



Nigeria

- Population: 178.5 million
- GDP per capita (in US dollars): 3,203
- Federal regime
- Human development index (HDI): 0.514 (152nd rank among 187 countries)
- Gender inequality index (GII): NA
- Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI): Score of 26 on a scale from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)
- Member of the African Union since 1963.

- No official national statistics on prostitution.
- In Nigeria, 50,000 young women between 9 and 17 years of age are victims of sex-trafficking. Over 50,000 undocumented immigrant Nigerian girls engage in prostitution in Europe and Asia (10,000 in Italy). At least 20,000 Nigerian women are victims of exploitation in Mali (*Fondation Scelles*, Prostitution by country). There is an estimated male prostitute population of 865 in Lagos, 642 in Kano, and 358 in Port Harcourt.
- Prohibitionist regime. Prostitution is illegal, as well as all forms of organization (procuring, prostitution establishments) and incentive (incentive constraint). The purchase of sexual services is not punished. The 2003 Trafficking in Persons Law Enforcement and Administration Act, amended in March 2015, condemns trafficking for sexual purposes with minimum 5 years' imprisonment (7 years when the victim is a minor) and 5,470 US\$ (5,054 €) fine.
- 30 convictions for human trafficking in 2014, against 42 in 2013 (*U.S. Department of State*, 2014). Sentences involving Nigerian sex trafficking had been pronounced in all the regions of the world where they are active.
- A third of the prostituted population could be HIV-positive. The Anti-Gay Bill, passed in November 2011, condemns homosexuality up to 14 years' imprisonment, which makes male prostitutes more precarious.
- Boko Haram plays a major role in Northern Nigeria, abducting women and girls for the purpose of sex slavery. In April 2014, 276 schoolgirls were abducted in Chibok. This raised international mobilization around the #Bring back our girls campaign.

- Significant domestic trafficking. The victims are often from rural areas and are prostituted in brothels in major cities, especially in Lagos and Edo State.
- Origin, transit, and destination country for sex trafficking.
- Victims are sent to Western Europe (especially Italy, Belgium and Netherlands), the Gulf countries, the neighboring Western African countries (especially Mali), Malaysia, Morocco, Libya and Turkey.

According to the 2014 U.S. Department of State Report on Trafficking in Persons, Nigeria is a origin, transit, and destination country for human trafficking with the purpose of sexual exploitation. International destinations include Italy (60-80% of girls trafficked abroad), the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Malaysia, Norway, Saudi Arabia, UK (Scotland in particular), Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, as well as the Middle East and Central Asia (*Review of European Studies*, 2014). Belgium and the Netherlands are experiencing an upsurge in arrivals of Nigerian victims of sex trafficking. National and regional destinations include Lagos, Port Harcourt, Libya, Mali, Morocco, and the “AIDS corridor” that spans the oil-producing areas of Nigeria, Cameroon, and Chad.

Although the Nigerian economy has seen high economic growth rates, at 5.4% GDP growth in 2013, the entire population has not enjoyed the benefits of this growth. The vast majority of foreign direct investment, mostly by transnational corporations, is in primary commodity production and mineral-extracting industries. This commodity-driven economic growth doesn't create jobs, meaning that the formal sector is creating a larger gap between capital owners and individuals who can no longer find steady employment. Unemployment and job insecurity have increased while real wages have deteriorated, especially among the poorest income group. Nigeria's Structural Adjustment Program has arguably worsened this trend due to a significant decrease in public benefits, employment embargos, currency devaluation, and the preference for a “corporate development model” that suppresses workers' rights (*Third World Quarterly*, 2013). Additionally, the Nigerian government provides no compensation to unemployed persons, forcing many to accept precarious poverty jobs in the increasingly large informal sector. Commercial sexual exploitation and other forms of trafficking play a major role in the informal market. The majority of brothel-based female prostitutes in Kaduna Metropolis are literate (80% Junior high school have finished at least), meaning that they are employable but cannot find other jobs (*Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2013). A prostituted man explained that the government does not offer a conducive environment for him and others to thrive as graduates. While these studies do not represent the entire demographic of prostituted persons in Nigeria, they show that many educated people have not been sheltered from the violence of sexual exploitation.

On an individual level, the main motive of a person accepting an offer from a sex trafficker is better financial opportunities for themselves or her/his family. With an adult literacy rate of 51.1% and a female adult literacy rate of 41.4% in 2008 according to the World Bank, low literacy, high unemployment, gender inequality, and poor living standards leave people with few choices. This literacy gap is illustrative of prevailing gender inequality: women have less access to education and economic opportunities. Although little stigma exists against divorced men, divorced women are urged to remarry, with one of the few alternative options

being prostitution, especially in cases where the woman in question must care for her children (*Transition*, 2014). In the case of child trafficking, many families consent out of financial necessity, and are ignorant to the harsh realities awaiting the trafficked girl.

The increase in commercial sex migration from Nigeria to parts of Europe has actually lessened the impact of unemployment. Remittances from commercial sex migrants have helped their families escape poverty, and contributed to the larger goal of alleviating extreme poverty in Nigeria (*Journal of International Women's Studies*, July 2013). It is important to note, however, that prostituted persons are not free agents; they are stuck in a stratified social system where their only hope to escape poverty is through prostitution.

Sex Trafficking Networks

The relatively small risk in human trafficking for sexual exploitation makes it more attractive than illegal drug or arms trafficking. Organized crime with both local and international networks often recruit young women with promises of material benefits and travel. According to a study of prosecution files on criminal Nigerian syndicates in Belgium, Nigerian sex traffickers generally have no long term vision and no intention to create legal structures to hide their activities, which is much more common among eastern European networks (*International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 2013). Defendants were mostly Nigerian between the ages of 30 and 40 and in each case a Madam played a key role. Nine of the files had ten or more defendants, meaning there are criminal organizations at work in Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, and Germany. These mafia-like organizations and cartels with well-connected networks are difficult and risky to infiltrate. They usually operate internationally through corruption while remaining in contact with their pyramid structural network in Nigeria. These networks primarily traffic women for the purpose of prostitution, but also take part in smuggling and forced marriages. Coercion methods include debt bondage (typically ranging from 25,000 US\$ to 50,000 US\$ / 23,100 € to 46,195 €), physical violence, voodoo spells, confiscation of travel documents and the threat of reprisal attacks against family in Nigeria. Consequently, victims usually refuse to testify against traffickers in court.

In the case of child trafficking, traffickers coerce boys and girls into trades that do not exist in order to be exploited for prostitution and other forms of trafficking. Traffickers frequently fake advantage of the extended family system - including aunts, uncles, and distant cousins - to reach victims. In the past, children were engaged in domestic services through direct agreement between the child's parents and the employers, sometimes including an arrangement to receive an education or vocational training. This connection to the child's parents has been eroded as middlemen increasingly procure children from poor rural families to work in urban households, but many of them are then sold into prostitution without ever reaching their promised household.

When the main objective is sexual exploitation, the routes traffickers commonly take travel through the West Coast of Nigeria, Mali, Morocco, and then by boat to Spain; or through the West Coast of Nigeria, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. 90% of traffickers travel by road across the Sahara Desert; others through airports, seaports, and scrublands (*Review of European Studies*, 2014). Victims travel together accompanied by constantly changing

traffickers, and are subjected to rape while traveling from Nigeria to Cotonou, Ghana, Mali, and Morocco. If they fall ill they are abandoned along the way.

The increasing power of non-state actors, including trafficking networks and terrorist organizations, reduces the state's capacity to combat sex trafficking (Falola, 2013). The terrorist organization Boko Haram, although not focused primarily on sex trafficking, has played a major role in northern Nigeria. They have abducted women and girls in northern Nigeria, some destined for sex slavery through forced marriages to its militants. Due to the nature of their terrorist organization, little data exist on their precise role in human trafficking and prostitution, but it is clear that they are exacerbating gender inequality under the guise of Islam and Sharia Law.

Madams, intermediaries of Nigerian origin, have close control over the victims. Usually a former prostituted person who has bought her liberty, she is the leader of the prostituted women and keeps order within the rooms and between clients and women. Her involvement allows businessmen to stay further from the criminal activity. The success of Madams also attracts victims to sex trafficking. Madams have become an integral part of the network by recruiting and training girls, and in exchange they often become wealthy and move home, where they have enough money to build one or several houses.

Conditions of prostituted Nigerians

There are over 50,000 undocumented immigrant Nigerian girls engaged in prostitution in Europe and Asia, with about 10,000 Nigerian prostituted girls in Italy alone (*Journal of International Women's Studies*, July 2013). Approximately 92% of Nigerians trafficked to Europe for the purpose of sexual exploitation are from Edo State, mostly from the population group known as *Binis*, from Benin City (*International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 2013). In most countries where Nigerian girls are taken, they cannot access medical care, are subject to risky sexual behavior and forced to have sex with sometimes as many as 30 men a day (*Review of European Studies*, 2014). This trafficking within and from Nigeria leads to loss of lives, increased prevalence of STDs and HIV/AIDS, increased violence, poor national image, massive deportation of Nigerian women, and in the case of child victims, an increased school dropout rate and impaired child development. Young girls and women trafficked to foreign countries often send remittances, and are seen as economic liberators for their families and communities at home.

Brothel-based commercial sexual exploitation is acknowledged as a booming business in North and Central Nigeria, and Edo State, in the south, is considered Nigeria's hub for sex trafficking (*Global Journal of Human Social Science*, 2013). Nigerian brothels have a strict hierarchical structure, with the owners rarely appearing since they function through managers and Madams. Prices vary according to specific sex styles, rules, the level of involvement and engagement, cultural norms and values and the client's socio-economic affluence. The prevalence of this activity does not however increase societal acceptance of prostituted individuals, who are often disowned and rejected by their relatives and friends.

Additionally, prostituted individuals in Nigeria are vulnerable to being used for moneymaking rituals, referred to as "blood money." These rituals require body parts, which are taken to witch doctors, traditional medicine practitioners, and juju priests. To create

instant wealth, ritual murderers use sacrifices of “genital hair, sex organs, semen, vaginal fluid and breast tissue, among others” (*Culture, Health & Sexuality: An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care*, 2013). Similarly, some victims have been forced to lick wounds of certain clients because the latter have been led to believe it will bring them wealth. Clients who abuse others for ritual practices are often older men who are ready to pay large and suspicious amounts of money for sex, and usually the prostituted person dies within days following the activity.

Because prostitution is legal in many nearby countries, traffickers bring Nigerians to or through these countries where they are able to operate more easily. Nigerian authorities cannot persecute international networks that span these countries due to the legality of their operations in some of these countries. Traffickers bring girls to Mali under the pretext of taking them to Europe, but instead abandon victims to brothel owners after crossing the porous international border. These traffickers demand as much as 10,000 US\$ (9,239 €) from victims for transportation costs. Because prostitution is legal in Mali, the brothels are usually secure and can contain as many as 1,000 Nigerian girls. Victims are denied outside contact until they pay their debts, and there is little chance for escape. Some die and are buried within the brothels’ premises (*Review of European Studies*, 2014). Prostitution is also legal in neighboring Benin and Burkina Faso, so traffickers are more secure as soon as they cross into these countries.

Young girls trafficked to Europe for the purpose of sexual exploitation are forced into unwanted sexual activity, and then abandoned when they are no longer profitable or if they become too hostile. In Belgian prosecution cases of Nigerian trafficking networks, 26 of 27 involved female victims of sex work, ten of which involved minors (*International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 2013). Most cases involved around ten Nigerian victims.

Men and same-sex relations

After the Nigerian government passed the Anti-Gay Bill into law in November 2011, the Nigerian Criminal Code Act and Sharia Penal Code in Northern Nigeria condemn homosexual activities with fourteen years imprisonment. Regardless, there is an estimated prostituted male population of 865 in Lagos, 642 in Kano, and 358 in Port Harcourt, and a large proportion of gay men report either selling or purchasing sex from other men. According to a survey conducted among English-speaking urban prostituted men in Nigeria, having a friend as a prostituted male was imperative to being introduced to the industry (*Culture, Health & Sexuality: An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care*, 2013).

Prostituted men face abuse from clients, police, and other members of society and cannot seek justice. They face discrimination, especially in the realm of healthcare, where they are often refused services. As a result they resort to self-medication or visiting traditional healers who don’t discriminate. Some report being forced to have unprotected sex with policemen, who refuse to pay the agreed-upon price after sex, and threaten to expose them. All respondents have learned to avoid policemen because of the threat of extortion, blackmail, and arbitrary arrest. Many men are unable to negotiate condom use because of their economic dependency on clients, which puts them at risk of further exploitation and increases HIV/AIDS susceptibility. Victims surveyed also reported threats, physical abuse,

powerlessness and insecurity. Cross-generational sex was commonly reported. The client's coercive power is increased when the meet-up takes place in a client's home, which happens often due to the illegality of both same-sex activity and prostitution. A 22-year-old victim recounted being forced to have unprotected sex in a client's home because he didn't have transport fare, and later tested positive for HIV/AIDS. Much like in other cases of prostitution, the prevailing opinion among clients is that they had paid for these men's bodies so they could do whatever they wanted with them.

Government Efforts, Rates of Success, and Recommendations

The Nigerian government is making significant efforts to eliminate trafficking, but does not currently comply with global minimum standards, according to the 2014 Trafficking in Persons Report. Sex work is criminalized in the Nigerian Criminal Code under the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act of 2003. It prescribes penalties of ten to fifteen years of imprisonment, a fine equivalent to 1,250 US\$ (1,150 €) (*U.S. Department of State*, 2013), or a combination of the two. In the case of fines, both Nigerian officials and the international community believe the law does not go far enough. A bill passed by Senate in March 2014 creates stiffer penalties, the minimum including 5 years' imprisonment and a fine equivalent to 500 US\$ (462 €) (*Premium Times*, March 19th, 2014). While this act is a step forward, legislation needs to give prosecutors more authority and further restrict judges' ability to substitute fines for sentences. Additionally, despite the comprehensive protection that the Child Rights Act of 2003 is supposed to provide, many children are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation due to the weak enforcement of the law coupled with lack of prevailing knowledge that child trafficking is a violation of human rights.

The government should continue aggressively pursuing trafficking investigations and ensuring adequate sentencing of convicted traffickers, as well as continuing their training programs on identifying trafficking victims for police and immigration officials. It needs to increase investigations of corrupt government officials complicit in trafficking offenses and better involve traditional leaders and members of the public in the fight to eradicate sex trafficking. This task is not easy, as government anti-trafficking campaigners travel with armed police escorts due to hostility from both women and men, but involving opinion leaders in the process will advance their goals.

Nigeria has a cooperation agreement to fight child trafficking with the Republic of Benin, and has discussed new bilateral agreements with Niger and Cameroon. The government has also assisted in trafficking investigations involving Nigerians in Ivory Coast, Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom (*Premium Times*, March 19th, 2014). However, cooperation does not go far enough, as is evident in a study on Belgian trials complicated by the inability to prosecute certain accomplices remaining in Nigeria, and therefore outside of jurisdiction. Additionally, the government has not implemented a formal procedure to facilitate the return and reintegration of Nigerian victims, depriving many of affordable and adequate care upon their return (*International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 2013).

The National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and Other related Matters (NAPTIP) has made huge strides against trafficking in Nigeria, but still faces major challenges. Insufficient budgetary allocations restricts its ability to fight human trafficking and provide victim rehabilitation. Inadequate statistics on trafficked persons make research and planning difficult. NAPTIP specifically recommends aggressive campaigns, adding information of the dangers of trafficking to school curriculum, fighting gender inequality, international cooperation in persecution, increased border security, poverty and unemployment alleviation programs, and increasing NAPTIP capacity, which would increase prevention and rehabilitation capabilities (*Anuforum*, October 2014).

Its shelter capacity, which houses and provides reintegration services on a short-term basis, increased to 313 victims in 2014. In July 2014, NAPTIP and the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) signed a Memorandum of understanding (MOU) to add anti-trafficking curriculum to primary and secondary schools, which will increase awareness and prevention efforts (*NAPTIP Press Release*, July 24th, 2014).

Due to prostituted persons' economic dependency on clients, recent government educational campaigns to decrease the spread of HIV/AIDS have had little success. As many as one third of prostituted person in Nigeria are estimated to be HIV positive (*Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2013). High HIV/AIDS prevalence in the region is attributed to structural factors such as poverty, prostitution, concurrent sex partnerships, and migration. A study conducted in Asaba, Port Harcourt, and Uyo looked at brothel based, street based, and nightclub based female prostituted persons in the region. It found that 90% of respondents used condoms with clients, but that about half would be willing sex without a condom if the client paid more. Only 10% of respondents reported a willingness to quit their activity because of the high risk of HIV/AIDS (*Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2013). Although misconceptions do exist among prostituted people on the mode of transmission of HIV/AIDS, the largest inhibitor to decreasing HIV/AIDS prevalence is poverty, which not only forces people into prostitution as a survival tactic, but also forces them to comply with client wishes despite future consequences for themselves and society as a whole.

Various campaigns in the Nigerian media aim to increase HIV/AIDS awareness and condom use. They aim to lower HIV/AIDS prevalence in society through education about transmission and safe behaviors to avoid the disease. Officials have argued that these campaigns should be restructured to better target young people, for instance by using social media. But these campaigns do not change the aforementioned structural issues that force people into prostitution, and prostituted persons still engage in high-risk activity because their economic survival depends on it.

The most significant way to reduce prostitution and sex trafficking in Nigeria would be through poverty reduction plans. The government must create an environment that provides employment opportunities for poor Nigerians. Additionally the tradition of rich households employing children to work as housemaids should be discouraged, as it allows traffickers to manipulate poor families with the promise of this type of employment. Legislation with more enforceable and severe penalties against sex trafficking and its patronage would also combat this phenomenon.

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