

# Fighting Human Trafficking in Nigeria: Recent and ongoing projects (2010-2019)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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**INSiGHT**  
Building Capacity to  
Deal with  
Human Trafficking and  
Transit Routes in  
Nigeria, Italy, Sweden

The purpose of the report is to analyse completed and ongoing anti-trafficking projects in Nigeria between 2011 and 2019, in order to inform the activities of the INSigHT Action (Building capacity to deal with human trafficking and transit routes in Nigeria, Italy, and Sweden) which started in April 2019 and will conclude in September 2020. The Action has the main aim to build the capacity to deal with human trafficking and secondary routes in Nigeria, Italy and Sweden, with specific attention to trafficked female children engaged in prostitution and boys involved in drug dealing and street begging. The report has a second purpose: that of providing an overview of existing projects that could be useful for stakeholders operating in the field, both in Nigeria and EU countries.

According to EU data (2018), Nigeria was the first among the top non-EU origin countries for victims of trafficking registered in the EU in the period 2015-2016. Nearly half of the victims with Nigerian citizenship were registered in Italy. Notwithstanding, the number of Nigerian arrivals by sea and land into Italy decreased in 2018 (UNHCR). An aspect not to be underestimated is the lack of data relating to transfer and secondary movements within the EU. Yet IOM (2017) stressed that transport through transit countries, such as France and Germany, but also Sweden, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands, and Switzerland should be under scrutiny. Regarding age and gender, victims registered in the EU in the period 2015-2017 included overwhelmingly girls and women who were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Furthermore, children represent almost one quarter of the registered victims (EU Commission, 2018). Nigeria is still a focus country for the EU and this report aims to contribute to the achievement of the five priorities identified by the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012–2016: (a) Identifying, protecting and assisting victims of

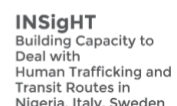
trafficking; (b) Stepping up the prevention of trafficking in human beings; (c) Increased prosecution of traffickers; (d) Enhanced coordination and cooperation among key actors and policy coherence; (e) Increased knowledge of and effective response to emerging concerns related to all forms of trafficking in human beings.

Numerous projects have been carried out in the last decade to combat human trafficking from Nigeria and other origin and destination countries, but data is fragmented, with the exception of the comprehensive policy review of anti-trafficking projects funded by the European Commission (2016), and little analysis is available of the content of these projects.

The geographical scope of the report includes Lagos and Edo State, but also extends over the wider Nigerian territory. The focus is on the following project areas: awareness raising, capacity building for law enforcement, capacity building for rehabilitation and research. Moreover, a particular focus was on identifying projects targeted to female children and adopting a child- and women-sensitive approach, as well as projects involving some degree of transnational cooperation.

The material was collected from June to September 2019, and it includes: secondary literature (reports and papers), the preliminary gap analysis prepared upon application for funding for the INSigHT Action; insights gathered from the INSigHT Action's two initial events in Brussels and Benin City, contacts with and direct visits to stakeholders in Nigeria. As concerns the analysis, it concentrated on the following aspects: total number of projects, donors, project leaders and project partners, geographical area of intervention, actual activities. Particular attention was placed on identifying and looking into projects targeted to female children and adopting a child- and

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women-sensitive approach, as well as to projects involving transnational cooperation.

A number of gaps have emerged that still need addressing, in terms of geographical scope, actors/partners' engagement, methodology and adoption of a child- and women-sensitive approach. In part they are in line with the objective and focus of the INSigHT Action's activities, in part they are not, and require a partial re-gearing of the INSigHT Action's activities accordingly. Specific recommendations are provided in this sense.

There has been a significant increase in the number of projects in all four areas, particularly since 2015. As far as capacity building for law enforcement is concerned, an increased number of interventions has been recorded in the last two years. In total, we have identified 39 awareness raising projects, 19 capacity building for law enforcement projects, 24 projects on capacity building for rehabilitation and 22 research projects.

Most awareness raising projects have been carried out in Edo State. Only a few are currently active in Lagos, the INSigHT Action's main target, which is emerging as a geographical area that requires intervention. No project has been identified in Enugu, the second target area of the INSigHT Action's awareness raising activities. A growing focus on rural areas (although in Edo State) has emerged too and calls for the INSigHT Action's attention.

The gap analysis shows that children have rarely been at the centre of attention and even less female children, particularly below the age of 15. With the partial exception of work by GPI, awareness raising activities have failed to address all the relevant levels of awareness raising: most focus has been on the individual level (the potential victims of trafficking), far less has been put on the social network level (family and peers), on the community level, and even less on the institutional level, with little

involvement of local authorities, not to mention traditional leaders.

Capacity building for law enforcement is a more recent area of intervention, and relevant projects in this field have been carried out in wider Nigerian territory, with no specific focus on a regional/local context. Four projects are currently based in Edo State and call for coordination. Only three projects have involved transnational cooperation, pointing to an urgent need for investment in this area.

Only a few projects have had a specific focus on women and children, showing that insufficient attention has been paid to these specific populations, which carries the risk of prevention and protection being ineffective and of their collaboration in investigations being scarce. Trainings have been undertaken for judiciary and prosecutors, as well as for police forces and border guards, but they are still limited in scope. Some topics seem to be still relatively unaddressed and should hence be taken into consideration for the capacity building agenda, including critical issues in: referral mechanisms, the use of SOPs for coordination and law enforcement activities, the protection of victims (such as the scarcity of safe houses for specific target populations). Far more investment is needed on transnational cooperation and far more exchange opportunities are needed among law enforcement officers across ranks and countries to learn about their respective work and foster collaboration.

Capacity building for rehabilitation projects have increased in recent years. A number of projects are ongoing in Benin, with a multiplication of stakeholders, thus calling for coordination, integrated work and extensive involvement of stakeholders in this sense, reaching beyond urban contexts. The importance of more involvement on the side of Nigerian institutions also emerges from the gap analysis. Little evidence has been found of rehabilitation stakeholders adopting target-specific

approaches, not to mention child- and women-sensitive approaches.

As it also emerged from the Gap Analysis Meeting, the following critical issues need addressing as far as rehabilitation services more generally are involved: in terms of the need for capacity building on rehabilitation services; trainings are too short and cover limited employment areas; psycho-social counselling support is limited; insufficient capacity is available for returnees accommodation; rehabilitation is not always satisfactory for victims and their needs; capacity gaps are evident in the use of a National Referral Mechanism. Again, limited scope for transnational cooperation has come to light.

Research projects have been mostly conducted by private individuals, often with the support of international intergovernmental organisations and sometimes - although mostly for reports - with some financial support by the EU, IOM, UNODC. To the author's knowledge, only one research project is ongoing at present, and it is a project by PJI aimed at examining the role of recruiters of trafficking. Various pieces of research have been carried out with no specific territorial focus, calling for micro-research to investigate the specificities of contexts to better seize the phenomenon of trafficking in all its complexity.

A number of works have looked at the root causes of trafficking, the theme that has been mostly examined. No specific piece of work has looked at the field of rehabilitation, the main focus of the INSigHT Action's research in Nigeria, although a number of research works do provide some useful inputs on the roles and functioning of agencies working on anti-trafficking in general. Nevertheless, a detailed assessment of the extent to which rehabilitation services are responding at all to victims' needs is sorely needed.

Also, evidence calls for a better understanding of whether girls are effectively becoming less

willing to consider opportunities for re-trafficking. Following up on the suggestions of the EC comprehensive policy review of anti-trafficking projects funded by the European Commission (2016), and considering the strategic priority areas of the EU Strategy against trafficking 2012-2016, topics that would need research or further investigation are the following: national referral pathways, engagement of child protection systems, identification of victims of trafficking, prevention initiatives which focus on forms of exploitation other than labour, especially sexual exploitation, which is rarely the focus of the current funded projects on prevention.

Adding to this, research is recommended on various themes, including first and foremost the impact of the Oba of Benin's recent declaration and curse placed on human traffickers and on the system for the protection of children below the age of 15, which are potential targets and/or victims of human traffickers.

Overall, this research has been useful to inform not only the INSigHT Action's activities but also ongoing anti-trafficking projects in Nigeria, as there is considerable fragmentation across territories and stakeholders, and many of them have stressed the need to have an overall picture of what projects are active, where, with what objectives and specific activities. The collected information does therefore provide an overview that is useful both for stakeholders and for researchers to continue exploring projects in more detail. In particular, a tremendous need has emerged for a longitudinal assessment and evaluation of rehabilitation services, but also of the overall system of protection and prevention in Nigeria. While several projects have been completed and others are still ongoing, hardly any evaluation of their impact has been carried out. This would be crucial to avoid duplications and learn from previous experiences. It would however require specific research funding for a further three-year period.

## Recommendations for future actions beyond INSigHT

### Awareness raising



Ensure awareness raising activities consistently address the individual level of awareness raising (victims and potential victims of trafficking), but also the community, the social network and the institutional levels;



Ensure more involvement of institutions, particularly local authorities, both in terms of funding but also as target of awareness raising activities;



Experiment and adopt innovative methodologies to reach out to target populations most effectively (including social media, tv, etc), by also involvement national and local media as much as possible;



Cover geographical areas that reach beyond Edo State and urban contexts, to reach out to rural areas and States in the country that have not been covered and yet have been interested by evolving trafficking dynamics



Promote a constant monitoring of the evolving transformation of trafficking dynamics across the country, including not only transnational trafficking but also internal trafficking, with attention to the various forms of trafficking (prostitution but also begging, etc.);



Promote and support full detailed longitudinal assessment of the prevention, protection and rehabilitation system in Nigeria, particularly as far as children are involved, as well as of the methodologies (if any) used by NGOs and the various agencies in carrying out their work.

### Law enforcement



Increase the scope for transnational cooperation across various ranks of law enforcement;



Ensure more involvement of institutions, particularly local authorities, both in terms of funding but also as target of awareness raising activities;



Ensure capacity building on currently unaddressed topics, such as critical issues associated with referral mechanisms, the use of SOPs for coordination and law enforcement activities, the protection of victims and the availability of safe houses ;



Promote and support projects that place specific focus on the adoption of a children- and women-sensitive approach;

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## Rehabilitation



Promote coordination across existing projects;



Promote the involvement of institutions;



Improve the capacity of stakeholders in terms of adopting women and children-sensitive approaches;



Address the pending needs for capacity building on rehabilitation services: length of trainings; lack of psycho-social/ counselling support; limited insufficient capacity for returnees accommodation; ineffectiveness of rehabilitation services with respect to target populations' needs;



Improve the scope for transnational cooperation on rehabilitation but also prevention more generally;



Assess the risk of re-trafficking.

## Research



Promote projects with a specific territorial focus, thus undertaking micro-research to investigate the specificities of contexts to better seize the phenomenon of trafficking;



Improve the understanding of the extent to which returnees are willing to be re-trafficking;



Carry out specific policy-relevant research on the following topics: national referral pathways, engagement of child protection systems, identification of victims of trafficking, prevention initiatives which focus on forms of exploitation other than labour, especially sexual exploitation, impact of the recent Oba of Benin declaration and curse placed on human trafficker and of any possible declaration on the side of traditional leaders and Obas; systems for the protection of children and children, below the age of 15, as targets of human traffickers.



Provide funding for longitudinal assessment and evaluation of rehabilitation services, but also the overall system of protection and prevention in Nigeria.

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