

INFORMATION SHEET

Child Trafficking

UNICEF Nigeria, April 2007

Background

The trafficking of children for the purpose of domestic service, prostitution and other forms of exploitative labour is a widespread phenomenon in Nigeria. In view of the clandestine nature of trafficking, accurate and reliable figures are hard to get. Globally, child trafficking is one of the fastest growing organised crimes with an estimated 1.2 million victims per year, of which 32% are African.

Scale of the problem

The FOS/ILO National Child Labour Survey (2003) estimates that there are 15 million children engaged in child labour in Nigeria with 40% of them at the risk of being trafficked both internally and externally for domestic and forced labour, prostitution, entertainment, pornography, armed conflict, and sometimes ritual killings.

Nigeria is a source, transit and destination country for child trafficking. Currently, external trafficking of children exists between Nigeria and Gabon, Cameroon, Niger, Italy, Spain, Benin Republic and Saudi Arabia.

The NAPTIP/UNICEF Situation Assessment of Child Trafficking in Southern Nigerian State (2004) reported that 46% of repatriated victims of external trafficking in Nigeria are children, with a female to male ratio of 7:3. They are engaged mainly in prostitution (46%), domestic labour (21%), forced labour (15%) and entertainment (8%). Internal trafficking of children in Nigeria was also reported to be for the purpose of forced labour (32%), domestic labour (31%) and prostitution (30%). Boys are mostly trafficked from the south eastern states of Imo, Abia and Akwa-Ibom to Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Congo, while those from Kwara go to Togo and as far as Mali to work on plantations.

Between October and December 2003, over 500 children from the Republic of Benin were rescued from granite quarries and repatriated back to their country of origin, through a joint effort of UNICEF in Nigeria and Benin. Similarly, Nigeria has recently seen an increased number of repatriation of trafficking victims from many foreign countries such as UK, Italy, Netherlands, USA, Belgium, Ireland, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.

Private transit camps have been reported to exist in Akwa-Ibom, Cross Rivers and Ondo States where children are transported from the south eastern states and forced into hard labour and prostitution. Likewise, immigration and investigation reports from NAPTIP have shown increasing number of cases in the northern part of the country.

Major causes

There are diverse reasons why many Nigerian children are vulnerable to trafficking, including widespread poverty, large family size, rapid urbanization with deteriorating public services, low literacy levels and high school-drop out rates. The demand for cheap commercial sex workers in countries of destination strongly contributes to the growth of this phenomenon and the success of this criminal network. Parents with a large family, often overburdened with the care of too many children, are prone to the traffickers' deceit in giving away some of their children to city residents or even strangers promising a better life for them.

Traffickers exploit the trust of people rooted in a widespread, culturally accepted common practice in West Africa of placement and fostering as part of the extended family safety net. In some instances, desperately poor and uninformed parents willingly co-operate with the traffickers, giving away their children in exchange for a small fee. In the hands of unscrupulous guardians, these children are increasingly trafficked and exploited for money.

Trafficking in person: a definition

The additional protocol to the United Nations Convention *against trans-national organised crime aiming to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children (2000)*, known as **Palermo Protocol**, gives a definition of trafficking and emphasises the establishment of legislative and punitive measures. Article 3a of the protocol defines trafficking in persons as:

“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. 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.”

The poor economic situation in Nigeria has led to unemployment and high rates of school drop-out. These circumstances have created a large pool of inactive and unengaged children and adolescents who are much more vulnerable to trafficking than their peers who go to school. The motivation, especially of teenagers, to find work away from home is often driven by the increasing taste for material things. For many others it is a question of bare survival.

The national response to child trafficking.

In July 2003, the Trafficking in Persons Prohibition and Administration Act was passed in Nigeria, a legislative framework that prohibits all forms of trafficking in persons and protects children and adults against criminal networks. As a result of the law, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and Other Related matters (NAPTIP) was established to fight human trafficking through investigation of cases, prosecution of criminals, rescue and rehabilitation of victims. NAPTIP has opened shelters to host rescued/repatriated children while investigations are being carried out and the families identified.

NAPTIP working closely with Police, Immigration and Civil Society Organizations has achieved the following results:

- **Investigation and Arrest**

- Investigation of over 64 cases in 2006.
- Since 2005, prosecution and conviction of 12 traffickers who are presently imprisoned.
- 32 cases currently at different stages of prosecution in the law courts.

- **Rescue and Rehabilitation:**

- A total of 757 victims have been rescued between February 2004 and December 2006, including 6 babies.
- 73 victims rescued and counseled in 2004.
 - 337 victims were rescued and counseled in 2005.
 - 348 victims rescued and counseled in 2006.

Most of these victims are Nigerian females, while a smaller number are Beninese, Togolese and Ghanaian.

However, the capacity of law enforcement agencies including the immigration and the police officials in monitoring and reporting cases, as well as patrolling borders, still needs to be enhanced.

One major development was the signing of a cooperation agreement to fight child trafficking, between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Benin in June 2005. The document provides notably for a joint security surveillance team that will patrol the borders of both countries. The Nigerian Government is currently discussing new bilateral agreements with Niger and Cameroon.

In July 2006, a regional conference was jointly organized by ECOWAS and ECCAS in Abuja, with active participation of NAPTIP. Supported by UNICEF, ILO, UNODC, IOM, and the Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Trafficking in Persons, the conference was

designed to share country experiences and to develop a common platform of action against trafficking in persons in West and Central Africa. To this end, a 'Multilateral Co-operation Agreement on Combating Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children' was signed by 15 member States from both ECOWAS and ECCAS.

UNICEF's support to the national response.

UNICEF's support to the prevention of child trafficking in Nigeria includes:

- Enhancing knowledge and research on the phenomenon of trafficking by supporting an efficient surveillance system to document the incidence and nature of rights violation.
- Raising public awareness through involvement of the media and addressing attitudes, behaviors and practices through an appropriate communication strategy.
- Advocating to national / State leaders to effectively combat trafficking by adopting adequate policies and programmes and by implementing legislation.
- Improving the co-ordination framework and strengthening collaboration at national, regional and international levels.
- Development and improvement of appropriate institutional responses and care for child victims of trafficking and exploitation.
- Enhancing the knowledge of the children themselves and adopting a preventive approach

Apart from direct interventions to address child trafficking, UNICEF's priority is to build a protective environment to prevent the abuse, violence and exploitation of children throughout the country.

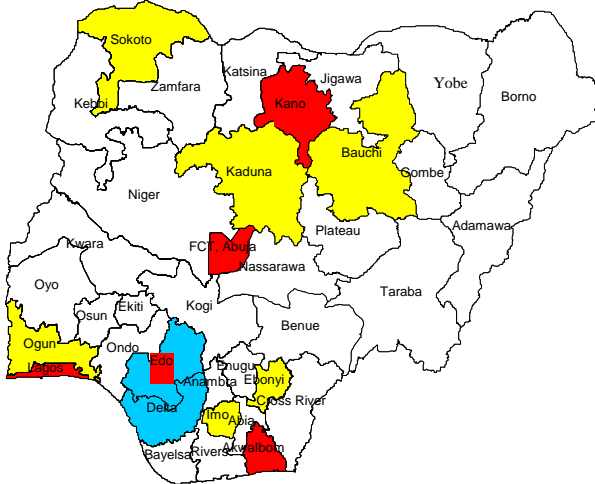
Right from the national Agency's inception, UNICEF supported the institutional capacity building of NAPTIP and helped in establishing an anti-trafficking network in 22 Southern and Northern States. UNICEF also gives assistance to NAPTIP shelters and trains their staff in psycho-social rehabilitation skills so that they can give an adequate support to children.

The continued capacity building and sensitization of police, immigration and prison officers is gradually bringing results, such as the rescue of 100 children at the border with Benin Republic in March 2005 and the recent handing over of 19 teenagers to the Benin Republic authorities by NAPTIP officials in Lagos State.

To prevent young people from being trafficked, UNICEF has facilitated the establishment of Youth Resource centers with the support of Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the UK National Committee. These centers provide health promotion, skills training, recreational services, legal support and information to young people.

- Two model Youth Resource Centres were established in Edo and Delta State in 2004 and 2005.

- Seven replicated Youth Resource Centres have been established in Kano, Akwa Ibom, Sokoto, Ebonyi, Bauchi, Ogun and Imo States
- Four transit shelters established in Kano, Edo, Akwa Ibom and Lagos States.



Status of the SIDA project coverage and Replication

- States with pilot Model Youth Resource Learning Centres funded by SIDA
- States with replicated Model Youth Resource Learning Centres
- States with Transit Shelters for victims of child trafficking

The project aims at addressing the underlying causes of child trafficking, youth violence and HIV/AIDS among young people (13–24 years), through the development of leadership skills, accountability, creativity, patriotism and the provision of services to school children and out-of-school young people.

As of December 2006, over 18,000 young people mostly within the 15-24 age bracket have been reached through the youth resources centres in Edo and Delta. On a regular basis, over 3,500 registered young people¹ use the resource centres every year. The large turn out came as a result of the government's commitment, good staffing of the centres, intensified outreach programmes/peer education programmes and recreational services including drama and video shows. Enterprise development, vocational training and creative arts courses anchored by young resource people drawn from the communities drew a lot of the young people wanting to change and improve their standard of living

UNICEF supports an active network of NGOs working against trafficking and helping victims. Action by the Civil Society Network against child trafficking, labour and abuse in Edo, Lagos, Cross Rivers, Rivers, Taraba, Osun and Kano states and the F.C.T., resulted in about 14,000

children having improved access to general information on trafficking; 43 children were reunited and reintegrated back into their families and 1,317 had access to life skills/vocational training and counseling. Through these NGOs, children gain access to education, vocational training and health care.

In addition, particular attention has been given to media, advocacy, and sensitization work. This has led to investigative reporting, editorials, posters, radio dramas and jingles on trafficking.

Emerging Priorities

- Building a protective environment for children remains a priority as long as children will be abused and exploited.
- Continuous public education campaign and rigorous enforcement of the law in order to change the tradition of using child labourers, particularly domestic girls.
- Training and capacity building of law enforcement officers and other key players in the fight against trafficking.
- Empowerment programmes for vulnerable groups.

For further information on UNICEF's work in Nigeria to counter child trafficking, please contact:

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¹ Figure indicated here does not include unregistered attendees, who benefit from the centre's outreach programmes