



THE ALL-PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

Nigeria

Human Trafficking Between Nigeria and the UK: Addressing a Shared Challenge



Cover Photo: Devatop Centre for Africa Development Team with Delegation in Abuja on the 16 February 2018

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Contents

Introduction	2
The Journey to Europe	4
The UK and Trafficking from Nigeria	7
The Challenges of Returning	9
Responses and Key Institutions	12
Recommended Approaches to Support Anti-Trafficking Efforts	19
Acknowledgments	21
Appendix: Nigeria APPG Visit Itinerary	22

Introduction

In February 2018, a delegation of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Nigeria visited the country on a fact-finding mission to examine initiatives to combat human trafficking from Nigeria to the UK, and explore areas of current and potential cooperation. The visit aimed to increase UK parliamentary understanding of human trafficking from Nigeria, to highlight the issue in both countries, and to further cement links between parliamentarians and their counterparts in the National Assembly of Nigeria.

The APPG delegation visited Benin City and Abuja, Nigeria's capital, from 11 to 17 February 2018. The delegation undertook meetings with government officials at the state and federal levels, and met with representatives from the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs) to discuss human trafficking and the work being done to prevent it.

Nigeria is an increasing concern as a source, destination and transit country for human trafficking. Although accurate data is difficult to come by, the 2018 Global Slavery Index

estimated that approximately 1.4 million Nigerians, or around 0.7 per cent of the country's total population,¹ are living in a state of modern slavery.

Most of those affected are found in Nigeria and in countries where there is a settled Nigerian diaspora. The country's rapid population growth, a struggling education system and a lack of youth employment opportunities are contributing factors to the problem.

According to United Nations data, Nigeria's population in 2017 was 191 million.² By 2050, the UN projects that that figure will reach over 400 million, behind only India and China.³ Accurate unemployment figures, particularly of the young, are difficult to ascertain due to the informal nature of much of Nigeria's economy.

However, approximately 40 per cent of the country's working age population is either unemployed or underemployed,⁴ and this figure is likely to be much higher among the country's youth. Nigeria's projected demographics will only intensify the urgent need for job creation and educational opportunities in the coming years.

¹ The Global Slave Index (2018), Country Data: Nigeria, <https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/2018/data/country-data/nigeria/> (accessed 19 Feb. 2019).

² United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017), *World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision, Key Findings and Advance Tables*, New York, United Nations, p. 29, https://population.un.org/wpp/Publications/Files/WPP2017_KeyFindings.pdf (accessed 19 Feb. 2019).

³ Ibid. p. 30.

⁴ Nigeria National Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force Statistics (2017) Vol.1 *Unemployment and Under-employment Report*, Q1–Q3 2017, p. 5, <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/download/856> (accessed 2 Mar. 2019).

However, Nigeria faces substantial institutional hurdles. It ranked 157th⁵ out of 189 countries in the 2017 Human Development Index, 145th⁶ out of 190 in the World Bank's 2018 ease of doing business index, and 144th⁷ in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. Nigeria's ongoing development challenges are also a symptom and a consequence of the country's beleaguered public education system.⁸ From primary to tertiary levels, the federal government spends approximately 7 per cent of the national budget on education. The low level of education investment is demonstrated by the fact that university graduates tend to find that, even when scant opportunities arise, their qualifications are often considered meaningless. A young Nigerian graduate told the APPG delegation that despite having a degree in computer science, he is unable to write a single line of code.

As a result, Nigeria's young adults face severe economic hardship and many feel despondent about the future. The country's young people, and particularly those from Edo State and the surrounding states, often believe that undertaking a perilous journey to Europe is their only opportunity to improve their circumstances.



⁵ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Indices and Indicators 2018 Statistical Update*, New York, United Nations p. 48, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/2018_human_development_statistical_update.pdf (accessed 1 Mar. 2019).

⁶ World Bank Group (2018), *Doing Business 2018 - Equal Opportunity for All*, Washington, p. 4, <http://www.doingbusiness.org/en/reports/global-reports/doing-business-2018> (accessed 1 Mar. 2019).

⁷ Transparency International (undated), 'Corruption Perceptions Index 2018', <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018> (accessed 1 Mar. 2019).

⁸ BudgIT (2018), *Public Education Financing: Issues and Recommendations*, BudgIT, Lagos p. 3, <http://yourbudgit.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Public-Education-Financing-Issues-and-Recommendations.pdf> (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

The Journey to Europe

Edo State

Edo State is a landlocked area in Nigeria's southern Niger Delta region. The state capital, Benin City, is 315 kilometres from Lagos and 470 kilometres from the federal capital Abuja. Edo is a minor oil producer and ranks among the top 10 of the country's 36 states for GDP. Despite this wealth, much of the population of Edo State is desperately poor and an entire economy has built up around the trade in humans. While the slave trade in the region dates back centuries, the trafficking of migrants began in earnest in the 1980s. At that time international travel was more straightforward with less stringent border controls. Frustrated by a dearth of opportunities in Nigeria, many young women travelled to Europe with fake travel documents seeking employment, often to sell gold and beads.⁹ Many ended up on the streets of European capitals engaging in sex work. In Italy, in particular, men using sex workers often preferred new arrivals from Nigeria over their Italian counterparts, many of whom had drug addictions, due to the fear of aids in the 1980s.¹⁰

During the visit to Benin City, the delegation observed severe poverty and conspicuous wealth adjacent to one another. While most in the city live in very simple accommodation, numerous mansions, complete with high walls and razor wire, dot the city's suburbs. Some streets in the city bear the names of prominent brothel owners, or madams.

While there is evidence that some Christian pastors are complicit in human trafficking, an important aspect of the thriving trade in this part of Nigeria is the prevalence of traditional beliefs among communities. These traditional beliefs are taken advantage of by human traffickers, who will often take girls and young women to meet a juju priest, a practitioner of a local form of 'witchcraft'. The juju priest will collect personal items from the girl such as fingernails, pubic hair and blood, and perform a ritual to ensure that the young victim will obey their madam¹¹ and repay a substantial debt for their travel and upkeep costs. Should they fail to repay the debt or if they inform the authorities about the madam or the ritual, the victim will often be told that she and her family will die for disobeying the oath. Debts are often exorbitant, reaching as much as \$60,000.¹²

⁹ Nwaubani, A. T. (2018), 'A Voodoo Curse on Human Traffickers', *New York Times*, 24 April 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/24/opinion/sunday/voodoo-curse-human-traffickers.html> (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

¹⁰ Ben Taub (2017), 'The Desperate Journey of a Trafficked Girl', *The New Yorker*, 10 April 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/10/t>

he-desperate-journey-of-a-trafficked-girl (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

¹¹ Madams are often women who were previously trafficked themselves and now engage in the trade.

¹² European Asylum Support Office (2015), *Nigeria: Sex trafficking of Women*, EASO Country of Origin Information Report, pp. 20–22,

The situation is different for boys and young men, who will make their own way to Europe and are not bonded by a juju oath. During the APPG visit, the delegation heard personal stories of young men who felt returning home was not an option because their families had spent a vast proportion of their income to get their children to Europe.

The economic desperation of people in the state has resulted in dependence on remittances from abroad, so family members are willing participants in illegal trafficking from Edo State. There is widespread evidence of girls attempting to make the perilous trip across the Sahara and beyond with the encouragement of both their immediate and extended families.¹³ While it is common for illegal migrants to perpetuate the story that they are travelling to work in domestic service, hairdressing or other types of employment, it is an open secret in Edo State that most young women and girls that travel will be forced to engage in sex work in Europe.

Once the juju ritual has taken place, the journey from Edo State in the south of Nigeria to the streets of Rome, Madrid or London takes a relatively well-defined route. With the help of their madam (either based in Europe or Nigeria),

girls and young women are loaded into buses and are driven to 'connection houses' in northern Nigerian cities such as Kaduna, Kano and Sokoto. They are then driven across the border into neighbouring Niger.¹⁴

Agadez

Typically, victims are then brought by 'connection men' to Agadez, a dusty city on the edge of the Sahara Desert, where they will assemble in ghettos before embarking on the next leg of the journey. There is very little comfort, and shortages of food and water are common. Girls and young women are subjected to abhorrent abuses while in transit, and rape and beatings are the norm. One interviewee told the delegation that traffickers often buy 'wholesale' from these connection houses in Niger, where a boy may cost N450,000 (\$1,242) while a girl will cost N400,000 (\$1,104). It is not uncommon for a trafficked person to have multiple owners.

However, in recent years and particularly since German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited Niger in October 2016, Agadez has increasingly become a focal point of the international community in the crackdown against illegal migration to Europe. Nigerian authorities have

<https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/BZ0415678ENN.pdf> (accessed 1 Aug. 2018).

¹³ Aghatise, E. (2002), *Trafficking for prostitution in Italy: concept paper*, paper presented at the Expert Group Meeting on 'Trafficking in women and girls', Glen Cove, New York, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/trafficking>

2002/reports/EP-Aghatise.PDF (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

¹⁴ There is freedom of movement among the 15 member states that comprise the Economic Community of West African States, including Nigeria and Niger.

stepped up their monitoring of the city and traffickers are increasingly seeking new, untested smuggling routes. These new routes are often more dangerous for trafficking victims, with numerous reports emerging of young women and girls being left in the desert without supplies when smugglers fear that authorities are nearby. In the absence of income from tourism, which has dried up due to increased jihadist activities in the region, and little in the way of alternative economic opportunity, Agadez has become increasingly dependent on the illegal migration trade.

Libya: The final leg

The final leg of the journey before reaching the shores of the Mediterranean consists of traversing the vast expanse of Libya. The ousting of Muammar Gaddafi in late 2011 left a dangerous political vacuum, and Libya has since descended into a chaotic structure in which governments, armed groups and international Islamist movements compete for power. The illegal migration trade is big business in Libya, and officials and armed groups alike are complicit in perpetuating the situation.

From the Nigerien border to Tripoli on Libya's Mediterranean coast, migrants travel over 1,000 kilometres and face immense hardship along the way. As in Niger, rape and beatings are commonplace, and there have been confirmed

reports of slave auctions, where young men from Nigeria are sold for labour to the highest bidder, sometimes for as little as \$400.¹⁵ Migrants who are apprehended by Libyan authorities during the journey are routinely beaten, robbed, arrested and placed in detention camps. From discussions with former Nigerian detainees, the delegation heard that conditions in these detention camps are worse than those in the desert. One male returnee, who spent nine months in detention in Libya, noted that the 'Libyan police rob you, we sleep side by side in jail, we have no room to turn around, and we are given only dirty water'. He claimed that he and others were routinely taken from detention, put to work and later returned to detention. At night, he routinely 'prayed to go to heaven, not to go back to Nigeria'.

Victims of human trafficking can be held in Libyan detention camps for prolonged periods. One victim told the delegation that friends of his have remained in these camps for more than three years. The exact number of Nigerians currently in Libya is extremely difficult to ascertain due to militant control of some parts of the country.

Crossing the Mediterranean

The final leg of the journey requires crossing the Mediterranean Sea in incredibly hazardous conditions. It is not known how many migrants

¹⁵ Elbagir, N., Razek, R., Platt, A. and Jones, B. (2017), 'People for sale', CNN, 14 November 2017,

<https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/14/africa/libya-migrant-auctions/index.html> (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

have drowned while attempting this journey, as many instances go undocumented. Those migrants that do reach European shores tend to follow a typical protocol.

Migrants will have been told by their madams or connection men to inform the authorities in Europe that they are over 18 years old, so as not to end up in shelters for unaccompanied minors where movements are more restricted. In Benin City, the delegation heard from various sources that victims are sometimes told to match their complexion and skin tone to specific parts of Nigeria and claim that they are fleeing from conflict, be it Boko Haram, the farmer–herder conflict in the Middle Belt region or the situation over Biafra, allowing them to claim asylum. Migrants will have a phone number, provided to them by their madams, to call upon arrival in Europe. The migrant will inform the contact person of their location and soon be picked up. Typically, young women and girls will find themselves alone in a strange city and be forced to have sex with multiple men every day for years, until their debt is repaid.

The UK and Trafficking from Nigeria

In order to understand the UK and trafficking from Nigeria, it is important to consider the historical links between the two countries. In 1914, the colony of Lagos (initially annexed by the British in 1861), the Southern Nigeria Protectorate (established in 1885–94), and the Northern Nigeria Protectorate (which was largely pacified by British forces in 1903) were amalgamated into Nigeria. British administration came to an end on 1 October 1960, when Nigeria was granted independence. In 1963, the Nigerian government severed links with the Crown and declared itself a republic. However, post-independence, the two governments maintained close ties and Nigeria remained a member of the Commonwealth of Nations.

Since the colonial era, Nigerians have migrated to the UK for education and employment, and the majority eventually return to Nigeria to work and raise families. The economic mismanagement and institutional corruption that has taken hold in Nigeria in recent decades, however, has shifted the Nigeria-to-UK migrant paradigm.

The dearth of opportunities on offer in Nigeria has meant that the UK is now largely seen as somewhere to escape to, and most migrants today see little benefit in ever seeking to return to Nigeria permanently.

During the APPG visit, the delegation repeatedly heard that the UK is seen as the premier destination for young Nigerian migrants from Edo State. A common language is likely an important factor, but the main reason appears to be the belief that a young migrant can obtain a 'real' job in the UK, rather than be forced to engage in sex work. The Nigerian press routinely reports on young Nigerian women and girls working as prostitutes in countries such as Italy and Spain, whereas the UK is not portrayed in this light. The delegation heard this was due to the positive impression Nigerians have of the UK and its authorities. Through various interviews that the delegation conducted, it was noted that many young Nigerians are ignorant of life in the UK and expect the streets to be 'paved with gold'.

The most important aspect of migration from Edo State, however, relates to the significant Nigerian diaspora in the UK. Although there are no concrete figures on the number of Nigerians in the UK, the 2011 census recorded 201,184 Nigerian-born residents in the UK.¹⁶ This figure is likely to have grown since and does not include those born in the UK to Nigerian parents or grandparents. On this basis, it is clear that Nigerians make up one of the largest diaspora groups in the UK. This large diaspora contributes to a type of human trafficking that is more

clandestine in nature. A young Nigerian woman or girl may go to the UK under the guise of staying with an extended family or a family friend, but the true nature of the relationship is often one of domestic servitude, with girls effectively working as slaves for little or no money. The clandestine nature of this type of trafficking means that it is difficult to ascertain the scale of the problem; it can often be unclear whether someone is a willing participant or not. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that these young people are brought to the UK legally. One interviewee told the delegation that it is possible to have someone traffic a child for you: the trafficker will pretend a child is their own, obtain a visa for the child and then send the child to the 'adopter' in the UK.

The delegation was informed that this system is exclusive to the UK. The delegation also heard from a member of the diaspora in the UK that this issue affects not just young women, but older people, including men. Families may send for a family member in Nigeria to join them in the UK, where they will work as servants. If these victims complain or threaten to speak out, they may be threatened with being sent back to Nigeria. In such cases, the delegation heard, the victim will often prefer to remain in the UK in bondage than risk going back to Nigeria due to

¹⁶ Office for National Statistics (2018), 'Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality', <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommu>

[nity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/datasets/populationoftheunitedkingdombycountryofbirthandnationality](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommu) (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

the lack of opportunity and shame that comes with not being able to 'succeed' in Europe.

However, at the other end of the spectrum, there are numerous cases of children adopted by wealthy members of their extended family and brought to the UK to benefit from better education and economic opportunities. In Nigeria, it is traditionally expected that successful members of a family support the wider family. These positive examples of migration and development must also be taken into account while tackling human trafficking for modern slavery.



The Challenges of Returning

In 2017, CNN launched a series of investigations into the plight of modern slavery victims from Nigeria. The reports were widely disseminated across Nigeria, and there was a sense of palpable outrage across the society. The Nigerian government has since significantly stepped up its efforts in repatriating young Nigerian migrants from Libya. However, whether victims are repatriated willingly from Libya or are denied entry into Europe, life upon returning to Nigeria is largely the same.

The Nigerian government provides regular flights for migrants who agree to voluntary return from Libya. The flights return to Lagos and Port Harcourt in Rivers State; the International Organization for Migration (IOM) manages the logistics for migrants who return to Lagos, while Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) handles returns to Port Harcourt. The delegation heard from numerous interviewees that the IOM-led Lagos return procedures were much better organized than the Port Harcourt returns. The delegation also heard worrying reports that traffickers were frequently on board these flights, effectively receiving a complementary ticket back to Nigeria to continue their business.

The primary bodies that assist returnees to Edo State are the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and the Edo State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking.¹⁷ The policy of the latter is to provide all returnees with start-up capital to begin their own small businesses.¹⁸ In addition to also providing a basic smartphone to each returnee, the taskforce offers skills acquisition programmes and job placement opportunities in areas such as catering, hairdressing and secretarial work. Victims are also provided with free basic education and healthcare upon return for a limited period.

With a federal mandate, NAPTIP administers a number of shelters for victims of human trafficking in cities across Nigeria, including Benin City, Uyo, Enugu and Maiduguri. The location of these shelters is not disclosed to the public, and each shelter has a maximum occupancy of anywhere between 20 and 60 persons. Due to low capacity, the length of stay for a returning victim cannot exceed six weeks. If longer is required, NAPTIP will refer the victim to a shelter managed by a partner NGO. NAPTIP does not currently operate any shelters for male returnees. The delegation met with Dame Julie Okah-Donli, the director-general of NAPTIP, and visited the agency's shelter in Benin City. There were approximately 15 girls and young women

present, some of whom had been raped and impregnated in Libya or Europe and were staying in the shelter with their new-born children. The girls all spoke of the fear and abuse they had suffered en route to Europe, but NAPTIP officials told the delegation that none of the girls were willing to identify who trafficked them.



Aside from NAPTIP and the Edo State Taskforce, there are a number of NGOs and civil society organizations in Edo State and across the country that are actively supporting returnees. The Society for the Empowerment of Young Persons, run by Jennifer Ero, and the Girls' Power Initiative, run by Grace Osakue, are both based in Benin City and offer valuable grassroots advice and support to returnees. The Devatop Centre for Africa Development, based in Abuja and founded by Joseph Osuigwe Chidiebere, is a youth-led movement that seeks to prevent

¹⁷ Profiles of both NAPTIP and the Edo State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking can be found in the subsequent section.

¹⁸ NAPTIP (undated), 'Counselling and Rehabilitation', website, https://www.naptip.gov.ng/?page_id=142 (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

human trafficking and the abuse of vulnerable children. However, these organizations suffer from a lack of funding and a lack of capacity.

While both NAPTIP and the Edo State Taskforce provide counselling and rehabilitation programmes to victims of human trafficking, many, if not all, of the thousands of migrants who return to Nigeria require psychological support to properly reintegrate into society.

This was demonstrated in a meeting with a male returnee from Benin City who was enrolled in a taskforce-led reintegration programme but continued to suffer serious mental trauma as a result of his treatment in Libya. Healthcare in Nigeria is extremely poor, and mental health services are largely non-existent. NGOs and civil society organizations are well placed to provide such support services as they are deeply integrated in their communities and have years of experience in assisting victims.

The international donor community should look to these organizations in their development planning. The delegation also met with Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa, Nigeria's senior special adviser to the president on diaspora and foreign affairs, who suggested that money from European governments would be better utilized if it was spent on rehabilitation rather than detention centres.

Despite the positive work of NAPTIP, the Edo State Taskforce and a whole host of smaller

organizations, the factors that have driven young Nigerians to leave their country remain. The lack of job opportunities, a weak education system, institutionalized corruption and widespread poverty, mean that victims return to a society without the capacity to support them.

While returnees are offered limited opportunities to acquire work skills and are provided with a small stipend to begin their own business, this fails to address the poor provision of basic services in the country. As the provision of power, clean water and infrastructure is limited, as are health and education, citizens often bear the cost of providing these things for themselves, as state funds for public services are often misdirected or can be caught up in mismanagement.

The delegation repeatedly heard that both the Nigerian government and international donors should focus more on providing agricultural machinery and agribusiness skills. Nigeria has vast potential for agribusiness ventures such as cashew farming. There is an abundance of fertile land and significant human capital, but the country lacks the well-managed institutions and effective services needed to foster an environment to enable large-scale and sustainable creation of quality jobs.

Life for victims of human trafficking is made harder by the fact that many are shunned and ostracized by their families upon returning to Nigeria. Often, those that return are deemed to

have ‘failed’ to provide financial security for their families. In addition, the culturally conservative nature of society means that women and young girls who return from Europe are particularly targeted for moral judgments. Professor Yinka Omorogbe, Edo State attorney-general and commissioner for justice, and chairperson of the Edo State Taskforce, noted to the delegation that female returnees are subjected to sexual discrimination, with public perceptions of them being wayward and disobedient. In Benin City, the delegation also met with a young woman in a charity-run shelter who spent two years in Morocco – believing herself to be in Europe – before going back to Nigeria, when she found herself disowned by her family for returning. In addition, the delegation heard reports of families refusing to pay school fees for their children who have refused to be trafficked.

As such, the situation in Nigeria is often worse for returning victims than before they initially left. One young victim that spent three years in Libya is Solomon Okoduwa. Solomon is now the senior special assistant to the Edo State governor on anti-human-trafficking and illegal migration and is the president of an NGO called Initiative for Youth Awareness on Migration, Immigration, Development and Reintegration. Solomon told the delegation that young people will continue to leave Nigeria until they truly believe that there are opportunities worth staying for, ‘people will try and go to Europe and fail but they will try again – what else is there for them?’



Responses and Key Institutions

National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP)

NAPTIP is the agency of the federal government of Nigeria mandated to address human trafficking. In 2001, Nigeria adopted the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and the Trafficking Protocol, and NAPTIP was established in July 2003 with the passing of the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act.

The agency is mandated to investigate, arrest, detain and prosecute individuals and organizations that commit offences under the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act. The organization operates under the broad umbrella of the ‘four Ps’: prevention, protection, prosecution and

partnership. Headquartered in Abuja, NAPTIP is structured under nine zonal commands – Benin City, Enugu, Kano, Lagos, Maiduguri, Makurdi, Osogbo, Sokoto and Uyo. In addition to close collaboration with the UK's National Crime Agency, the organization works in partnership with international bodies such as the IOM and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. In addition, it works closely with frontline ministries in the federal government, such as the ministries of justice, women affairs and youth development. NAPTIP also collaborates with the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in monitoring Lagos airport, and maintains a presence at Heathrow and Gatwick airports. NAPTIP has a visible presence on the ground in Edo State, leading anti-human-trafficking awareness campaigns at marketplaces and offices and running educational seminars for parents. The agency also maintains a prominent social media presence.

NAPTIP has enjoyed some successes since its creation. The agency secured the conviction of 339 traffickers as of February 2018, with its own in-house lawyers. As of December 2017, NAPTIP has rescued over 3,500 victims of human trafficking in Edo and Delta states, and during the APPG visit the delegation met with officers from the Lagos Zonal Command, who noted that they had recently shut down three hotels in the city that were engaged in the trafficking of persons. NAPTIP has the power to seize and sell these

assets, the proceeds of which can be used to compensate victims. In addition, NAPTIP is actively working with juju priests to educate them about the plight of young women and girls, and to help identify the madams involved.

Despite these positives, however, the agency faces numerous complex challenges. Maintaining an adequate stream of funding is a major problem for NAPTIP, and this greatly hampers the agency's ability to help victims of human trafficking and those at risk of being trafficked. NAPTIP currently operates 10 shelters across the country, but none of these houses more than a few dozen women and there are no facilities for men. As such, NAPTIP can support only a small percentage of returnees and those at risk. Dame Julie Okah-Donli informed the delegation that the agency hopes to operate an office and shelter in each of Nigeria's 36 states, but a lack of available funding is an obvious impediment to realizing this aim.

In addition, progress is hampered by the inter-agency rivalry that seems to persist between NAPTIP and the Edo State Taskforce. The parliamentary delegation heard from both agencies that there is a sense of mutual mistrust, and other stakeholders engaged by the delegation in Benin City, Lagos and Abuja – from civil society organizations to representatives from international organizations – also alluded to this rivalry. Such competition between agencies that share the same goal is

unproductive at best and dangerous at worst. NAPTIP officials also told the delegation that their efforts would be more effective if the governments of destination countries, including the UK, were more engaged in mutually beneficial intelligence sharing. This 'one way' system of intelligence-sharing from Nigeria to the UK without reciprocation was also criticized by several organizations engaged by the delegation.



Edo State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking

Edo State Governor Godwin Obaseki established the Edo State Taskforce Against Human Trafficking in August 2017 in response to the state's prominence in trafficking. It was created to complement the work of NAPTIP and other international organizations. The taskforce is entirely funded by the state government and led by Professor Yinka Omorogbe, the state's attorney-general and commissioner for justice.

As of February 2018, the taskforce employed 16 fulltime members of staff in the secretariat and five in the agency's security team.

As a relatively new agency the taskforce does not yet run its own shelters, instead it arranges for victims of human trafficking to stay at local hotels and at a shelter affiliated with the Catholic Church. The 2018 Edo State budget approved an allocation of N100 million (£209,000) for the taskforce, which is less than one-fifth of the resources allocated to the State Sports Council.¹⁹

Professor Omorogbe told the delegation that, on return to the state, victims of trafficking are processed in a structured fashion: returnees are debriefed by the taskforce, asked detailed questions about their experiences, provided with medical and health tests and have their biometrics taken. As mentioned earlier, returnees receive a monthly stipend of N20,000 (around \$55) for the first three months of return, this figure rises to N25,000 (around \$69) and N30,000 (around \$82) per month, respectively, if the victim is pregnant or has a child. These stipends are conditional upon returnees opening bank accounts. The taskforce told the delegation that this is to ensure that victims of human trafficking do not slip into the informal economy upon return. As mentioned, training and empowerment programmes are also delivered.

¹⁹ Edo State Government (2018), *Approved Budget Estimates*,

<http://yourbudget.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2018-Edo-State-Approved-Budget.pdf> (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

The delegation discussed the human trafficking issue with the Edo State governor in February 2018. He stated that in his opinion the current crisis is a Nigerian problem and it is for Nigerians to resolve. However, he noted that the state government needs more meaningful support from European governments and donors, and that the mutual sharing of intelligence is just as important as financial contributions to combat these illicit practices. Governor Obaseki also stressed that, although the taskforce fulfils its duties locally, without international support in pursuing and prosecuting overseas ringleaders, the human trafficking problem will remain.

The taskforce faces considerable, multi-faceted challenges. The sheer number of victims of human trafficking returning to Edo State means that the agency's current funding allowances are not fit for purpose. The taskforce has struggled in recent months to process the large volumes of returnees. Although the state government faces budgetary challenges, it is imperative that it increases funding to combating human trafficking, and improvements in financial management and efficiency may help to achieve this in part. Human trafficking is the primary

crisis affecting the state; one interviewee told the delegation that Edo is 'losing a generation'.

In addition, the inter-agency rivalry between the taskforce and NAPTIP is unhelpful. It is difficult to see how the illegal trade in humans can be effectively countered when the two primary agencies devoted to it are unable to work together.

The National Assembly, state assemblies and the judicial system

Nigeria has a federal system of government, which means that its 36 states²⁰ are vested with significant independence in their respective legislatures. As such, a law may be passed at the federal level, but it will not be binding at the state level unless adopted by the state assembly. For example, Nigeria's National Assembly passed the Child Rights Act in 2003,²¹ which aims to protect children from violence and being trafficked; to date, 26 states in the federation have adopted the act.²² However, there is strong anecdotal evidence suggesting that even in states where the law has been enacted, instances of violence against children remain very high. A 2014 national survey conducted by the National Population Commission of Nigeria, UNICEF and the US Centers for Disease Control

²⁰ The Federal Capital Territory is administered by the federal government in Abuja.

²¹ National Assembly (2003), Nigeria: Act No. 26 of 2003, Child's Rights Act, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5568201f4.html> (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

²² The states that have not yet passed the Child Rights Act are all northern states: Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno,

Gombe, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara.

and Prevention (CDC)²³ found that more than half of the children in Nigeria suffer from physical violence between the ages of six and 11, while one in four girls and one in 10 boys face forms of sexual violence. A UNICEF representative told the delegation that Nigeria loses approximately 1.5 per cent of its GDP every year due to the health consequences of violence against children.

In Abuja, the delegation met with two members of the National Assembly: Hon. Pwajok Gyang, chairman of the Human Rights Committee, and Hon. Razak Atunwa, chairman of the Justice Committee. Both members insisted that while there is pressure on states to adopt the Child Rights Act, the judicial system in Nigeria is often resistant to change. They note that there is a great deal of rigidity in the structure of the court system, and progress tends to be slow. The members also stated that there is a lack of expertise on human trafficking among judges, and there is a significant need to increase capacity in this regard.

Traditional leaders

Together with the widespread prevalence of Christianity in southern Nigeria, traditional beliefs remain strong in states such as Edo. The Benin Kingdom arose in the 10th century, long

before the arrival of Europeans to West Africa, and developed into an important pre-colonial empire. At its height, the kingdom stretched from Onitsha on the banks of the Niger River in modern day Anambra State, and across parts of present day Republic of Benin, Togo and Ghana. The kingdom was ruled by the Oba, an absolute monarch. When the kingdom was razed by the British in 1897, the Oba lost his political powers but retained his strong religious and cultural influence over the people of Edo State.

Today, the Oba retains his role as the traditional ruler and his influence is widely felt. NAPTIP, the Edo State taskforce and the various civil society organizations all understand the importance of engaging with the Oba on matters related to human trafficking. The role of juju priests and the administering of oaths to young women and girls is a prominent cause of this persistent problem. The various anti-trafficking agencies and organizations work with local doctors on awareness programmes and have achieved some success. The Oba, however, has the power to revoke the oaths that juju priests have placed on young victims. In March 2018, just weeks after the delegation departed Nigeria, the current and 40th Oba of Benin, Ewuare II, announced that he had revoked all of the

²³ National Population Commission of Nigeria, UNICEF Nigeria, and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2015), *Violence Against Children in Nigeria: Findings from a National Survey*, Abuja, Nigeria: UNICEF, <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/>

[/media/files/un%20women/vaw/full%20text/africa/nigeria%20violence%20against%20children%20survey%202014.pdf?vs=1313](#) (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

existing curses placed on young women and girls, and that these victims should not be afraid that they or their families will come to harm if they do not pay off their debts or go to the police. In addition, the Oba placed a curse on anyone encouraging or supporting illegal migration within his domain.²⁴

The importance of the Oba's proclamation cannot be underestimated. Owing to his status as the traditional leader of Edo State, this is undoubtedly a significant and positive step forward in the fight against human trafficking in Nigeria. As one analyst notes, the Oba's decision is likely to be more effective than the years of work and millions of dollars spent by the international anti-trafficking community.²⁵ Indeed, prior to the Oba's declaration, Dame Julie Okah-Donli informed the delegation that should the Oba decide to make all of the juju priests commit to opposing trafficking, then 85 per cent of NAPTIP's work will have been done. It remains to be seen exactly what effect the declaration of Oba Ewuare II has on the illicit trade in humans in Edo State.

The British government

The UK government's current approach to human trafficking and modern slavery is largely due to the efforts of the then home secretary, Theresa May. She was instrumental in the Home

Office's sponsorship of the Modern Slavery Act, which attained royal assent and became law on 26 March 2015. The act provides for law enforcement to better fight modern slavery, ensures that perpetrators receive suitably severe punishments, and enhances support and protection for victims of modern slavery.²⁶ The law is the first of its kind anywhere in Europe. Upon becoming prime minister, Theresa May worked closely with her successor as home secretary, Amber Rudd, to set up the first ever government taskforce on modern slavery.

The Modern Slavery Act also made provisions for an independent anti-slavery commissioner, the first position of its kind in the world. In 2015, the commissioner, Kevin Hyland, published his first Strategic Plan (2015–17), which focused on five key priorities to stimulate the UK government's response to combating modern slavery, including: ensuring improved identification and care of victims of modern slavery; driving an improved law enforcement and criminal justice response; promoting best practice in partnerships; engaging the private sector to develop supply-chain transparency and combat labour exploitation; and encouraging effective and targeted international collaboration. The commissioner has visited Edo State twice to meet with local stakeholders and government officials.

²⁴ Nwaubani (2018), 'A Voodoo Curse on Human Traffickers'.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ UK Government (2015), Modern Slavery Act, <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery-bill> (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).



At the United Nations General Assembly in 2017, Prime Minister May focused her speech on modern slavery, and led a collective ‘call to action’²⁷ to tackle the problem. Nigeria was one of the countries to endorse this statement of intent.

As part of the UK’s engagement, the prime minister set aside £33.5 million from the overseas development aid budget to create a five-year Modern Slavery Fund, focusing on high-risk countries such as Nigeria. The government allocated £5 million of this money to a programme in Nigeria to both boost the response of law enforcement and to support victims.

²⁷ UK Government (2017), *A Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking*, Policy Paper, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-call-to-action-to-end-forced-labour-modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking> (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

²⁸ UK Government (2017), UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652366/2017_uk_annual_report_on_modern_slavery.pdf (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

The Department for International Development (DFID) recently announced that it plans to devote £7 million to enhance livelihood opportunities in Nigeria to improve outcomes for victims of modern slavery and human trafficking.²⁸

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) UK also benefits from the Modern Slavery Fund. The CPA UK Modern Slavery Project is supporting legislatures across the Commonwealth as a means of ensuring that national legislation can effectively deal with the problem of modern slavery. The CPA UK recently published a handbook on drafting legislation against trafficking across the Commonwealth, which includes submissions from Nigeria.²⁹ In addition, the National Crime Agency works closely with Nigerian law enforcement – as well as agencies such as NAPTIP and the EFCC – to monitor borders through the Joint Border Task Force and supports capacity-building to manage instances of kidnappings.³⁰

²⁹ Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (undated), ‘CPA UK Modern Slavery Project’, <https://www.uk-cpa.org/what-we-do/modern-slavery> (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

³⁰ UK Government (2017), Countering Organised Crime and Corruption Programme for Nigeria, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630402/Nigeria_Organised_Crime_Africa_2017.pdf (accessed 20 Feb. 2019).

Recommended Approaches to Support Anti-trafficking Efforts

Provision of resources and training

- The British government should help to ensure that NAPTIP receives adequate and coordinated funding and systems support to expand its capacity to monitor trafficking networks, contribute to multinational anti-trafficking initiatives and support rehabilitation facilities and reintegration programmes for victims.
- Several key local NGOs in Edo State, with strong community linkages, require more support to enhance their capacity to deliver empowerment and prevention programmes to young people. These NGOs should be actively involved in the design and development of national and international anti-trafficking programmes. The UK should also work with these organizations to deliver localized outreach initiatives for radio and town hall meetings, translated into local languages.
- The UK should invest in providing agribusiness training and machinery for both returnees and those at risk of being trafficked. Nigeria's ample, fertile soil provides significant potential for job creation.

- The UK should further support business-development programmes, partnering with private-sector organizations to create pathways of attainment and mentorship to those who engage with education programmes.

The UK and Nigeria could work together to bolster the expertise of judges on human trafficking between the two countries.

Cooperation with the international community and the diaspora

- The British government should deepen its engagement with the Nigerian diaspora in the UK to generate greater awareness of the issues around human trafficking, including domestic servitude.
- Along with partners in the African Union and European Union, the UK should use its bolstered network in the Sahel to coordinate on anti-human-trafficking efforts within West and North Africa.
- Deeper cooperation and intelligence sharing on trafficking networks between the UK, Nigeria and other affected countries will increase prevention and the prosecution rate.

Take advantage of the UK's influence in Nigeria

- There is an urgent need for more collaborative thinking between the various agencies. British lawmakers should encourage their Nigerian counterparts to ensure stronger coordination between the government's anti-human-trafficking agencies, the police and the judiciary.
- The UK should increase its advocacy and technical assistance at the state level to ensure that more state assemblies enact the Child Rights Act of 2003 legislation.

Acknowledgments

The APPG on Nigeria depends on the support, hard work and goodwill of a range of organizations and individuals to make its work and country visits possible. The APPG wishes to express its sincere thanks to those who took the time to meet with the delegation in Benin City, Abuja and Lagos.

The APPG is particularly grateful to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK, which provided financial support for the visit. The APPG also thanks Katherine Lawson and Daragh Neville from Chatham House, who both provided research assistance and logistical arrangements for the visit. The Chatham House Africa Programme provides administrative and research support to the APPG.

Thanks are also due to the staff at the Save the Children office in Abuja for kindly hosting a working lunch for the delegation. In addition, the APPG wishes to thank the former British high commissioner to Nigeria, Paul Arkwright, and deputy high commissioner in Lagos, Laure Beaufigli, for their hospitality and insights. The APPG also appreciated the efforts of staff from DFID, the Home Office and the National Crime Agency, who took the time to meet with the delegation in Nigeria.

Appendix: Itinerary of the Visit to Nigeria

APPG visit to Nigeria, 11–17 February 2018

Delegates:

Kate Osamor, Member of Parliament for Edmonton; Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Nigeria

Baroness Liz Barker, Member of the House of Lords; Member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Nigeria

Daragh Neville, Projects Officer, Africa Programme, Chatham House

AGENDA

Sunday 11 February 2018 (London/Lagos)

- 09:50** Depart London Heathrow Airport Terminal 5 (Flight BA 75)
- 17:20** Arrive Murtala Muhammed Airport (Lagos); depart for Four Points Sheraton Lagos
- 19:00** Arrive Four Points Sheraton Lagos
- 19:30** Depart for the British High Commission residence
- 20:00** Dinner at Deputy British High Commission residence with Deputy High Commissioner (Lagos) **Ms Laure Beaufils**, Deputy Head of Mission (Lagos) **Mr Andrew Davidson**, DFID Modern Slavery Lead, Lagos, **Mr Richard Sandall** and NCA, Joint Border Task Force Lead Officer **Ms Vanessa Fleming**

Monday 12 February 2018 (Lagos)

- 07:00** Breakfast at Four Points Sheraton Lagos
- 08:00** Depart for The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters
- 09:00** Meeting at The Salvation Army Territorial Headquarters with **Mr Umoru Eric**, program coordinator, Anti-Human Trafficking Community Awareness & Recovery (CAR) Project, Salvation Army Nigeria
- 10:00** Depart for Lagos State Police Command
- 12:00** Meeting at Lagos State Police Command with the executive director of the Lagos State Security Trust Fund (LSSTF), **Dr Abdurrazaq Balogun**
- 13:30** Meeting at Lagos State Police Command with the commissioner of the Lagos State Police Command, **Mr Imohimi Edgal** [meeting cancelled]
- 14:30** Light lunch

- 15:30** Depart for Four Points Sheraton Lagos
- 16:30** Arrive Four Points Sheraton Lagos
- 17:20** Depart for Lagos Motor Boat Club
- 18:00** Dinner with **Mr Osagie Okunbor**, managing director for Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC); **Mr Peter Costello**, vice president, Shell Companies in Nigeria and **Ms Jackie Maitland**, senior adviser, government relations, Shell International, at the Lagos Motor Boat Club
- 20:30** Depart Lagos Motor Boat Club for Four Points Sheraton Lagos

Tuesday 13 February 2018 (Lagos/Benin City)

- 06:45** Breakfast at Four Points Sheraton Lagos
- 07:30** Check out and depart hotel for Murtala Muhammed Airport (Lagos)
- 10:20** Depart Murtala Muhammed Airport (Lagos) (Flight P47170)
- 11:10** Arrive Benin Airport; depart for Protea Hotel
- 12:30** Arrive at Protea Hotel, lunch at hotel
- 14:00** Depart for Society for the Empowerment of Young Persons (SEYP) office
- 14:30** Visit to Society for the Empowerment of Young Persons (SEYP) anti-trafficking project and meeting with founder, **Mrs Jennifer Ero**, team members and project participants
- 16:00** Depart SEYP for Protea Hotel
- 16:30** Meeting at Protea Hotel with **Mr Solomon Okoduwa**, president, Initiative for Youths Awareness on Migration, Immigration, Development & Re-integration, IYAMIDR and senior special assistant on human trafficking and illegal migration to the Edo State governor.
- 18:00** Dinner at Protea Hotel

Wednesday 14 February 2018 (Benin City)

- 08:00** Breakfast at Protea Hotel
- 09:15** Depart Protea Hotel for Benin City NAPTIP Zonal Command
- 10:00** Meeting at Benin City NAPTIP Zonal Command with NAPTIP Director-General **Dame Julie Okah-Donli** and Zonal Commander **Barrister Nduka Nwanwenne**

11:00 Depart Benin City NAPTIP Zonal Command for Edo State Government Secretariat

13:00 Meeting at Edo State Government Secretariat with Governor of Edo State, **HE Godwin Obaseki** and Edo State attorney general and commissioner for justice and chairperson, Edo State Task Force on Human Trafficking, **Professor Yinka Omorogbe**

14:00 Depart Edo State Government Secretariat for Protea Hotel

14:30 Lunch at Protea Hotel

15:30 Depart Protea Hotel for meeting at Girls' Power Initiative

16:30 Meeting at Girls' Power Initiative with co-founder and coordinator **Ms Grace Osakue** and project leads

17:30 Depart Girls' Power Initiative for Protea Hotel

19:00 Dinner at Protea Hotel

Thursday 15 February 2018 (Benin City/Abuja)

08:00 Breakfast at Protea Hotel

09:00 Check out and depart for Benin Airport

11:30 Depart Benin Airport (flight P47172)

12:30 Arrive Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport (Abuja); depart for Sheraton Hotel

13:00 Arrive at Sheraton Hotel; lunch at hotel

14:15 Depart hotel for National Assembly

15:00 Meeting at National Assembly with:

- **Hon. Pwajok Gyang**, chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Human Rights
- **Hon. Razak Atunwa**, chairman, House of Representatives Committee on Justice

16:00 Depart National Assembly for State House

17:00 Meeting with **Hon. Abike Dabiri-Erewa**, senior special adviser to the president on Diaspora and Foreign Affairs (SSADF)

18:00 Depart State House for British High Commission

19:00 Dinner focused on human trafficking at British High Commission with **Mr Paul Arkwright**, high commissioner; **Ms Debbie Palmer**, head of DFID Nigeria; **Ms Kelly**

Stiebel, DFID modern slavery lead in Abuja; **Mr Alan Pamplin**, NCA regional head and **Mr Lewis Evans**, Home Office modern slavery lead in Abuja; also **Ms Tina Fahm**, commissioner, ICAI

Friday 16 February 2018 (Abuja)

- 09:00** Depart Sheraton Hotel for Crown Agents
- 09:30** Meeting at Crown Agents with **Mr Jiru Bako**, country manager, Crown Agents Nigeria and **Ms Maureen Ademola**, consultant, Crown Agents Nigeria
- 10:30** Depart Crown Agents for NAPTIP HQ
- 11:00** Meeting at NAPTIP HQ with **senior management team**
- 12:00** Depart NAPTIP HQ for Save the Children office
- 13:00** Lunchtime roundtable hosted by **Save the Children** with NGOs and CSO representatives on local and international anti-trafficking initiatives (held under the Chatham House Rule)
- 14:15** Depart Save the Children for Devatop Centre for Africa Development (DCAD)
- 15:00** Visit to Devatop Centre for Africa Development (DCAD), with Executive Director **Joseph Osuigwe Chidiebere**
- 16:30** Depart DCAD for Sheraton Hotel
- 19:00** Dinner at Sheraton Hotel (free evening)

Saturday 17 February 2018 (Abuja/London)

- 06:20** Depart Sheraton hotel for Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport (Abuja)
- 09:05** Depart Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport (Abuja) (Flight BA 82)
- 14:40** Arrive London Heathrow Airport Terminal 5

