According to Cherti et al., *juju* oaths in Nigeria generally occur in situations where the victim is already vulnerable (for example, in a pre-existing situation of exploitation). Their research shows a much lower percentage of victims (who had been trafficked to the UK) having been exposed to *juju* ⁽²¹¹⁾. 28 % of the victims had directly experienced *juju*; the majority of the rituals occurred in Nigeria, and 8 % in Europe; 8 % of the victims had experienced other oaths or rituals in Nigeria, not all directly related to being trafficked ⁽²¹²⁾. This implies that more than two-thirds of the victims trafficked to the UK had not experienced a *juju* ritual.

Not every woman participating in *juju* rituals necessarily believes in *juju*, nor is she a voodoo worshipper. Many consider it a mere contract ritual with no magic powers and perceive the oath as a sealing of agreements. Some women's belief in *juju* may also fade after some time in Europe, as Skilbrei and Tveit note ⁽²¹³⁾.

According to an ex-victim of trafficking interviewed by Pascoal in 2012, many Christian girls do not swear a *juju* oath because of their religious belief ⁽²¹⁴⁾. However, Christianity is often blended with belief in ancestral spirits ⁽²¹⁵⁾. In addition, devout Christians may still return to traditional beliefs, especially when they are sick or when seeking help and comfort ⁽²¹⁶⁾. In some cases, migration pacts are sealed with prayer rituals in Pentecostal Churches to which most of the victims belong, further broadening the pact's legitimacy ⁽²¹⁷⁾.

Rituals serve numerous purposes. Some aim to instil fear of terrible reprisals, such as death and madness if the oath is broken, while others are intended for attracting clients or protecting the victim against HIV/AIDS ⁽²¹⁸⁾. The rituals are also said to make the woman stronger, more balanced, more beautiful and better fitted for obeying the spirits ⁽²¹⁹⁾.

2.5.3 Juju ceremonies

Religious leaders

The ceremony is performed by a traditional religious leader, commonly called a *juju* priest. These religious leaders are named in various ways: *ohen* ⁽²²⁰⁾, *baba-loa*, native doctor, *père-savant*, voodoo minister ⁽²²¹⁾, medicine man ⁽²²²⁾ and head priest ⁽²²³⁾. *Juju* priests may often be accomplices of traffickers and participate in controlling victims through the oath taking. The priests are the guarantors of the debt contracted by young women with their madam. In case of non-payment, they may turn against the family of the young woman ⁽²²⁴⁾.

⁽²⁰⁹⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 22-23; Europol, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union*, 1 September 2011, p. 6; Skilbrei, M.-L. & Tveit, M., *Facing return*, 2007, p. 32.

⁽²¹⁰⁾ Dijk, van, R., 'Voodoo' on the doorstep. Young Nigerian prostitutes and magic', p. 570; Think Africa Press, *A Bewitching Economy: Witchcraft and Human Trafficking*, 17 September 2012.

⁽²¹¹⁾ Cherti, M., et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 43.

⁽²¹²⁾ Cherti, M., et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 43.

⁽²¹³⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007 p. 33.

⁽²¹⁴⁾ Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 18.

⁽²¹⁵⁾ Carling J., *Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe*, 2006, p. 15.

⁽²¹⁶⁾ Villemain, M, *West African Voodoo: A technique for control by human traffickers*, 2015.

⁽²¹⁷⁾ Nwogu, V., 'Human trafficking from Nigeria and voodoo. Any connections?', June 2008.

⁽²¹⁸⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, pp. 22-23; Dijk, van, R., 'Voodoo' on the doorstep. Young Nigerian prostitutes and magic', 2001, p. 571.

⁽²¹⁹⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 38.

⁽²²⁰⁾ Carling J., *Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe*, 2006, p. 60.

⁽²²¹⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 37.

⁽²²²⁾ Achebe, N., 'The Road to Italy: Nigerian Sex Workers at Home and Abroad', 2004, p. 182.

⁽²²³⁾ CNN, '*Juju oaths' ensnare trafficking victims mind, body and soul*', 1 April 2011.

⁽²²⁴⁾ Simoni, V., "'I swear an oath'", serments d'allégeances, coercitions et stratégies migratoires chez les femmes nigériennes de Benin City', 2013, pp. 33-60.

Shrines

Rituals for sealing the oath are performed during *juju* ceremonies at shrines (which are used for many other rituals, not only for trafficking purposes) in Nigeria, and in addition sometimes in the destination country. In Nigeria, numerous shrines have also established branches internationally⁽²²⁵⁾. In 2003, the most potent shrine in Benin City was Aru’Osun Oba⁽²²⁶⁾.

In the past few years, the most popular shrines for taking oaths have become Ayelala’s shrines. These are temples where chief priests practice different cults related to the goddess Ayelala⁽²²⁷⁾. She became the guarantor of contractual relations and is invoked to kill all those who do not respect their commitments. The goddess administers justice and protects morality⁽²²⁸⁾. Ayelala’s shrines are strongly implanted in Edo State, particularly in Benin City. According to Simoni, between 2005 and 2011, 50 % of the prostitutes interviewed in France by the association “Les amis du bus des femmes” had sworn in an Ayelala’s shrine. Between 2011 and 2013, this percentage had increased to 75 %⁽²²⁹⁾.

Items used

A significant part of the *juju* ceremony is the assemblage of a packet or packets. The packets often contain symbolic artefacts and items embodying a whole range of meanings and functions. The packets serve as a medium linking the priest with the victim even after she has left the country⁽²³⁰⁾.

Some of the following items are usually collected from the victims: hair, pubic hair, armpit hair, fingernails, toenails, blood, menstrual blood and used underwear that may be stained with menstrual blood⁽²³¹⁾. Pieces of twisted metal referring to the power of the *Ogun* deity may be added as well⁽²³²⁾.

According to UNICRI, several small packets are usually assembled, given to the woman - and, at times, to her father or mother as guarantors and witnesses of the pact - and to the madam. Once the debt has been repaid as agreed, the victim receives the packets back as a proof that the pact has been respected⁽²³³⁾.

2.5.4 Effects of *juju*

Victims consider the oath sworn in the *juju* ceremony as a solemn oath⁽²³⁴⁾ and as a result, are not ready to break it easily. The oath cannot be renegotiated. It is considered to be binding regardless of where the victims are residing⁽²³⁵⁾. This is one of the reasons why the majority of victims are usually not willing to cooperate with the authorities in destination countries, which in turn complicates legal action against traffickers⁽²³⁶⁾.

Women may believe that breaking the oath leads to misfortune, illness, madness, their death or death in their families⁽²³⁷⁾. Nigerian victims of human trafficking in Italy have described their experiences with the following *juju*-related expressions:

‘I’ve got a snake in my head’, ‘There’s a snake in my belly’, ‘I can feel the water in my head’, ‘Cool my head’, ‘I’m possessed’, ‘Last night there were ants coming out of my feet’, ‘The other night I went to Benin City and

⁽²²⁵⁾ Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 15.

⁽²²⁶⁾ Okojie, C., et al., *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy*, 2003, p. 68.

⁽²²⁷⁾ This goddess was said to be Ijaw’s slave, sacrificed during a reconciliation pact between the Ijaw and Ilaje tribes of Ondo State. She was sacrificed to atone for the sins of Ilaje guilty of adultery who took refuge among Ijaw. During her sacrifice, she would have used the word Ayelala which means ‘the world is incomprehensible, is a mystery’. Akhilomen, D., *The Resurgence of Ayelala in Benin Kingdom*, 25 September 2009.

⁽²²⁸⁾ Akhilomen, D., *The Resurgence of Ayelala in Benin Kingdom*, 25 September 2009.

⁽²²⁹⁾ Simoni, V., ‘“I swear an oath”, serments d’allégeances, coercitions et stratégies migratoires chez les femmes nigérianes de Benin City’, 2013, pp. 33-60.

⁽²³⁰⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 38.

⁽²³¹⁾ ECPAT, *Victims’ courage helps to convict trafficker over Nigerian child sex ring*, 29 October 2012; DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 22-23; UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 38; Nwogu, V., ‘Human trafficking from Nigeria and voodoo. Any connections?’, June 2008; Ana Dols Garcia, *Voodoo, Witchcraft and Human Trafficking in Europe*, October 2013.

⁽²³²⁾ Dijk, van, R., ‘Voodoo’ on the doorstep. Young Nigerian prostitutes and magic’, 2001, p. 571.

⁽²³³⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 38.

⁽²³⁴⁾ Carling, J. *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005.

⁽²³⁵⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 38.

⁽²³⁶⁾ Another reason why women are not willing to cooperate with the authorities is the fear of deportation. Carling J., *Migration, Human Smuggling and Trafficking from Nigeria to Europe*, 2006, p. 29; Plambach, S., *Points of departure*, 2014, pp. 141-142; DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 23-24.

⁽²³⁷⁾ Ana Dols Garcia, *Voodoo, Witchcraft and Human Trafficking in Europe*, October 2013.

I came back this morning', 'I hear voices that tell me to go back home because my parents are in danger', 'I want to go to sleep and never wake up again', 'Break my head open to get out the poison they made me swallow' (238).

Juju rituals may lead to severe psychological and even psychiatric problems and it may take years for the victims to recover or feel safe from the *juju* (239). Nigerian victims sometimes display symptoms of Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the related mental and psychosomatic symptoms and other potential problems are interpreted as a result of *juju* (240). Because of the psychological nature of *juju*, victims may not feel safe from the subjective fear of the *juju* oath. Even though a victim gets a residence permit in the destination country, she may still fear that the *juju* priest is capable of killing her. Hence the use of psychotherapy has sometimes been advised (241).

Counter-strategies against the effects of *juju*

In order to prosecute traffickers, victims acting as witnesses are necessary but fear for the effects of *juju* or other factors, such as fear of deportation makes many victims unwilling to testify (242). Breaking the spell of *juju* is a way to lift the fear of *juju*. In the last decade, different approaches have been developed, such as the use of Christian prayers and exorcism and counter-*juju* rituals. The Italian Catholic Church is said to have performed exorcism rituals on victims of human trafficking (243).

The Girls' Power Initiative organisation (GPI) used Christian rituals to decrease the power and influence of *juju* priests and to oppose the traditional spirits so that the rituals will no longer have a hold on the victims (244).

NAPTIP has raided shrines in Edo to stop the use of *juju* in human trafficking, and witness protection has been given to some *juju* priests who have exposed traffickers. In its raids, NAPTIP has reclaimed items that victims were forced to leave at shrines (245). In the Dutch large-scale court case *Koolvis*, a local Nigerian priest helped to break the oath so that the women could feel free from the curse and be comfortable to talk to the police and help convict the trafficker (246).

(238) UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 38, p. 69.

(239) ECPAT, *Victims' courage helps to convict trafficker over Nigerian child sex ring*, 29 October 2012; DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, pp. 22-23.

(240) Think Africa Press, *A Bewitching Economy: Witchcraft and Human Trafficking*, 17 September 2012; Aghatise, E., *Trafficking for prostitution in Italy*, 8 November 2002, p. 8.

(241) DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, pp. 23-24

(242) Plambech, S., *Points of departure*, 2014, pp. 141-142; Cherti, M., et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p.77.

(243) Global Post, *'I was a slave': Nigerian women escape sexual bondage in Italy*, 14 July 2015.

(244) Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 15.

(245) Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 15; DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 23.

(246) Villemain, M., *West African Voodoo: A technique for control by human traffickers*, 2015; Torremans, S.J.C.M., *Met onbekende bestemming*, 2009 (restricted).

3. Travel to Europe

While Chapter 3 attempts to describe the journey of trafficked women to Europe (routes, circumstances, travel documents, destination countries), it should be underlined that ‘trafficking methods and routes continuously evolve in response to immigration controls and anti-trafficking initiatives’ (247).

3.1 Organisation of the journey

According to Plambech:

‘The first sex workers tended to work independently, but European immigration restrictions made prospective migrants increasingly dependent on large loans in order to pay their journey. Some of the first arrived migrants, mostly women, began to recruit and organize the migration of other women from their region, fronting the money for travel and creating a system of indentured labor.’ (248)

In many cases, madams, also referred to as ‘sponsors’ are considered to be the ones who make the travel to Europe possible by providing the documents or guaranteeing the financial means for the victims to arrive in the destination country (249).

Crossing from Nigeria to Europe is expensive and ranged from EUR 40,000 to EUR 60,000 in June 2015, according to women with whom Plambech worked (250).

As indicated in section 2.1, madams depend on men escorting the girls to their destination (251). The victim usually travels with young men called brothers, trolleys or *dagos* (252). Often these men may subdue new victims and exploit them sexually (253). It is worth noticing that a study on illicit trafficking in Libya points to the growing relationship, in this country, between those smuggling persons and the transit of illicit drugs amongst Nigerian networks (254).

In some cases, madams themselves take their victims to the destination country (255).

(247) Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 24.

(248) Plambech S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 34.

(249) Plambech S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p.22. Carling J., *Trafficking in Women from Nigeria to Europe*, 1 July 2005.

(250) Plambech, S., ‘Violence in the safety of home’, 12 August 2015.

(251) UNODC, *Transnational Organized Crime in the West African Region*, 2005, p. 27.

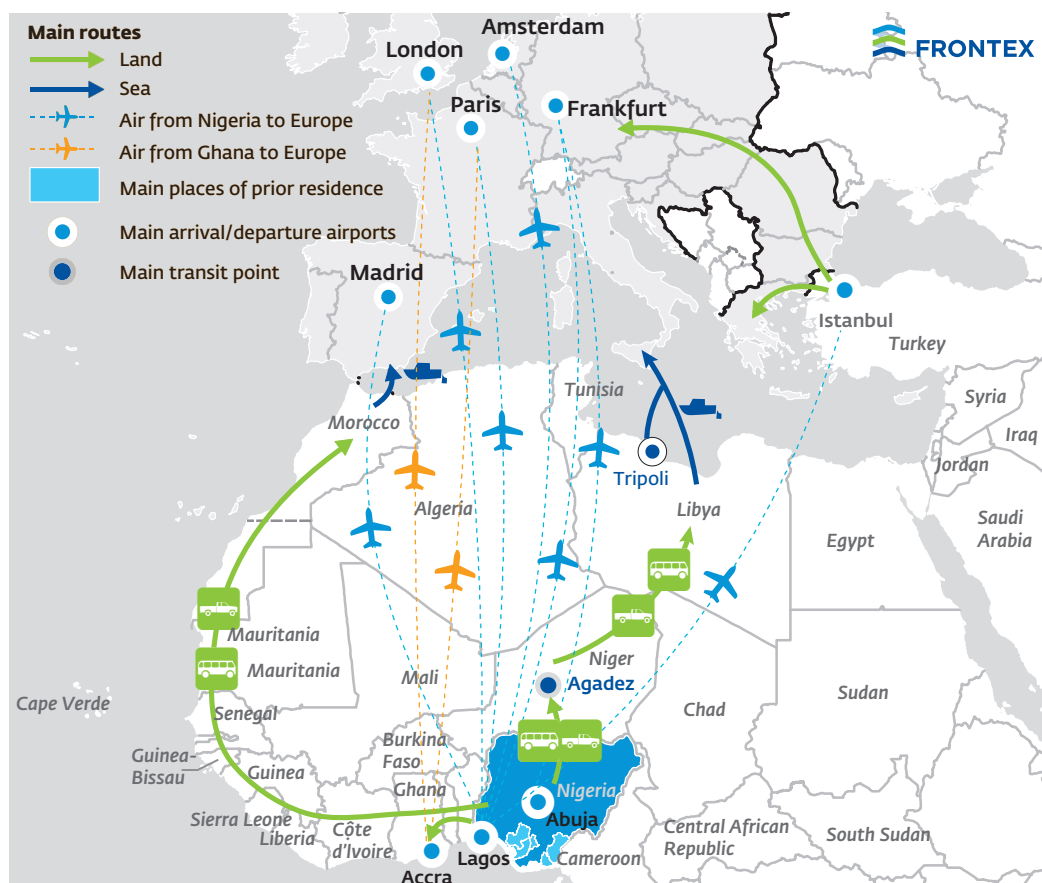
(252) UNODC, *The role of organized crime in the smuggling of migrants*, January 2011, pp. 37-38. UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 42.

(253) UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 38.

(254) Shaw, M. & Mangan F., *Illicit Trafficking and Libya’s Transition*, 2014, pp. 14-15.

(255) Baye, E.M.-O., *Experiences of Nigerian Trafficked Women*, December 2012, p. 14.

3.2 Travel routes, means of transportation and duration of the journey



Map Source: Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015

From the late 80s to mid-2000, victims typically travelled by air.

Due to tightened migration control and higher costs, this pattern changed from 2005 onwards, with victims travelling more commonly through several transit countries first, before crossing the Mediterranean Sea ⁽²⁵⁶⁾.

According to consulted sources, the most prevalent and established route appears to take victims across Nigeria in mini-buses (via Kano State, Northern Nigeria), through the Niger border by car, foot or motor bike, before reaching Agadez (Niger) by truck ⁽²⁵⁷⁾. From Agadez, women undertake a dangerous journey through the Saharan desert, to Libyan cities such as Zuwarah, Sabha or Tripoli ⁽²⁵⁸⁾. From Tripoli and the Western Libyan coast, victims are transported by boat across the sea to Italy ⁽²⁵⁹⁾ (Lampedusa, Sicily) ⁽²⁶⁰⁾ or Malta ⁽²⁶¹⁾.

⁽²⁵⁶⁾ Baye, E.M.-O., *Experiences of Nigerian Trafficked Women*, December 2012, p. 19; Plambech S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, pp. 34, 164; Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, p. 12; Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 61; UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014*, pp. 56-57.

⁽²⁵⁷⁾ Plambech S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 233; Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 61; Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, p. 13.

⁽²⁵⁸⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, pp. 37, 233.

⁽²⁵⁹⁾ Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 61.

⁽²⁶⁰⁾ Plambech S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 233; UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014*, pp. 56-57.

⁽²⁶¹⁾ Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, p. 13.

Sources also point to the use of established overland routes to reach Spain⁽²⁶²⁾. Victims travel through various countries, such as Algeria, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Senegal, Mauritania or Morocco⁽²⁶³⁾. One transit route consists in passing through Mali (Tin Zaouaten) to enter Algeria (Tamanrasset), then Morocco (Oujda). From Morocco, victims are sent to the coast of Andalusia on inflatable rafts or smuggled into Ceuta and Melilla in the trunks or engine compartments of cars. Another route takes victims through Mali to Mauritania, and from there, across the desert to Morocco where they attempt to enter Europe via the same means described above⁽²⁶⁴⁾. The UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014 specifies that 'Victims trafficked to Spain, for instance, may fly to the main airports of the country or of neighbouring countries. In the case of the land route, they will travel through the Sahel, the Sahara to North Africa and cross the border into Ceuta or Melilla in Spain'⁽²⁶⁵⁾.

During this overland journey, women are transported from one 'connection house' (also referred to as 'ghettos') to the next along the route, locked up in these houses and regularly sexually exploited in villages or cities along the route⁽²⁶⁶⁾. In transit countries, trafficked women may also be already engaged in prostitution. According to the women Plambech interviewed, 'typically, they waited several months in Libya before crossing, some began selling sex to Libyan men during these months to sustain their living'⁽²⁶⁷⁾. It is worth noting that before arriving or while in Europe (e.g. in Morocco or Spain), women may face a new challenge when they become pregnant. According to Kastner, being pregnant or being a young mother - even unwillingly - helps women to earn money through begging, and may give them protection against rape and deportation. For instance, Moroccan immigration law prohibits the deportation of pregnant women and minors, whereas Spanish law prohibits the deportation of pregnant women if this endangers their health. As single mothers, the women take up the role of double bread winners however: they have to support their families in Nigeria and provide for their children born in Europe. This double burden plays a crucial role in their endurance, in continuing the prostitution work and earning as much money as possible⁽²⁶⁸⁾.

In the UNICRI study on Nigerian women trafficking (2010), some of the girls report about the:

'Nigerian and Libyan traffickers buying and selling them behind their backs (the "brother" at times leaving them in the hands of Libyan exploiters), about the rapes they suffered as "initiation" or about the extreme violence of getting them pregnant so that the Italian Coast Guard will protect them once on shore'⁽²⁶⁹⁾.

Other sources make reference to the particular vulnerability of Nigerian trafficked women in Libya⁽²⁷⁰⁾. In Morocco, the organisation Women's Link Worldwide reports that traffickers use women for forced begging⁽²⁷¹⁾.

It should be noted that women and girls may be 'trapped' in Morocco or Libya en route to Europe⁽²⁷²⁾. In total, the journey might take from one month to several years⁽²⁷³⁾.

Victims also travel by air, from Lagos, to London and Frankfurt or to Eastern European countries. To a lesser extent, they also arrive in the EU by plane from Istanbul, Morocco, Dubai, Senegal and Ghana, while flights from Guinea-Bissau are used to reach the EU through Lisbon⁽²⁷⁴⁾.

⁽²⁶²⁾ Europol, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union*, 1 September 2011, p.12.; Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 61; BBC, *Human trafficking: The lives bought and sold*, 28 July 2015.

⁽²⁶³⁾ Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 61.

⁽²⁶⁴⁾ Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, p. 13; Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 61; Plambech S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 233.

⁽²⁶⁵⁾ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2014*, p. 56-57.

⁽²⁶⁶⁾ Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 61; Okojie, C. et al., *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls to Italy*, 2003, p. 67; Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, p. 15.

⁽²⁶⁷⁾ Plambech S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 233. See also: UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 83.

⁽²⁶⁸⁾ Kastner, K., 'Moving relationships', January 2010, pp. 17, 22, 24.

⁽²⁶⁹⁾ UNICRI, *Trafficking of Nigerian Girls in Italy*, April 2010, p. 83.

⁽²⁷⁰⁾ Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, p. 14; US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 224.

⁽²⁷¹⁾ Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, p. 14.

⁽²⁷²⁾ Vanguard (Nigeria), *Reps move to repatriate 10,000 Nigerian girls from Libya, Morocco*, 26 June 2009.

⁽²⁷³⁾ Plambech S., *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 233; Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 61.

⁽²⁷⁴⁾ Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 62; Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, June 2015, p. 12.

3.3 Main destination countries

Europol emphasises the ‘continuous shifting of exploited victims within the EU’⁽²⁷⁵⁾. As indicated below, destination countries can become transit countries.

Italy and Spain appear to be the primary destinations⁽²⁷⁶⁾ but can also be countries of transit from which victims are transported to other EU countries⁽²⁷⁷⁾, particularly to the Nordic countries⁽²⁷⁸⁾. According to the UNODC report 2014, in 2013, 13 % of the victims detected and 8 % of the THB suspects arrested in Spain were Nigerian citizens⁽²⁷⁹⁾.

Other destination countries include the United Kingdom, where 244 of the 2,340 potential victims referred to UK authorities in 2014 were from Nigeria, according to the National Crime Agency, a 31 % increase compared to the previous year⁽²⁸⁰⁾. Nigeria was placed amongst the top countries of origin for potential victims identified during the same year⁽²⁸¹⁾.

Portugal, France and Norway have also been assessed as destination or transit hubs for Nigerian trafficked women⁽²⁸²⁾. In July 2014, Portuguese law enforcement authorities arrested an organised criminal group of West African and Portuguese nationals suspected of trafficking young, mostly Nigerian women, to Portugal and other EU countries in order to exploit them through forced prostitution⁽²⁸³⁾.

In the Netherlands a drastic fall in the detection of Nigerian victims has been observed since 2008 when a large human trafficking network was dismantled, in operation *Koolvis*⁽²⁸⁴⁾. This operation provides interesting background on the use of some European countries as transit hubs:

‘In May 2006, the Netherlands Centre of Expertise on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (EMM) received a report from a lawyer who suspected that her Nigerian client was a victim of human trafficking. An analysis of flights at Schiphol Airport, carried out in response to this report, showed that a relatively large number of unaccompanied underage aliens from Nigeria had entered the country in the period from October 2005 to May 2006. It was also observed that after October 2005, more unaccompanied underage Nigerians had disappeared without a trace from shelters and safe houses for victims of human trafficking throughout the Netherlands. More than 30 incidents similar to the original notification were identified. The Netherlands was being used by Nigerian criminal organisations as a transit country in human trafficking. It was being used as the port of entry to the Schengen area through the misuse of the asylum procedure or, in some cases, the B9 regulation for victims of human trafficking, and the associated shelter. The final destination was usually Italy or Spain, where the unaccompanied underage Nigerians were then exploited by being forced to work as prostitutes. The entire criminal organisation was exposed and more than 140 victims were ultimately identified.’⁽²⁸⁵⁾

According to statistics from 2014 from the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA), in the yearly report to the government, the largest group of suspected THB victims in Sweden was that of Nigerian nationals. A fifth of the suspected victims among the applicants handled by the SMA were Nigerian citizens⁽²⁸⁶⁾.

In addition to the destinations mentioned above, the US Department of State annual report on human trafficking 2015 (for the year 2014) indicates that the following EU countries are also concerned by trafficking from Nigeria: Austria⁽²⁸⁷⁾, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Switzerland⁽²⁸⁸⁾. Other destination

⁽²⁷⁵⁾ Europol, *Joint actions to tackle West African Human Trafficking Networks*, 12 June 2014.

⁽²⁷⁶⁾ Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 61; Europol, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union*, 1 September 2011, p. 12.

⁽²⁷⁷⁾ Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 61.

⁽²⁷⁸⁾ Mberu, B.U., Pongou, R., *Nigeria: Multiple Forms of Mobility in Africa’s Demographic Giant*, 30 June 2010.

⁽²⁷⁹⁾ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, 2014, p. 56-57.

⁽²⁸⁰⁾ UK National Crime Agency, *National Referral Mechanism Statistics*, 19 January 2015, p. 3.

⁽²⁸¹⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 350.

⁽²⁸²⁾ Europol, *Joint actions to tackle West African Human Trafficking Networks*, 12 June 2014.

⁽²⁸³⁾ Europol, *Human trafficking ring dismantled in Portugal*, 16 July 2014.

⁽²⁸⁴⁾ Frontex, *Unaccompanied Minors in the Migration Process*, December 2010, p. 13.

⁽²⁸⁵⁾ European Commission, *Koolvis Case*, last update 19 August 2015.

⁽²⁸⁶⁾ Migrationsverket (Swedish Migration Agency), *Årsredovisning 2014*, 19 February 2015.

⁽²⁸⁷⁾ For Austria, the report indicates that ‘victims primarily originate from Eastern Europe (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria) and, to a lesser extent, China, Nigeria, the Middle East, North Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America’. US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 77.

⁽²⁸⁸⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 77.

countries mentioned amongst consulted sources are Belgium, Germany, the Czech Republic ⁽²⁸⁹⁾ and Russia ⁽²⁹⁰⁾. As concerns Ireland, it is worth noting that in 2014, authorities reported a decrease in suspected victims from Nigeria ⁽²⁹¹⁾.

3.4 Travel documents used

Nigerian organised crime groups are proficient in the production of falsified and counterfeit travel documents for human trafficking, and the victims often use genuine documents issued to ‘look-alikes’ or so-called imposters ⁽²⁹²⁾.

Authentic passports containing counterfeit visas are also used ⁽²⁹³⁾.

The visa regime and the international protection system are also abused. Some discard their documents on arrival in the destination country and allege citizenship of an unstable country. Once at a refugee reception centre, they abscond and meet their trafficker or madam ⁽²⁹⁴⁾.

In many cases, Nigerian human trafficking groups use Italian or Spanish residence permits – either falsified or obtained through bogus marriages, for instance – which allow the victims to travel within the Schengen zone ⁽²⁹⁵⁾.

In the case of Nigerian unaccompanied minors, Frontex reports that victims board the planes with facilitators and bear genuine travel documents (in some cases, with fake identities) provided by local authorities. During the flight the young women hand over their travel documents to the traffickers and arrive unaccompanied at the border checks ⁽²⁹⁶⁾.

The aforementioned Koolvis-case in The Netherlands illustrates (ab)use of the procedure for international protection and the use of false identities. In this particular case, young girls were recruited (Edo State), gathered in safe places where they participated in a voodoo ritual before signing a USD 50,000 debt recognition. They were then instructed about the procedure for international protection in the Netherlands, including a thorough presentation of the Dutch legal system. Finally, the young women were provided with false travel documents, bearing fake identities, issued by corrupt Nigerian officials. Once on the plane, they were escorted by a facilitator to whom they had to hand over the false documents to be used by other victims afterwards. Upon arrival, they immediately applied for international protection, as it is the only way to cross the border without valid travel documentation. They were subsequently sheltered in open centres from where they could easily leave. The girls had been given a number to call the contact person to pick them up. After some time they were transported to the place of employment, which most usually implied prostitution ⁽²⁹⁷⁾.

⁽²⁸⁹⁾ UNODC, *The Globalization of Crime A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment*, 2010, p. 46; US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015; Mberu, B.U., Pongou, R., *Nigeria: Multiple Forms of Mobility in Africa's Demographic Giant*, 30 June 2010.

⁽²⁹⁰⁾ Premium Times, *200 Nigerian girls trafficked to Russia monthly – Ambassador*, 20 June 2013.

⁽²⁹¹⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 192.

⁽²⁹²⁾ Europol, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union*, 1 September 2011, pp. 10-11.

⁽²⁹³⁾ Frontex, *Handbook on Risk Profiles on Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2015, p. 69.

⁽²⁹⁴⁾ Europol, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union*, 1 September 2011, pp. 10-11.

⁽²⁹⁵⁾ Europol, *Trafficking in Human Beings in the European Union*, 1 September 2011, p. 12.

⁽²⁹⁶⁾ Frontex, *Unaccompanied Minors in the Migration Process*, December 2010, pp. 4, 27-28.

⁽²⁹⁷⁾ Frontex, *Unaccompanied Minors in the Migration Process*, December 2010, pp. 27-28.

4. Return of victims of sex trafficking to Nigeria

Until recently, information on victims of sex trafficking returning to Nigeria was rare. Recent studies based on fieldwork in Nigeria have filled that gap to a large extent ⁽²⁹⁸⁾.

This chapter presents information about the reception of victims of human trafficking repatriated to Nigeria, the attitudes towards them at home and potential threats from traffickers. Differences in reception and risks may be related to the situation of women returning to Nigeria, i.e. whether they are deported undocumented sex workers, acknowledged victims of trafficking or ex-witnesses in trafficking court cases, and whether they have paid off their debts or are returning with savings and presents.

As Pascoal notes:

‘Prostitution is morally unaccepted in Nigeria, so returning girls can expect two reactions from their communities. If the girl comes back with money, she is accepted in the society, even if the community knows that she was a prostitute in Europe. However, if the girl has been deported or comes without any money, the community puts the girl aside and even the family may refute the girl.’ ⁽²⁹⁹⁾

This difference in reception, in turn, may guide the women’s later decisions.

Deported women may feel ashamed to go back home without money, ‘without anything to show for her time spent abroad’ and may decide not to return to their family, as expressed by this woman:

“‘I was ashamed to go back with nothing.” Now, traumatised by her experiences, she feels nothing but anger towards her traffickers. “They are wicked,” she says. “The woman that sent me has two girls. She is sending them to the best schools with the money that I earned with my body.”” ⁽³⁰⁰⁾

4.1 Repatriation to Nigeria

Repatriation to Nigeria is done via two different programmes.

4.1.1 Voluntary return

Only very few trafficked women voluntarily return to Nigeria if they have not repaid their debt or if they cannot return with a great sum of money, for various reasons. Their families might need the income from their work abroad. Women may fear the anger and rejection of their families for having failed to earn money in Europe. If they have not repaid the entire debt, they may fear the consequences of violating the contract with the traffickers and the harmful effects of the *juju*. In addition, women do not trust the Nigerian authorities to provide them with protection against traffickers or to assist them in providing means for their subsistence ⁽³⁰¹⁾.

4.1.2 Forced returns or deportations

In January 2012, the Nigerian Immigration Service and Frontex signed a working agreement on the exchange of information and collaboration on border management. The agreement extends to other Nigerian authorities and agencies involved in border and migration management, including the Nigeria Police Force and NAPTIP. There are strict procedures for people who are returned via Frontex return operations and there are independent observers to monitor the process ⁽³⁰²⁾.

⁽²⁹⁸⁾ For example, Plambech, S. *Points of Departure*, 2014; Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013.

⁽²⁹⁹⁾ Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 24.

⁽³⁰⁰⁾ BBC, *Human trafficking - The lives bought and sold*, 28 July 2015.

⁽³⁰¹⁾ Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 60.

⁽³⁰²⁾ Frontex, *Frontex signs Working Arrangement with Nigeria*, 19 January 2012; Frontex, *Working Arrangement establishing operational cooperation between the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (Frontex) and the Nigerian Immigration Service*, 19 January 2012.

Different return programs

Plambech notes that women caught by European authorities while working as prostitutes may be identified and treated in two different ways (on the basis of interviews with police and social workers): they may be recognised as victims of trafficking and may opt for an assisted voluntary return program (AVR, not specific to victims of trafficking) through the International Organisation of Migration (IOM). But they may also be defined as undocumented migrants and deported to Nigeria through the EU Joint Return Program (JRP) to a detention shelter in Nigeria without any assistance⁽³⁰³⁾.

People returned through the AVR are brought to a shelter and the IOM arranges a sum of money to be paid with the purpose of reintegration. However, only a very small portion of all deportees to Nigeria are recognised as victims of trafficking (in Plambech's own research group, two out of fifteen deportees were recognised as victims of trafficking). Hence, most deported women do not receive any assistance upon return, neither are the authorities notified on their return⁽³⁰⁴⁾.

NGOs interviewed by Women's Link Worldwide confirm that Nigerian authorities and NAPTIP are not notified about returning women because the departing countries do not identify the women as victims but as 'undocumented aliens'⁽³⁰⁵⁾. It should be noted, however, that the women themselves do not make a distinction between those who are considered victims and returned under the AVR program and those who are considered 'illegal criminals'. They all label themselves as 'deportees' and consider the return as 'deportation'⁽³⁰⁶⁾.

Assistance at the airport

Women arriving in Nigeria who cannot be confirmed as trafficked victims are taken from the airport to a police station for interview. In principle, this procedure should not be lengthy as it involves few administrative tasks. However, several cases have been reported in which women have been held for periods of three to five days 'as if they were criminals, without ever being informed what crime they were charged with, if any'⁽³⁰⁷⁾.

Many of the informants in Skilbrei and Tveit's study in 2007 had heard of women returning to Nigeria who had been arrested upon their arrival in the country and released in exchange for bribes paid by their family. IOM also noted in 2005 that detention of Nigerian women at the airport and corruption by the airport's police were common. In 2005, some women arriving in Nigeria had to present an 'AIDS certificate' at the airport proving that they were not HIV positive. As no such certificate exists, this demand on the part of the airport's police may have served as a way to request bribes from victims⁽³⁰⁸⁾.

IOM and NAPTIP are supposed to provide protection and assistance to returning women but they are often not notified in advance of the return. According to NAPTIP staff, interviewed by Women's Link Worldwide:

'(...) planes from European countries often land in Nigeria full of handcuffed trafficking victims, each guarded by two agents. Notwithstanding the insistence of Nigerian authorities and NAPTIP that they cannot be held responsible for receiving, assisting and protecting returning trafficking victims when they are not notified of expulsions by the departing countries, a large number of victims are returned without being properly identified as such by European authorities, despite the existence of evidence of their status as victims, and they therefore receive no specific assistance or support upon return'⁽³⁰⁹⁾.

Forced returnees from Great Britain said there was no organisation at the airport to offer them appropriate support. Some returnees were met at Nigerian airports by traffickers rather than support providers, while others were detained. Some could not communicate with the organisations, for which they had obtained contact details, in order to seek support⁽³¹⁰⁾.

⁽³⁰³⁾ Plambech, S. 'Between "Victims" and "Criminals"', September 2014, p. 385.

⁽³⁰⁴⁾ Plambech, S. 'Between "Victims" and "Criminals"', September 2014, pp. 382-402.

⁽³⁰⁵⁾ Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 60.

⁽³⁰⁶⁾ Plambech, S. *Points of Departure*, 2014, p. 26.

⁽³⁰⁷⁾ Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 61.

⁽³⁰⁸⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, pp. 53-54.

⁽³⁰⁹⁾ Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 60.

⁽³¹⁰⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, pp. 9, 73.

The returnees interviewed by Plambech said they did not receive any assistance upon arrival in Lagos and some of the women included in her study had slept in the residential areas near the airport until they were able to return to Benin City ⁽³¹¹⁾.

4.2 Attitudes of relatives and communities towards returnees

4.2.1 High expectations

In addition to arrests, repatriated women fear the social consequences of return. There are both negative attitudes and high expectations towards victims of trafficking who have returned or been forced to return from Europe ⁽³¹²⁾.

Women who have worked as prostitutes in Europe, as many migrants going to Europe, are met with high expectations from their families because they are assumed to be wealthy and regarded as socioeconomically advantaged even when the way money has been earned is known. According to Plambech, interviewed in Science Nordic, deported women are regarded as ‘socioeconomically advantaged individuals by their families – even when it’s apparent that they have sold sex in Europe’ ⁽³¹³⁾. Plambech notes that in Nigeria, women are expected to take care of several relatives, and consequently, the relatives expect the victims to help them out of poverty. Returning women often find themselves taking care of a large number of family members, apart from their own children ⁽³¹⁴⁾. Many cases have been recorded in which families continuously demand money from the victims ⁽³¹⁵⁾.

4.2.2 ‘Successful’ returnees

Women who return from Europe wealthy do not hide the fact that the money stems from prostitution. Becoming rich through illicit activities such as prostitution has become socially acceptable in Edo State ⁽³¹⁶⁾. When the women arrive in Nigeria for holidays or return home, Nigerians pretend not to know how the victims have earned their money in Europe ⁽³¹⁷⁾. Negative stories about prostitution in Europe are generally not told in Benin City because they are associated with shame. Women are expected to return home with money and people are not interested in the origin of the earnings ⁽³¹⁸⁾.

According to Osezua, ‘successful’ trafficked women enjoy high socio-economic status in their native families, especially when family members were the direct recipients of the money earned by the women. The research shows that most mothers of ‘successfully’ trafficked victims enjoy greater influence within their family than was the case in traditional Benin family structure before widespread trafficking took place. In addition, victims who are considered ‘successful’ victims of trafficking are highly esteemed by their older brothers, as long as they send ‘hard currency’ from overseas. Osezua concludes that many uneducated women still perceive trafficking and sex work as empowering and enriching activities, that are otherwise out of reach for Benin women ⁽³¹⁹⁾.

4.2.3 ‘Unsuccessful’ returnees

Trafficked women who return or are repatriated to Nigeria without money are received in a significantly different manner than those who return wealthy. Communities may have a negative attitude towards the victims. The social stigmatisation is also high if the victim returns with health problems instead of wealth ⁽³²⁰⁾.

⁽³¹¹⁾ Plambech, S. ‘Between “Victims” and “Criminals”’, September 2014, p. 390.

⁽³¹²⁾ Sine Plambech interviewed in Science Nordic, *Victims of sex trafficking return home to great expectations*, 13 September 2012.

⁽³¹³⁾ Science Nordic, *Victims of sex trafficking return home to great expectations*, 13 September 2012.

⁽³¹⁴⁾ Science Nordic, *Victims of sex trafficking return home to great expectations*, 13 September 2012.

⁽³¹⁵⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 35.

⁽³¹⁶⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 6; Independent (The), *The curse of ‘juju’ that drives sex slaves to Europe*, 7 April 2011.

⁽³¹⁷⁾ Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 35.

⁽³¹⁸⁾ Science Nordic, *Victims of sex trafficking return home to great expectations*, 13 September 2012; Pascoal, R., *The situation of the Nigerian human trafficking victims and their children in Italy*, 19 December 2012, p. 35.

⁽³¹⁹⁾ Osezua, C., ‘Changing Status of Women and the Phenomenon Trafficking of Women for Transactional Sex in Nigeria’, 2013, pp. 14-30.

⁽³²⁰⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 71.

Bowers reports that victims are considered immoral by the general public and they are believed to have had a choice in selecting their work ⁽³²¹⁾. They are also accused of being greedy ⁽³²²⁾. According to Skilbrei and Tveit, Nigerians suspect that Nigerian women working in Europe make their living from prostitution, and having been in prostitution is typically considered shameful, in particular if they did not bring money back - even when having been trafficked ⁽³²³⁾.

In some cases, mothers show disappointment with their deported daughters and hardly discuss with them their experiences in Europe ⁽³²⁴⁾. Lack of empathy for the victims has also been noted, even among educated Nigerians ⁽³²⁵⁾. Parents may also force their children back into their situation of exploitation after they return to Nigeria. According to Cherti et al., this may result from the parents' disbelief in their children, the need for money or fear of repercussions from the traffickers due to unpaid debt. Some families in Nigeria have been threatened or attacked by traffickers, with the clear warning that the trafficked woman would be the next one to be attacked ⁽³²⁶⁾.

Social networks

A concern for returned victims is the lack of social support networks; the longer the victim has lived in Europe, the likelier this is. Many feel that it is impossible to succeed in Nigeria without a family and believe that 'in Nigeria, you are nothing without your family'. The assistance provided by NGOs cannot substitute social networks, nor can the organisations look after the returned victims on a permanent basis. For some women, the only option to earn a living, after the assistance period by the NGOs has expired, may be prostitution ⁽³²⁷⁾.

Psychological and physical violence

As in many cases of forced returns, the victims may not necessarily be able to admit their 'failure' when forced to return penniless and indebted, as the failure often causes a severe psychological crisis and suffering. They may also suffer from traumas resulting from their experiences in Europe ⁽³²⁸⁾. The uncertain socioeconomic situation, lack of opportunities for earning a living and social stigmatisation may cause fear and worries in the victims ⁽³²⁹⁾.

Many victims of human trafficking have experienced violence when returning to Nigeria. Women returning to Lagos and Benin City have fallen victim to armed robbery, rape and/or physical violence. According to the women, it is 'safer to sell sex on the streets of European cities than to have a food stall in Benin City'. Many inhabitants of Edo State experience violence but repatriated women are more vulnerable to it as they are assumed to have money, either earned by themselves or received as repatriation compensation ⁽³³⁰⁾. In addition, their children, especially when light-skinned (e.g. of a European father), may be vulnerable to kidnapping in Benin City ⁽³³¹⁾.

4.3 NAPTIP

As indicated in [Chapter 1](#), Nigeria's anti-trafficking act - Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act - entered into force in the entire country on 14 July 2003. On the basis of the Act, a national anti-trafficking body, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other Related Matters (NAPTIP) was established on 26 August 2003. According to its mission statement:

'NAPTIP is fully committed to the prevention of all forms of human degradation and exploitation through the coordinated use of the Nation's crime prevention and law enforcement resources; to stamp out human

⁽³²¹⁾ Bowers, M.M., *Room for Improvement: Nigeria's Approach to Trafficking*, 4 September 2012, p. 3.

⁽³²²⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 71.

⁽³²³⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 55.

⁽³²⁴⁾ Science Nordic, *Victims of sex trafficking return home to great expectations*, 13 September 2012.

⁽³²⁵⁾ Bowers, M.M., *Room for Improvement: Nigeria's Approach to Trafficking*, 4 September 2012, p.2.

⁽³²⁶⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, pp. 41, 73.

⁽³²⁷⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 58. See also *Safe Return, Safe Return and Reintegration for Victims of Trafficking and Victims of Domestic Violence Facing Residency Problems*, 2014, p. 49.

⁽³²⁸⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 59.

⁽³²⁹⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 45; Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 59.

⁽³³⁰⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of departure*, 2014, pp. 393-395.

⁽³³¹⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of departure*, 2014, footnote 22.

trafficking and to liberate and uplift the vulnerable, especially women and children, from dehumanising and exploitative employment and usage; and to ensure their rehabilitation and effective reintegration into society' ⁽³³²⁾.

The goals of NAPTIP include prevention of human trafficking and awareness raising, prosecution of traffickers and protection of victims ⁽³³³⁾. In this chapter, NAPTIP's tasks to support and protect victims of trafficking are discussed (for the prosecution of traffickers, see [Chapter 1](#)).

NAPTIP's tasks include identification and reception of victims, sheltering, counselling and training, family tracing, return/repatriation, integration, empowerment and follow-up ⁽³³⁴⁾. NAPTIP operates nine shelters intended for victims of human trafficking, with a total capacity for 313 victims ⁽³³⁵⁾ and has reportedly rescued and rehabilitated 3000 trafficking victims in 10 years ⁽³³⁶⁾ (see [4.5](#)).

One of NAPTIP's challenges is inadequate funding ⁽³³⁷⁾. In 2014, NAPTIP received approximately 2.4 billion naira (USD 13 million) from the Nigerian government. During that year, NAPTIP spent ca. 20 % of its operational budget, or 96.5 million naira (USD 528,000), on victim protection and assistance. State governments also contributed an additional five million naira (USD 27,300) to support state anti-trafficking efforts ⁽³³⁸⁾. According to Nwogu, the Nigerian government does not fund NGO efforts to address human trafficking. NAPTIP funds allocated to anti-trafficking efforts have not been adequate, especially considering the victims' need for assistance services ⁽³³⁹⁾.

The work of NAPTIP has been questioned because of allegations of corruption and the use of financial resources. It is, however, difficult to assess the degree of corruption within NAPTIP and specifically the impact on the protection of victims. Fact-finding missions by the Danish Immigration Service in 2008 and 2010 found no confirmation of these allegations. According to the interviewed NAPTIP partners, the Agency is effective within the limits of its resources. Staff must also undertake trainings constantly because traffickers' methods change very quickly. NAPTIP tries to ensure it is able to respond to these changes ⁽³⁴⁰⁾.

Researchers consider as potentially problematic that NAPTIP is in charge of both the rehabilitation of victims and the prosecution of traffickers. The victims do not necessarily have the courage to seek assistance because they are afraid of having to testify against traffickers. It is considered possible that in its operations, NAPTIP prioritises the prosecution of traffickers over the prevention of human trafficking and the rehabilitation of victims ⁽³⁴¹⁾.

4.4 Support organisations (NGOs) in Nigeria

A large number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) assist in the reintegration of victims and conduct awareness campaigns against human trafficking. These NGOs generally receive weak support and are poorly coordinated, even though some service providers are highly professional and well-informed. The organisations feel unsupported by NAPTIP and consider that the agency attempts to dominate and lead all anti-trafficking work to raise its own profile ⁽³⁴²⁾. Because of the poor funding, the organisations may not necessarily be able to provide the specialist support that victims require ⁽³⁴³⁾.

List of non-governmental organisations

A number of NGOs collaborate together in the Edo State NGO Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons (ENCATIP). This is a coalition of six NGOs working in Edo state to prevent trafficking in persons from Nigeria to European countries through awareness raising, rescue and rehabilitation of trafficked victims/returnees. The coalition consists

⁽³³²⁾ NAPTIP, [website], n.d. <http://www.naptip.gov.ng/>

⁽³³³⁾ NAPTIP, *Factsheet, Factsheet 5*, n.d.

⁽³³⁴⁾ NAPTIP, *Factsheet, Factsheet 6*, n.d.

⁽³³⁵⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, , p. 266.

⁽³³⁶⁾ Eagle Online (The), *NAPTIP rescues, rehabilitates 3,000 trafficked victims in 10 years*, 11 May 2015.

⁽³³⁷⁾ NAPTIP, *Factsheet, factsheet 8*, n.d..

⁽³³⁸⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 267.

⁽³³⁹⁾ Nwogu, V.I. 'Anti-Trafficking Interventions in Nigeria and the Principal-Agent Aid Model', 2014.

⁽³⁴⁰⁾ DIS, *Allegations against the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) and warnings against return to Nigeria*, June 2010.

⁽³⁴¹⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 65.

⁽³⁴²⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 85.

⁽³⁴³⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 92.

of representatives of African Women Empowerment Guild (AWEG), the Committee for Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW), Girls Power Initiative (GPI), Idia Renaissance, International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group (IRRRAG), and the National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) ⁽³⁴⁴⁾.

Below is a list of the most well-known NGOs in Nigeria, many with offices in Benin, Edo State:

- Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW), Lagos

COSUDOW has its own shelter in Benin City and cooperates closely with NAPTIP and the Dutch Safe Return project ⁽³⁴⁵⁾. The COSUDOW website states:

‘The Nigeria Conference of Women Religious (Catholic Reverend Sisters) was touched by the obvious exploitation of the Nigerian women in Europe and indeed elsewhere in the world by the traffickers. They felt a strong need to put up a fight to liberate the daughters of Africa from the shackles of their slave masters. In order to be able to fight this new form of slavery, the Committee for the Support of the Dignity of Women (COSUDOW) was formally established in 1999 with the following Objectives:

- To resettle and rehabilitate those young women who may be repatriated or who wish to pull out of prostitution.
- To educate families and young people of the hazards involved in travelling to Europe or elsewhere for prostitution. (...)
- To provide security for these young women and their families after they have opted out of prostitution.
- To have a “welcome home” where these young women are accommodated and regain themselves through counselling and spiritual direction. In this home they are assisted to re-enter into the society.
- To find ways of giving them marketable skills and help them to set up ventures that will give them some self-support and make them self-reliant.
- To work in collaboration with Government agencies that are working for this purpose’ ⁽³⁴⁶⁾.

During the period June 2013 – June 2014, 14 returning victims of trafficking were assisted by COSUDOW in Lagos. Most victims returned from Italy, where COSUDOW cooperates closely with its Italian counterpart. Some victims travelled back with the assistance of IOM and seven (58 %) had been provided with reintegration budgets from the supporting NGOs in the country of destination. Five returned without financial support and COSUDOW had to find additional means to support them ⁽³⁴⁷⁾.

- Girls’ Power Initiative (GPI), Benin City

GPI runs a shelter in Benin City. The website of the organisation does not provide any information on GPI’s activities towards victims of trafficking ⁽³⁴⁸⁾.

- Idia Renaissance, Benin City

This organisation was established by Mrs Eki Igbinedion. It offers an alternative to sex trafficking by initiating empowerment programmes for survivors and vulnerable women and young girls in the country ⁽³⁴⁹⁾. According to its website:

‘Idia Renaissance provides support services to foreign and local governments and organizations to deliver safe and voluntary return services to Nigerian nationals who may be irregular migrants abroad to return home with living and economic support to enable them reintegrate back into the society. (..) by providing “Meet and Greet” services at the Nigeria international airport, business mentoring and development, psychosocial support, vocational training and job integration services.’

- International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group (IRRRAG), Benin City

⁽³⁴⁴⁾ UNODC, *Edo State NGO Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons (ENCATIP)*, n.d.

⁽³⁴⁵⁾ Safe Return, *Safe Return and Reintegration for Victims of Trafficking and Victims of Domestic Violence Facing Residency Problems*, 2014, pp. 47-48.

⁽³⁴⁶⁾ COSUDOW, *Welcome to COSUDOW*, 2015.

⁽³⁴⁷⁾ Safe Return, *Safe Return and Reintegration for Victims of Trafficking and Victims of Domestic Violence Facing Residency Problems*, 2014, p. 49.

⁽³⁴⁸⁾ Girls’ Power Initiative (GPI), [website], n.d.

⁽³⁴⁹⁾ Idia Renaissance, *Voluntary Return*, 2013.

UNODC specifies the following: ‘The International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group (IRRRAG) is an international consortium of women researchers, activists and health providers’ ⁽³⁵⁰⁾.

- Women Aid Collective (WACOL)

WACOL has offices in Abuja; Port-Harcourt, Rivers State; Ogidi, Anambra State; Nkalagu, Ebonyi State; Owerri, Imo State; Funtua, Katsina State; New Haven, Enugu State. This NGO has also set up a free emergency phone number for victims ⁽³⁵¹⁾.

- Women’s Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), Lagos

One of WOCONs aims and objectives is:

‘To set up temporary abode for distressed girls and women including battered women and to prepare such girls and women psychologically be counseling and other forms of therapy and education for a re-orientation towards attaining a better and more purposeful life in the society ⁽³⁵²⁾.’

- Women Trafficking & Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), Benin City

WOTCLEF was established in 1999 and has advocated for the enactment of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act in 2003 and the subsequent establishment of NAPTIP by the Federal Government of Nigeria.

‘WOTCLEF offers assistance to young women, boys and girls who are victims of trafficking and child labour. Psychosocial counselling is provided for repatriated victims. They also receive medical treatment, clothing, legal assistance and shelter. Whenever possible, victims are reunited with their families and offered vocational training ⁽³⁵³⁾.’

Other NGOs mentioned by NAPTIP are ⁽³⁵⁴⁾:

- Great Women Multipurpose Co-Operative Society, Benin City, Edo State
- Lift Above Poverty Organisation, Benin City, Edo State
- Young Girls Foundation, Benin City, Edo State
- Gender Care Initiative (GCI), Lagos
- KAF Care Foundation, Nasarawa, Kano State
- The Holy Family Sisters of the Needy, Nekede-Owerri, Imo State
- Emmanuel Children Foundation, Akure, Ondo State
- The Real Woman Foundation (Peace Villa), Lagos
- Society for Enlightenment of Youth on Dangers Abroad (SEYONDA), Lagos
- Ebunoluwa Foundation, Lagos
- Project Alert, Lagos and Abuja
- Women of Light Foundation (WOLF), Lagos
- Child Rights Brigade International, Abuja
- Society for the Empowerment of Young Persons, Benin City, Edo State
- Life Helpers Initiative, Sokoto, Sokoto State
- Network for Justice and Democracy, Benin City, Edo State
- Rehoboth Homes and Skills Acquisition Centre, Lagos

⁽³⁵⁰⁾ UNODC, *The International Reproductive Rights research Action Group (IRRRAG)*, n.d.

⁽³⁵¹⁾ WACOL, [website], n.d.

⁽³⁵²⁾ Women’s Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON), *Aims and Objectives*, 2013.

⁽³⁵³⁾ Global Hand, *WOTCLEF*, n.d.

⁽³⁵⁴⁾ NAPTIP, *List of NGOs that meet NAPTIP’s criteria*, n.d.

IOM

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Nigeria started its activities in 2001 and focused on anti-trafficking activities, migration issues, return and reintegration of stranded migrants, and Voluntary Returns from abroad ⁽³⁵⁵⁾.

IOM Nigeria receives the victims upon return and supports them in their reintegration, together with local NGOs, such as COSUDOW and Idia Renaissance. If a victim comes back with a reintegration budget, it is easier to provide sustainable help for the victim to be able to rebuild her life. Help is always provided in kind, according to IOM staff, to prevent the money from ending up in the hands of traffickers ⁽³⁵⁶⁾.

4.5 Support and reintegration of victims of sex trafficking

4.5.1 Shelters

There are a number of shelters available for returning victims of human trafficking, run by NAPTIP and various NGOs. NAPTIP shelters are located in the following cities: Abuja, Lagos, Benin, Uyo, Enugu, Kano, Sokoto, Maiduguri and Markudi ⁽³⁵⁷⁾. Through the shelters, victims can access legal, medical and psychological services. Victims who require special attention and treatment have an opportunity to receive help from hospitals and clinics cooperating with NAPTIP. The agency's shelters offer short-term care. Victims staying at NAPTIP's shelters are not allowed to leave the premises unless accompanied by a chaperone. NAPTIP collaborates with non-governmental organisations, and victims requiring longer-term shelter and care are directed to the shelters of these NGOs ⁽³⁵⁸⁾.

The number of women staying in the NAPTIP shelters is not exactly known. The maximum length of stay differs according to sources: some say six weeks, according to others this ranges from two to six weeks. It happens that if after six weeks women still lack a safe place to stay or resources to maintain themselves, the stay in the NAPTIP shelter may be extended. According to IOM the only women who stay in shelters for more than two weeks are those who have testified against traffickers and whose cases are under investigation by NAPTIP ⁽³⁵⁹⁾. On the other hand, women who stay in a NAPTIP shelter are stigmatised as everyone assumes that they have been working in prostitution abroad. NAPTIP staff therefore says they send the women to their families as soon as possible, or to shelters in other areas in Nigeria ⁽³⁶⁰⁾.

Some NGOs run shelters for returning victims of human trafficking as well. In Benin City, the Nigerian Conference of Women Religious runs a shelter for women, Resource Centre for Women, which can accommodate 18 women at a time ⁽³⁶¹⁾. WOTCLEF has a small rehabilitation centre for minor victims in Abuja, with a maximum capacity for 30 persons, and offices in four other states. The centre faces extreme challenges in terms of space, staff capacities and facilities ⁽³⁶²⁾. Grace Gardens has a shelter in Jos, Plateau State ⁽³⁶³⁾. GPI runs a shelter in Benin City ⁽³⁶⁴⁾.

The NGOs state that they lack grants for victims' school tuition, vocational training or setting up business. The shelter personnel have limited capacity to provide psychosocial and rehabilitation support to mentally handicapped victims, and the follow-up of rehabilitated victims is inadequate ⁽³⁶⁵⁾. Although shelters have bars on the windows, they are considered unsafe. It is common knowledge that the buildings house victims of human trafficking, wanted by traffickers ⁽³⁶⁶⁾.

⁽³⁵⁵⁾ IOM, [website], n.d.

⁽³⁵⁶⁾ Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 63.

⁽³⁵⁷⁾ NAPTIP, *Counselling & Rehabilitation Department*, n.d.

⁽³⁵⁸⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 266.

⁽³⁵⁹⁾ IOM Interview in Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 63.

⁽³⁶⁰⁾ NAPTIP Interview in Women's Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 70.

⁽³⁶¹⁾ Bonetti, Sr. E., "Women helping women", 2011.

⁽³⁶²⁾ Nwogu, V. 'Anti-Trafficking Interventions in Nigeria and the Principal-Agent Aid Model', 2014, p. 8.

⁽³⁶³⁾ Mission Africa, *Vulnerable Women's Ministry* [webpage], n.d.

⁽³⁶⁴⁾ Safe Return, *Safe Return and Reintegration for Victims of Trafficking and Victims of Domestic Violence Facing Residency Problems*, 2014, p. 49.

⁽³⁶⁵⁾ Nwogu, I.V., 'Anti-Trafficking Interventions in Nigeria and the Principal-Agent Aid Model', 2014.

⁽³⁶⁶⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 72.

4.5.2 Family reunification

The main aim of NAPTIP and other NGOs is to reunite victims with their families. However, the large-scale phenomenon of family complicity in the recruitment and trafficking of their daughters complicates this aim. The study by Cherti et al. demonstrates that family reunification is often inappropriate as many have been victimised due to various family situations, such as fleeing from abuse or being trafficked by the family. Emphasising the significance of family reunification may jeopardise the recovery of victims and lead to abuse, violence and re-trafficking⁽³⁶⁷⁾.

In addition, when families have not been involved in the trafficking, it has been mentioned that they may refuse to take their daughter back because they live in poverty. In these cases, mediation and reunification are not the best options. Furthermore, victims of trafficking are said to be afraid to return to their communities where traffickers come from⁽³⁶⁸⁾.

In March 2014, the Dutch-Bulgarian-Nigerian Safe Return Project⁽³⁶⁹⁾ organised a round table discussion in Nigeria with 30 representatives from 17 governmental and non-governmental organisations. Participants observed the following:

‘Nigeria is a collective society and the role of the family is very important to provide support to its individual members. If a family was involved in the trafficking process or if they condemn the client for what has happened to her, it will be very difficult for the victim to return to her family. In such cases it is recommended that the victim relocates in another part of Nigeria. To this regard, participants considered Lagos a safe destination for resettlement, as it is a very large city with plenty of opportunities to start a new life unnoticed’⁽³⁷⁰⁾.

4.5.3 Reintegration

Lack of resources hinders the capacity of NAPTIP and other (International) NGOs to take significant steps with the aim of reintegrating victims of trafficking. The Nigerian authorities give trafficked women a reintegration package of between 50,000 and 200,000 naira (approximately EUR 660 to 880). According to the UNODC, this amount is not sufficient to set up a new, autonomous life in Nigeria. If women were given a sufficient amount of money, they would be able to successfully integrate, thus reducing stigmatisation and rejection by their families⁽³⁷¹⁾.

All victims are eligible to receive funds for training or school tuition, for instance, from NAPTIP’s victims’ trust fund, which is financed primarily through confiscated assets of traffickers. In the 2015 reporting period, the government paid 4.1 million naira (USD 22,400) to 17 victims for purposes such as vocational training and school tuition⁽³⁷²⁾.

According to NAPTIP, victims of trafficking also have an opportunity to receive various forms of vocational training, learn business management skills and benefit from trade and financial empowerment. Some victims manage to complete their basic education, and some are also reunited with their families⁽³⁷³⁾.

However, Plambech indicates that victims returning through AVR do not concretely receive money from the fund for themselves but they receive support in kind; for example, when purchasing supplies for starting a business, they are accompanied by NGO representatives who buy the items. Consequently, they cannot immediately pay their loans to their family and friends, as they had promised, which may lead to conflicts with them. According to Plambech’s informants, some victims repatriated to Nigeria had to sell sex while waiting six months to receive money from the fund. Plambech could not find confirmation of this statement⁽³⁷⁴⁾.

On reintegration, the Round table organised by the Safe Return project, notes:

‘Participants observed that the shame and taboo associated with working in the sex sector often prevent safe return and reintegration. The most essential factor hindering return however is the lack of a sustainable

⁽³⁶⁷⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 73.

⁽³⁶⁸⁾ Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 63.

⁽³⁶⁹⁾ The Safe Return project (May 2013-September 2014) was a cooperation between the Dutch Federation of Shelters and Nigerian and Bulgarian counterparts, aimed to support safe return and reintegration of victims of trafficking and victims of domestic violence. Safe Return, *Safe Return and Reintegration for Victims of Trafficking and Victims of Domestic Violence Facing Residency Problems*, 2014, p. 2.

⁽³⁷⁰⁾ Safe Return, *Safe Return and Reintegration for Victims of Trafficking and Victims of Domestic Violence Facing Residency Problems*, 2014, p. 46.

⁽³⁷¹⁾ Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 65.

⁽³⁷²⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 267.

⁽³⁷³⁾ NAPTIP, *Factsheet, Factsheet 7*, n.d.

⁽³⁷⁴⁾ Plambech, S., *Points of departure*, 2014, p. 393.

perspective upon return. In order to survive, it is paramount to find employment or other incoming generating activities, sometimes accompanied by additional education. However, not all returning victims have a re-integration budget to pick up their lives again and therefore depend largely on charity upon return. Moreover, the budgets that are provided are very often not sufficient to rebuild the client's life, especially not in an expensive area such as Lagos. Furthermore, donors sometimes have very explicit demands on how the re-integration budget should be spent, which is not always realistic, as clients have sometimes been abroad for a long time and do not have a realistic picture how they can earn a living after return' ⁽³⁷⁵⁾.

4.5.4 Evaluation of NGOs

An evaluation of rehabilitation and integration programs for trafficked victims, provided through rehabilitation houses administered by government (NAPTIP) and NGOs, showed that the 'beneficiaries':

'appreciated the provision of accommodation and feeding but believed that facilities available could be better. The beneficiaries did not condemn the psychological and emotional interventions provided but argued that it could be improved upon. It was concluded that recovery of human trafficking victims may require very rich programmes designed by different professionals such as social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, medical personnel, legal professionals etc.' ⁽³⁷⁶⁾.

4.6 Safety of returning victims of THB

Victims of human trafficking often express the feeling that returning to Nigeria is too dangerous for fear of retaliation by traffickers or madams. They are afraid because of the *juju* oath they have sworn and the remaining debt with the trafficker ⁽³⁷⁷⁾.

Their fears are not always shared by NGOs working with victims of sex trafficking. The NGOs working with victims of sex trafficking interviewed by the Danish Immigration Service (2007 fact-finding mission) provided conflicting and unclear information on this issue. Some NGOs emphasised the fear of retaliation by traffickers of victims, while others remarked that there were no records of violent reprisals or killings of victims in the media. Traffickers were not known to have persecuted or killed victims in Nigeria. Victims who had testified against their traffickers were not considered to be at risk. It was explained that local traffickers would have no interest to act against a victim who testifies against them or a madam abroad, as this would greatly expose them to risks of imprisonment by the police. The risk of reprisals was assessed to be greater in Europe than in Nigeria. It was reported that traffickers would rather send the victim back to Europe than killing or severely injuring them ⁽³⁷⁸⁾.

On the other hand, other interlocutors interviewed by the aforementioned Danish mission in 2007, did mention examples of reprisals, violence, kidnapping and burning of homes of victims, especially when they had not repaid their debts. There were also reports of witnesses experiencing reprisals and intimidation by traffickers. However, there seemed to be no systematic reprisal against returning victims, although in individual cases this might have occurred. It was further stated that victims would testify against a trafficker or a madam only if they were not related, and if the victim had been cheated by them. Unpaid debts were considered more risky for women's safety than testifying against traffickers ⁽³⁷⁹⁾. This was confirmed by many of the women interviewed by Skilbrei and Tveit in 2007 as well, as they feared punishment or revenge from traffickers if they returned to Nigeria before paying back their debt ⁽³⁸⁰⁾.

According to the 2013 study by Cherti et al., the return to Nigeria is often highly risky for the victims, and they are exposed to the risk of violence or re-trafficking. The close relationship between the victims and their exploiters appears to create difficulties for the victims, particularly if there is still debt remaining. Interviewees testify that returnees as well as their relatives have been threatened, their houses have been burnt and in some cases the victims' family members had been killed ⁽³⁸¹⁾.

⁽³⁷⁵⁾ Safe Return, *Safe Return and Reintegration for Victims of Trafficking and Victims of Domestic Violence Facing Residency Problems*, 2014, p. 46.

⁽³⁷⁶⁾ Adejumo Gbadebo Olubunmi et al., *Perceived Satisfaction and Effectiveness of Rehabilitation of Victims of Human Trafficking in Nigeria*, 14 January 2015.

⁽³⁷⁷⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 71; DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, pp. 23-28.

⁽³⁷⁸⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, pp. 23-28.

⁽³⁷⁹⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, pp. 23-28.

⁽³⁸⁰⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 57-58.

⁽³⁸¹⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 71.

On the other hand, women interviewed by Plambech (2011-2012) noted that traffickers do not pursue the deported women violently to collect their unpaid debt, as they have so many women going to Europe to control ⁽³⁸²⁾.

NAPTIP staff, interviewed by Women’s Link Worldwide in 2011, stated that women who do not file charges against traffickers are not considered to be at risk. In their view, women who have escaped from their traffickers and reported them to the authorities generally run more risks than those who have been detected by the police in a European country and deported to Nigeria. The former have broken the contract but still have a debt to be repaid. NAPTIP staff notes that deported women who still have a debt to be paid run the risk of being re-trafficked to Europe. This risk is not taken into account in risk assessments, according to NAPTIP staff ⁽³⁸³⁾.

Plambech raises yet another safety concern for returned women who are assisted by reintegration funds to start a business. Due to low funding, they only can settle in areas where rents are low, that is, at the outskirts of Benin City where there are no paved roads, scarce light from a few generators, and no security guards. As these women usually have basic or no education, they are not allowed to open shops within the Government Reserved Areas which are protected by security guards. In these ‘repatriation areas’, where it is (falsely) assumed that deportees have brought a lot of money back, the women are more exposed to crime, armed robbery, and rape ⁽³⁸⁴⁾.

4.7 Possibility of obtaining state protection

The US DoS 2015 Trafficking in Persons Report states:

‘The government increased efforts to protect trafficking victims. (...) 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’ ⁽³⁸⁵⁾.

According to the US DoS Trafficking in Persons Report 2015, the Nigerian authorities have occasionally detained individuals involved in prostitution or other unlawful acts before they were identified as victims of human trafficking, although this is against the 2003 Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act. Once they were identified as victims of human trafficking, they were released and offered appropriate assistance ⁽³⁸⁶⁾.

Interlocutors of the 2007 Danish fact-finding mission to Nigeria stated that, even if the debt had not been fully repaid, the victim would be able to obtain protection from reprisals by traffickers in Nigeria. The Nigerian police was said to have the capacity to protect victims from traffickers. However, it was also stated that there was no guarantee of protection as the Nigerian police suffered from corruption, and any trafficker could bribe the police and avoid possible prosecution. It was further stated that up to 90 % of the families in which one of the family members had been trafficked did not call on the police or go to court but would do their utmost to pay the debt, including by selling their land and other property ⁽³⁸⁷⁾.

Representatives of NGOs interviewed by the 2007 Danish fact-finding mission were generally sceptical about NAPTIP’s capability to protect victims against traffickers, due to lack of resources and technical know-how. It was not considered possible that all victims who need assistance would receive it as there were too many victims compared to the available resources. However, NAPTIP officials blamed NGO criticism of NAPTIP on the fact that they have to compete for funds ⁽³⁸⁸⁾.

Difficulty for returned victims to obtain state protection is mentioned in various other studies. Several respondents in the 2013 study by Cherti et al. reported incidents of indifference or even active complicity with traffickers on the part of the authorities when the respondents tried to seek help from the police ⁽³⁸⁹⁾.

⁽³⁸²⁾ Plambech, S., ‘Between ‘Victims’ and ‘Criminals’’, September 2014, p. 395.

⁽³⁸³⁾ Women’s Link Worldwide, *Trafficking of Nigerian Women and Girls*, 2015, p. 63.

⁽³⁸⁴⁾ Plambech, S. *Points of Departure*, 2014, pp. 147-150.

⁽³⁸⁵⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 267.

⁽³⁸⁶⁾ US DoS, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report, Nigeria*, 27 July 2015, p. 267.

⁽³⁸⁷⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, pp. 24-28.

⁽³⁸⁸⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 36-40.

⁽³⁸⁹⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 11.

According to an Italian inspector of police and a consultant who visited Edo State several times to cooperate with Nigerian authorities, working with NAPTIP and the Nigerian police is ‘frustrating’. They report that some police officers were not willing to facilitate collaboration (exchange of information for instance). Victims were also told by the police that it would be better if they just paid their debt ⁽³⁹⁰⁾.

4.8 Relocation in Nigeria

Interlocutors of the Danish Immigration Service in 2007 observed that in southern Nigeria anyone who originates from the North was called ‘stranger’, and vice versa; in many Nigerian cities, there were special quarters for non-indigenes. Nigerian communities tend not to grant children from non-indigenous entitlements such as jobs or political positions. Therefore, people identify strongly with and feel safer in their home states. Although relocation in another part of Nigeria might be feasible and possible for victims who feel threatened by traffickers, they would need economic support and a social network or members of their ethnic group to sustain a safe livelihood in their new place of residence ⁽³⁹¹⁾.

Cherti et al. discuss possible alternatives to returning victims of trafficking to their local communities, in specific cases, such as when they had been forced by their families to return to Europe; or when families in Nigeria had been attacked by traffickers, with the message that the trafficked woman would be next. In these cases, internal relocation within other areas of Nigeria might be an alternative but is considered problematic as well, and increases their vulnerability. This would be especially the case when the victim is young and uneducated, without much working experience and of a different religion and ethnicity than the area of relocation. The study concludes:

‘Tribal and religious difference across the country, the concentration of services in areas where trafficked people typically originate from and the stigma of trafficking can preclude successful reintegration, particularly of somebody with high support needs’ ⁽³⁹²⁾.

4.9 Possible return and re-trafficking to Europe

Many of the victims repatriated to Nigeria try to return to Europe as soon as possible. They may do so on their own initiative, or be pressured or forced to do this by the trafficker or the madam, to whom they may not have yet fully repaid their debt ⁽³⁹³⁾, or by their family, disappointed that they were not able to fulfil their expectations of becoming wealthy ⁽³⁹⁴⁾. Many of the women repatriated to Nigeria that Peano interviewed in her study re-negotiated their passage to Europe under the same conditions and did so repeatedly ⁽³⁹⁵⁾. Cherti et al. note that the close relationship between the victims’ families or communities and traffickers may lead to the risk of being re-trafficked even when the victim herself is unwilling to leave ⁽³⁹⁶⁾.

Some victims may at first try to resettle in Nigeria, but if they find life there to be unsatisfactory, they may try to migrate to Europe again. In connection with this migration, victims may again be exploited and accumulate more debt. On the other hand, according to some women in Skilbrei & Tveit’s study, the second migration to Europe may be easier as the customs of the destination country have already become familiar and the women are not as vulnerable as they were during their first migration ⁽³⁹⁷⁾.

⁽³⁹⁰⁾ Baye, E.M.-O., *Experiences of Nigerian Trafficked Women*, 2012, pp. 33, 34.

⁽³⁹¹⁾ DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 51

⁽³⁹²⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 73.

⁽³⁹³⁾ Plambech, S. ‘Between “Victims” and “Criminals”’, 1 September 2014, p. 395; DIS, *Protection of victims of trafficking in Nigeria*, April 2008, p. 31.

⁽³⁹⁴⁾ Landinfo, *Trafficking in Women*, May 2006, p. 16.

⁽³⁹⁵⁾ Peano, I., ‘Bondage and Help: Genealogies and Hopes in Trafficking from Nigeria to Italy’, 2013, p. 12.

⁽³⁹⁶⁾ Cherti, M. et al., *Beyond Borders*, January 2013, p. 9.

⁽³⁹⁷⁾ Skilbrei, M.-L. & M. Tveit, *Facing return*, 2007, p. 59.

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